

# Justin de Benedictis-Kessner

John F. Kennedy School of Government  
79 John F. Kennedy St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138

✉ [jdbk@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:jdbk@hks.harvard.edu)  
📄 <https://jdbk.scholars.harvard.edu/>

## Academic Employment

### Harvard University

Emma Bloomberg Associate Professor (without tenure), John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2025–

Associate Professor (without tenure), John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2024–2025

Assistant Professor, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2020–2024.

Faculty Affiliate: Department of Government; Taubman Center for State & Local Government; Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation; Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative; Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy; Center for Public Leadership; Institute for Quantitative Social Science; Center for American Political Studies; Safra Center for Ethics; Bloomberg Center for Cities

### Boston University

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, 2019–2020

Faculty Affiliate, Initiative on Cities

Boston Area Research Initiative, Harvard University and Northeastern University.

Postdoctoral Research Associate, 2017–2019.

## Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Ph.D. in Political Science, 2017.

College of William & Mary, B.A. in Government and Psychology (*summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa).

## Research and Teaching Interests

Urban & Local Politics and Policy, Media & Political Communication, Surveys & Public Opinion, Causal Inference, Experimental Methods.

## Publications

### Book:

“The Fog of Accountability: How Institutions Keep Voters from Holding Their Local Governments Accountable” (forthcoming at the University of Chicago Press, Summer 2026)

### Articles:

24. “Dynamic Persuasion: Decay and Accumulation of the Persuasive Effects of Partisan Media” (with Matthew Baum, Adam Berinsky, Joohye Jeong, Zach Markovich, and Teppei Yamamoto). Forthcoming at *Political Science Research & Methods*.
23. “Alphabet Soup: Randomized Ballot Order and the Representation of Marginalized Candidates” (with Rachel Bernhard and Sean Freeder). Forthcoming at *Political Behavior*.

22. "Short-term exposure to 'filter-bubble' recommendation systems has limited polarization effects: naturalistic experiments on YouTube." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122(8). February 2025. (with Matthew Baum, Adam Berinsky, Allison Chaney, Andrew Guess, Xinlan Emily Hu, Dean Knox, Christopher Lucas, Najia Liu, Rei Mariman, Yasemin Savas, and Brandon Stewart).
21. "The partisanship of mayors has no detectable effect on police spending, police employment, crime, or arrests." *Science Advances* 11(3). January 2025. (with Matthew Harvey, Daniel Jones, and Christopher Warshaw)
20. "How Partisanship in Cities Influences Housing Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 69(1): 64–77. January 2025. (with Daniel Jones and Christopher Warshaw)
19. "How Self-Interest and Symbolic Politics Shape the Effectiveness of Compensation for Nearby Housing Development." *Journal of Public Policy* 44(4): 785–808. December 2024. (with Michael Hankinson)
18. "To Ride-Hail or Not to Ride-Hail? Complementarity and Competition Between Public Transit and TNCs Through the Lens of App Data." *Public Transport* 16: 831–854. November 2024. (with Alex Deng, Edgar Castro, Sage Gibbons, Ryan Qi Wang, and Daniel T. O'Brien)
17. "How the Identity of Substance Users Shapes Public Opinion on Opioid Policy." *Political Behavior* 46(1): 609–629. March 2024. (with Michael Hankinson)  
 \* awarded the Lupia-Mutz Outstanding Publication Award from Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences
16. "American Local Government Elections Database." *Nature: Scientific Data* 10 (912). December 2023. (with Christopher Warshaw, Yamil Velez, and Diana Da In Lee).
15. "Media Measurement Matters: Estimating the Persuasive Effects of Partisan Media with Survey and Behavioral Data." *Journal of Politics* 85(4). October 2023. (with Matthew Baum, Adam Berinsky, Chloe Wittenberg, and Teppei Yamamoto)
14. "Driving Turnout: The Effect of Car Ownership on Electoral Participation." *Political Science Research & Methods* 11(3): 654–662. July 2023. (with Maxwell Palmer)
13. "Men and Women Candidates Are Similarly Persistent After Losing Elections." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(26). June 2021. (with Rachel Bernhard)
12. "Strategic Partisans: Electoral Motivations and Partisanship in Local Government Communication." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 2(2): 227–248. June 2021.
11. "Strategic Government Communication About Performance." *Political Science Research & Methods* 10(3): 601–616. March 2021.
10. "Accountability for the Economy at All Levels of Government in United States Elections." *American Political Science Review* 114(3): 660–676. August 2020. (with Christopher Warshaw)
9. "Politics in Forgotten Governments: The Partisan Composition of County Legislatures and County Fiscal Policies." *Journal of Politics* 82(2): 460–475. April 2020. (with Christopher Warshaw)
8. "The Effect of Associative Racial Cues in Elections." *Political Communication* 37(4): 512–529. March 2020. (with Adam Berinsky, Michele Margolis, and Megan Goldberg)
7. "Concentrated Burdens: How Self-Interest and Partisanship Shape Opinion on Opioid Treatment Policy." *American Political Science Review* 113(4): 1078–1084. November 2019. (with Michael Hankinson)
6. "Persuading the Enemy: Estimating the Persuasive Effects of Partisan Media with the Preference-Incorporating Choice and Assignment Design." *American Political Science Review* 113(4): 902–916. November 2019. (with Adam Berinsky, Matthew Baum, and Teppei Yamamoto)
5. "How Attribution Inhibits Accountability: Evidence from Train Delays." *Journal of Politics* 80(4): 1417–1422. October 2018.

4. "Off-Cycle and Out of Office: Election Timing and the Incumbency Advantage." *Journal of Politics* 80(1): 119–132. January 2018.
3. "Mayoral Partisanship and Municipal Fiscal Policy," *Journal of Politics* 78(4): 1124–1138. October 2016. (with Christopher Warshaw)
2. "Evidence in Voting Rights Act Litigation: Producing Accurate Estimates of Racial Voting Patterns," *Election Law Journal* 14(4): 361–381. December 2015.
1. "A balancing act: Physical balance, through arousal, influences size perception," *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics* 72(7): 1890–1902. October 2010. (with Michael Geuss, Jeanine Stefanucci, and Nicholas Stevens)

#### Book Chapters:

2. "Polarization and Media Usage: Disentangling Causality." In *Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion*. Bernard Grofman, Liz Suhay, and Alex Treschel, eds. May 2019. (with Matthew Baum and Adam Berinsky)
1. "Vote-Seeking Third Parties in the Twentieth Century," in *Guide to U.S. Political Parties*, ed. Marjorie Hershey, CQ Press, 2014. (with Ron Rapoport)

## Working Papers

"Partisan Polarization in Local Politics" (with Katherine Levine Einstein, David Glick, Maxwell Palmer, and Christopher Warshaw). *Under review*.

"The Electoral and Policy Effects of Election Timing in City and County Governments" (with Christopher Warshaw).

"Funding the Growth Machine: The Effects of Municipal Campaign Contributions on Housing Policy Outcomes" (with Jennifer Gaudette).

"Who Should Make Decisions? Public Perceptions of Democratic Inclusion in Housing Policy" (with Katherine Levine Einstein and Maxwell Palmer).

"Nationalization in Local Elections" (with Daniel Naftel, John Sides, and Christopher Warshaw).

"Where the Sidewalk Ends: How Participation Contributes to Inequity in Government Service Provision" (with Christian Schimpf).

## In Progress

"Polarization in Local Legislatures" (with Jonathan Colner and Christopher Warshaw).

"Violence Against Local Political Candidates" (with Yanilda Gonzalez).

"Descriptive Representation Among Unelected Local Government Leadership" (with Jeremiah Cha).

"If You Build It, They Will Vote: How Infrastructure Builds Support for Public Transit" (with Jared Kalow and Toby Nowacki).

"Street-Level Participation: Field Experimental Evidence on Smart City Technology and Voter Registration" (with Melissa Sands).

"Reducing Unsafe Driving and Excess Emissions Through Behavioral Nudges" (with Soubhik Barari).

"Civic Roundtable: Retaining Election Officials in a Time of Uncertainty" (with Jose Altamirano, Austin Boral, and Madeleine Smith).

"Voting Rights and Local Democracy" (with Desmond Ang).

## Invited Talks

2026: IE University, Political Research Group; London School of Economics, Methodology Department. Planned: New York University, Urban Seminar; University of Pennsylvania.

2025: University of South Carolina, Interdisciplinary Policing Workshop; University of Calgary, Canadian Municipal Barometer Speaker Series; Stanford University; University of Chicago, Center for Effective Governance; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Workshop on Polarization, Social Norms, and Trust in Societies.

2024: University of Houston, CYCLONE Urban Politics Workshop; Princeton University, CSDP; National University of Singapore; Seoul National University; Emory University; Carlsberg Foundation, Housing Policy Workshop; Hertie School, Political Economy Seminar; Aarhus University; Columbia University, American Politics Speaker Series; University of Connecticut; UC Berkeley, Research Workshop in American Politics.

2023: Yale University, American Politics & Public Policy Workshop; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, American Politics Conference; University of Pittsburgh, Local Policy & Politics Workshop.

2022: Louisiana State University; Tulane University; Vanderbilt University; Princeton University, CSDP Conference on Housing Politics and Policy; Suffolk University, Symposium on Health and Biomedical Law.

2021: Columbia University, American Politics Workshop; USC, Local Political Economy Symposium.

2020: ETH Zurich, Data Science Seminar; Aarhus University; University of Copenhagen.

2019: Brown University, Political Behavior Workshop.

2018: Boston University, Initiative on Cities.

2017: College of William & Mary, Government Department Research Colloquium.

2016: Yale University, Institute for Social and Policy Studies Experiments Workshop.

## Practitioner-Focused Presentations

City of Boston, Data Collective ERG, 2025.

Boston-Area Abundance Chapter, 2025.

Greater Boston Bike Infrastructure Roundtable, 2025.

City of Boston, Office of Councilor Michelle Wu, 2019.

MetroLab Network Annual Summit, 2019.

Boston Area Research Initiative Conference, 2017.

## Conference Presentations

European Political Science Association Annual Conference, 2024.

Copenhagen Money in Politics Conference, 2024.

Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference: 2011, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2024.

American Political Science Association Annual Conference: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023.

Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, 2017, 2020, 2023.

International Communication Association, 2022.

NYU-CESS Experimental Political Science Conference Poster Session, 2016.

Research Methods in the Psychological Sciences Conference, 2009.

## Grants & Awards

Unite America Institute, grant for "Collecting Primary Elections Data to Support Causal Research on Local Government" (with Christopher Warshaw), 2025, **\$47,539**

Bloomberg Center for Cities, grant for "Politics Under Fire: Threats and Violence Against Women Mayors" (with Yanilda Gonzalez), 2024. **\$50,000**

Lupia-Mutz Outstanding Publication Award, Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences, for the paper "How the Identity of Substance Users Shapes Public Opinion on Opioid Policy," 2023.

MIT Election Data + Science Lab: The Evolving Election Administration Landscape, grant for "Civic Roundtable: Retaining Election Officials in a Time of Uncertainty" (with Austin Boral and Madeleine Smith), 2022. **\$56,050**

Clarence Stone Scholar Award, Urban Politics Section, APSA, 2022.

Facebook Foundational Integrity Research: Misinformation and Polarization Research Award, grant for "Do online video recommendation algorithms increase affective polarization?" (with Naijia Liu, Matt Baum, Adam Berinsky, Andy Guess, Dean Knox, Christopher Lucas, and Brandon Stewart), 2020. **\$100,000**

Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS), grant for "How Group Identity Shapes Opioid Treatment Policy Opinion" (with Michael Hankinson), 2019.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation, grant for "Translating Data Generated by the Transit App into Insights on Transportation Use in Greater Boston" (with Dan O'Brien and Ryan Qi Wang), 2018. **\$299,920**

Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) Short Studies Program, grant for "Burden Sharing and Collective Action: A Study of Opinion on Opioid Treatment Funding" (with Michael Hankinson), 2018.

APSA Travel Grant, 2016.

Boston Area Research Initiative, grant for "Stimulating and Measuring Civic Engagement through the Introduction of Unclaimed Property in Public Spaces" (with Ryan Enos, Michael Hankinson, and Melissa Sands), 2015. **\$7,400**

Norton Long Young Scholar Award, Urban Politics Section, APSA, 2015.

Institute for Quantitative Social Science Research Grant (with Tess Wise), 2014. **\$1,000**

Phi Beta Kappa, College of William & Mary, 2011.

Monroe Research Grant, College of William & Mary, 2010. **\$3,000**

## Teaching Experience

### Course Instructor

Politics & Ethics in Unstable Times, Harvard University, Spring 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, & 2026

Urban Politics Field Lab, Harvard University, Fall 2021, 2023, & 2025.

Senior Executives in State & Local Government Executive Education Course, Summer 2022, 2023, 2024, & 2025.

Introduction to Public Policy, Boston University, Spring 2020.

Urban Public Policy Lab, Boston University, Fall 2019.

Political Science Scope & Methods, MIT, Fall 2018.

### Methodological Workshop Instructor

Webscraping for Data Collection, Social Sciences Research Methods Workshop, College of William & Mary, 2017.

Geographic Visualization & Analysis, Political Geography Lab, Harvard University, 2017.

Geographic Visualization & Analysis, Political Science Methods Workshop, MIT, 2014 & 2017

### Teaching or Grading Assistant

US Social Policy, MIT, Spring 2017.

American Public Policy for Washington Interns, MIT, Fall 2016 & Spring 2017.

Electoral Politics, Public Opinion & Democracy, MIT, Fall 2016.

Introduction to the American Political Process, MIT, Spring 2016.

Randomized Controlled Trials Executive Education Course, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), MIT, 2015.

Making Public Policy, MIT, Fall 2013.

Research Methods in Government, College of William & Mary, Spring 2011.

## Advising

Can Mutlu, Harvard Kennedy School, dissertation committee member (Ph.D. anticipated 2026)

Zoe Muse, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, anticipated 2026)

Palmer Mills, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, anticipated 2026)

Kellie Lounds, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, anticipated 2026)

Farih Rahim, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, 2025)

Adrienne Zhang, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, 2025)

Maya Alper, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, 2024)

Tyler Simko, Harvard Government Department, dissertation committee member (Ph.D. 2024)

Jose Altamirano, Harvard Kennedy School, Policy Analysis Exercise advisor (MPP, 2023)

Soubhik Barari, Harvard Government Department, dissertation committee member (Ph.D. 2023)

## Service

### Community

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, Active Transportation Steering Committee (2024–).

City of Cambridge Mayor's Commission on Climate Change (2021–2022).

### Discipline

Executive Committee, APSA Section on Urban and Local Politics (2019–2021; 2023–2025).

Committee on the Status of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Political Science, MPSA (2019–).

Dennis Judd Best Book Award Committee, APSA Section on Urban and Local Politics (2023).

Division Program Co-Chair, APSA Section on Urban and Local Politics (2022).

Co-organizer, Local Political Economy Pre-Conference at APSA Annual Meeting (2022, 2025, & 2026).

Reviewer: *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Politics Research*, *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Journal of Politics*, *Journal of Public Economics*, *Electoral Studies*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Local Government Studies*, *Nature Cities*, *Political Analysis*, *Political Behavior*, *Political*

*Communication, Political Psychology, Political Research Quarterly, Political Science Research & Methods, Quarterly Journal of Political Science, Review of Economics & Statistics, Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences.*

Discussant: Local Political Economy Pre-Conference at American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (2017, 2019, 2020, 2024, 2025); American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (2016, 2019, 2020, 2023, 2025); Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference (2018, 2019, 2022); Copenhagen Money in Politics Conference (2024), European Political Science Association Annual Conference (2025).

Publishing Editor, *Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics*, August 2010-May 2011.

## University

Politics & Institutions PhD program track leader, Harvard Kennedy School, (2023–).

Admissions Committee, PhD Program in Public Policy, Harvard University (2023–).

Standing Committee on Social Policy, Harvard University (2021–).

Admissions Committee, PhD Program in Social Policy, Harvard University (2021–2023).

Dukakis Fellowship Selection Committee, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2022).

Goldsmith Book Prize Committee, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University (2021).

American Politics Faculty Search Committee, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2014.

Program Assistant, MIT Summer Research Program. Mentored undergraduates from underrepresented backgrounds in university-wide summer research program, May-August 2012.

## Computing

Author of *MBTAr*: R package to access data from the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) performance API.

Author of *seeclickfixr*: R package wrapper for the SeeClickFix web API to access data on urban citizen service requests.

Proficient in R, Stata, ArcGIS,  $\text{\LaTeX}$ , PASW Statistics (SPSS); knowledgeable in Javascript and Python.