Zachary Esses Johnson, M.Sc., M.P.P., J.D.

Tax Professional and Political Economy Doctoral Student at the University of Virginia

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Research Interests

Political Economy, Taxation, Public Finance, Latent Factor Analysis, Causal Inference

Thesis

Tax Me If You Can: How Property Tax Shocks Drive Intercounty Migration

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, Political Science   2023 – 2028
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

Master of Public Policy   2021 – 2023
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA

Master of Science, Behavioral Science   2020 – 2021
London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Juris Doctor   2014 – 2017
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, Political Science   2011 – 2014
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

Professional Tax and Public Economics Experience

Statistician, The Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia   2024 – Present
Project on Democracy and Capitalism
– Solo-designed a multi-level PCA model to build index scores across countries and over time.
– Developed reproducible R-based scripts for index construction and documentation.

State Taxation Intern, The Tax Foundation   2023
– Conducted research on state and local tax structures.
– Assisted in preparing policy briefs and articles on Tax Foundation datasets.
– Analyzed proposed tax policy changes across multiple states, contributing to comparative reports.

Associate Lawyer, Legacy Tax + Trust Lawyers   2018 – 2020

Articling Student, DLA Piper LLP   2017 – 2018

Research Experience

Research Assistant, Department of Politics, University of Virginia   2025
Supervisor: David Leblang, Ph.D.

Research Assistant, Department of Politics, University of Virginia 2024
Supervisor: Carol Mershon, Ph.D.

Research Assistant, Department of Politics, University of Virginia 2023
Supervisor: Albert Rivero, J.D., Ph.D.

Research Assistant, Gould School of Law, University of Southern California 2022 − 2023
Supervisors: Abby Wood, J.D., Ph.D., and Pamela McCann, Ph.D.

Research Student, London School of Economics 2021
Supervisor: Liam Delaney, Ph.D.
Project: Behavioral Science & National Preparedness for Risks

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant and Co-Instructor, University of Virginia 2025
Class: Regression Analysis (Doctoral)
Instructor of R Statistical Computing Class

Teaching Assistant, University of Virginia 2024
Class: Indian and Pakistani Politics (Undergraduate)

Course Grader, University of Southern California 2023
Class: Public Financial Management and Budgeting (Masters)

Course Grader, University of Southern California 2021
Class: Contemporary International Politics (Undergraduate)

Papers in Progress

Stacked Taxes: Uncovering the Layered Burden on U.S. Consumers (*Under Review*)

Sequential Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Small-N Samples (*Under Review*)

Can Social Democratic Parties Attract Left-Authoritarian Voters? Evidence from Election Simulations in the Netherlands, 1994–2021 (with Kirill Zhirkov) (*Under Review*)

Presentations

Diffusion of Violent Political Protest - Geographic Evidence from Bangladesh 2025
Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Service

Editorial Assistant, American Journal of Political Science 2023 − 2025

Awards

Bob Biller Award - Finalist 2023
University of Southern California

Sol Price School of Public Policy Scholarship 2021
University of Southern California ($60,000)

Undergraduate Research Award 2015
University of Manitoba ($5,000)

Coding/Software Skills

R, Python, Stata, LaTeX, Excel, Gorilla, Qualtrics

Languages

English (Native), French (Basic), Turkish (Beginner)