How Does Obtaining a College Education Affect Political Voting Patterns?
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As the 2020 presidential election is fast approaching, per our democratic process, Americans will soon be held responsible to fulfill, arguably, their most important political right. Elections are thought of by many as both a mechanism of accountability and a measurement of performance. Although fair elections are a necessity to uphold democracy, it is essential to recognize that this belief is a misconception. The result of a political election is predominantly decided by the culmination of individual voters making decisions based upon their backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. To examine this notion further, it is our goal to address the question: How does obtaining a college education affect political voting patterns? To accomplish this task, we have obtained data from the American National Election Survey (ANES). The data includes over 50,000 survey responses, ranging in years from 1948 to 2016, covering topics that include, but are not limited to, wealth, background, beliefs, ethnicity, age, gender, and socio-economic status. With this data, we have performed a regression analysis that is weighted and uses the Taylor Series adjustments to compute design-consistent standard errors. Through our research, it can be seen that the trends reveal a widening gap between educational attainment and party affiliation. Furthermore, those with higher education hold more leftward leaning beliefs, and in turn, are more likely vote Democrat when compared to those with less education. Lastly, the trends over-time reveal a dramatic shift; as, non-college-educated Americans used to primarily be Democrat, while college-educated Americans were mostly Republican. We feel that this no longer holds. This research has implications to demonstrate the importance, or lack of importance, of higher education in terms of the effect and influence it has on real life decisions, which in our case is voting patterns for presidential elections.

Implementation of Climate Policies in Small to Medium Sized Cities in Washington State
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Today, over 50% of the world’s population live in cities or urban areas. While cities only count for roughly 2% of global landmass, they contribute over 70% of CO2 emissions globally. With a significant environmental footprint, cities have the opportunity to be integral in climate change action. While many cities globally have begun to implement climate policies and targets, there is still a wide spectrum of engagement. Therefore, it’s important to assess when and how cities tend to implement climate policy and why they engage in climate action. Through the Center of Environmental Politics, we are researching what factors lead small to medium sized cities in the state of Washington to implement these climate change policies. Random cities are selected, and data is being gathered largely by looking through the cities website’s and surveying for statements of climate change and the resulting policies and goals. Currently, we are in the process of analyzing the data so no set results and conclusions can be resolved yet. However, the results of this research can help us determine the hurdles when bringing climate change rhetoric and action into the political sphere and potentially highlight the political atmosphere around climate change in Washington cities.

The Influence of Ballot Initiative Campaign Spending on Voter Turnout in State-level Elections
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Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science
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This project seeks to explore the effect of spending on state-level ballot initiative campaigns on voter turnout. Past research into the area of voter turnout has revealed evidence of relationships between campaign spending, voter turnout, and vote outcomes. Differentials in spending by competing cam-
Campaigns has been demonstrated to have clear effects on vote outcomes in a variety of electoral contexts, and aggregate spending has been shown to affect levels of voter turnout as well. However, no work has in the past sought to look exclusively at the role of spending allocated to ballot initiatives in its ability to affect turnout. I anticipate higher levels of spending by pro and opposition groups correlating to higher overall voter turnout. In addition, I expect spending by opposition groups to have the greatest impact, as these groups are able to allocate funds mainly to media ads which seek to influence voter behavior through psychological aspects like fear. Using publicly disclosed data on ballot initiative spending tied to election year, the relationship between spending and voter turnout for the previous six biannual elections in four states with active ballot measure processes is investigated. Types of election, changes in voter partisanship, voter registration, and quantities and policy areas of ballot measures considered are controlled for to establish a baseline for voter turnout. The influence of campaign spending on turnout is sought after to help bridge-the-gap in relationships between spending and vote outcome, and turnout and vote outcome.

**Studying Development and Russian Sentiment in Romania and Bulgaria**

*Jacob P (Jake) Slater, Senior, Political Science, Comparative History of Ideas*  
*Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science*

In this project, I seek to examine the relationship between economic development and Russian influence in the post-Soviet states of Romania and Bulgaria. While scholars have studied the individual paths that these recently formed states have taken since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there has been little inspection of how these nations regard the now Russian Federation. My work studies this relationship at a closer level. Specifically, I examine data on economic development at the district level (standardized by NUTS 3) in these countries and vote share for pro-Russian parties. I run a multivariate regression to examine the effect that level of development has on citizens’ willingness to accept Russian influence in their country, controlling for other relevant factors. I hypothesize that as the amount of development increases, the level of vote share for pro-Russian parties will consequently decrease. This hypothesis is grounded in the well documented positive effect that development has on democracy. In this case, a nation such as Russia, who touts anti-democratic ideals, would be looked upon less favorably by a district that is relatively more developed. Thus, I expect to see an inverse relationship between my variables. This analysis will inform research on the interactions between nations in Eastern Europe and Western Asia, areas of growing importance in this world, and allow us to examine the path forward for other post-Soviet states.

**Us v.s. Them in 280 Characters: Why Political Polarization Fuels Vicious Attacks on Twitter**

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*Mentor: Bree Bang-Jensen, Political Science*

Negative campaigning strategies were a major part of the 2016 presidential campaigns. Candidates from both major political parties attacked their opponents by spreading scandals, name-calling, and character attacks. But why are the election campaigns so negative, anyway? Psychology offers us an intuitive explanation. When humans are placed into groups, whether they are divided along the stance on the important issues of politics, or with arbitrary identities, it is natural to accumulate antipathy for the people on sides. This study draws a casual relationship between the division along the partisan lines and the vicious attacks from political campaigns against their opponents. Specifically, I examine 29,062 tweets tweeted by the gubernatorial candidates within the last three months leading up to the 2014 gubernatorial race across 36 states. I also measure two levels of polarization: 1) party elite polarization, the division in the legislature along party lines, and 2) mass polarization, the division among the electorates along the party line. In turn, I propose two models that suggest polarization drives vicious attacks. One model considers the top-down pressure — the greater the division among party elites in a state the more likely the candidates will use negative campaigning strategies against their opponents. In parallel, the other model considers the bottom-up pressure, which establishes the same causal mechanism but instead the pressure on candidates comes from the electorates. To quantify negative campaigns on Twitter, I measure the candidates’ tweets’ viciousness based on a novel index called the Political Tweet Viciousness Index (PTVI) as well as the tweets’ affect with a set of sentiment lexicons. It is expected that both models will explain the quantity and the viciousness of the negative campaigns.