

ABHIT BHANDARI

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Vanderbilt University
Department of Political Science
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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Vanderbilt University

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, 2023–present

Temple University

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, 2021–2023

Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, 2020–2021

EDUCATION

Columbia University

Ph.D., Political Science, 2020

M.Phil., Political Science, 2016

M.A., Political Science, 2015

Northwestern University

B.A., Political Science (honors) and African Studies, 2012

RESEARCH

BOOK

Property Rights for Some: Political Connections and Markets Under Selective Rule of Law. Under contract at Cambridge University Press.

ARTICLES

“Substitutes For Rule of Law? How BITs Deepen But Do Not Broaden U.S. Investment in Developing Countries,” with Joonseok Yang. 2025. *International Interactions* 51(6): 1067–1088.

“Able and Mostly Willing: An Empirical Anatomy of Information’s Effect on Voter-Driven Accountability in Senegal,” with Horacio Larreguy and John Marshall. 2023. *American Journal of Political Science* 67(4): 1040–1066.

“Social, Formal, and Political Determinants of Trade Under Weak Rule of Law: Experimental Evidence from Senegalese Firms.” 2023. *Comparative Political Studies* 56(2): 163–192.

“Political Determinants of Economic Exchange: Evidence from a Business Experiment in Senegal.” 2022. *American Journal of Political Science* 66(4): 835–852.

→ **Michael Wallerstein Award** for Best Article in Political Economy, APSA, 2023

“Nation-State or Nation-Family? Nationalism in Marginalized African Societies,” with Lisa Mueller. 2019. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 57(2): 297–322.

WORKING PAPERS

“Access Denied: How Partisanship and Gender Bias Prevent Private-Sector Development.”

→ **Best Paper Award**, Class and Inequality Section, APSA, 2024

“Political Connections, Patronage, and Consumer Attitudes: The Non-Electoral Consequences of Clientelism,” with Erin York.

“The Political Nature of Entrepreneurship in Developing Countries: Experimental Evidence from Tunisia and Senegal,” with Robert Kubinec, Sekou Jabateh, and Hamza Mighri.

“Formalizing Inequality? Firms’ Political Connections and the Limits of Institutions in Developing Markets.”

“Private-Sector Support for Programmatic Candidates: Evidence from a Senegalese Election,” with Lucas Borba and Jessica Gottlieb.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

“Who Becomes a Bureaucrat? How Bureaucratic Backgrounds Shape Access to Economic Opportunity in Senegal.”

“How Chinese Economic Interests Shape Legislative Behavior in Africa: Evidence from Zambia’s Parliament,” with Donghyun Danny Choi.

“Overlapping Networks of Political Power,” with Jennifer Larson.

“Protest as a Shock to Economic Exchange: Trust and Trading Behavior in Senegal,” with Lisa Mueller.

“Political Formalization Cycles: How Political Uncertainty Can Promote Economic Development,” with Lucas Borba and Guilherme Fasolin.

“Fiscal Shocks and Political Futures: Exogenous Windfalls and Withdrawals of Rural Tax Revenue in Brazil,” with Lucas Borba and Guilherme Fasolin.

“No Trust, No Deal: How Political Mistrust Constrains Markets in the Global South,” with Erin York.

“The Economic Costs of Favoritism,” with Horacio Larreguy.

“Economics, Politics, and the Rule of Law: An Experiment in Formalization,” with Jessica Gottlieb.

OTHER WRITING

“African Countries Are Opening Their Borders. What Does This Mean for Security, Identity and Trade?” with Lisa Mueller. *The Washington Post*. August 13, 2019.

AFFILIATIONS

Individual Researcher Member, Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP)
Faculty Affiliate, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (CSDI)
Faculty Affiliate, Center for Global Democracy (CGD)

AWARDS, GRANTS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

EXTERNAL

Best Paper Award for best article presented in previous year, APSA Class and Inequality Section, 2024
Michael Wallerstein Award for best article in political economy published in previous year, APSA Political Economy Section, 2023
Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) - Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (PEDL), 2019, £38,371.
National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship (GRFP), 2015-18, \$138,000.
Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) - Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (PEDL), 2017, £29,944.
National Science Foundation (NSF) Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG), 2017, \$18,900.
Spencer Foundation (with Horacio Larreguy and John Marshall), 2017, \$50,000.
J-PAL Governance Initiative Seed Grant, 2016, \$5,036.
Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, 2015, \$5,000.
National Merit Scholarship, 2008-12.

INTERNAL

Summer Research Award, Temple University, 2022.
Grant-in-Aid for Research/Creative Activity, Temple University, 2022.
College of Liberal Arts Research Award (CLARA), Temple University, 2021.
Liberal Arts Undergraduate Research Award (LAURA), Temple University, 2021.
Katerina Alevizaki Dracopoulos Summer Fellowship, Columbia University, 2017.
Dissertation Development Grant, Columbia University, 2016.
Schiff Fellowship, Columbia University, 2015.
Dean's Fellowship, Columbia University, 2013.
African Research Leadership Award, Northwestern University, 2011.
Provost's Undergraduate Research Grant, Northwestern University, 2011.

TEACHING

COURSES TAUGHT

African Politics (undergraduate lecture)
Comparative Politics of Developing Countries (undergraduate lecture)
Business and Politics in the Global South (undergraduate seminar)
Studies in Comparative Analysis (Ph.D. seminar)
States and Markets (Ph.D. seminar)
Political Economy of Development (Ph.D. seminar)

OTHER TEACHING

Spatial Econometrics Graduate Workshop, African School of Economics. 2015.

ADVISING

Federico Lombisano (in progress), Guilherme Fasolin (in progress), Ilyssa Yahmi (2025, Assistant Professor, American University of Paris)

PRESENTATIONS

INVITED TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

World Bank (postponed), 2026
NYU Comparative Politics Series, 2025
LSE African Political Economy Group Speaker Series, 2024
UC Berkeley Comparative Politics Series, 2024
MIT Comparative Politics Series, 2024
Washington University in St. Louis Comparative Politics Series, 2023
NYU, Rebecca B. Morton Conference on Experimental Political Science, 2023
University of Connecticut, Business and Human Rights Initiative Speaker Series, 2023
Columbia University, Seminar for the Study of Development Strategies, 2023
Enda ECOPOP, Senegal, 2022
Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse, 2022
Enda ECOPOP, Senegal, 2021
Office of Evaluation Sciences, Washington, D.C., 2020
Yale University, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, 2019
NYU-Columbia Political Economy of Informal Institutions Workshop, 2019
Harvard University, Department of African and African American Studies, 2019
Working Group in African Political Economy (WGAPE), NYU Abu Dhabi, 2019
Northeast Workshop in Empirical Political Science (NEWEPS), UPenn, 2018
Contemporary African Political Economy Research Seminar (CAPERS), NYU, 2018
WZB, Berlin, Germany, 2017
PEDL, Oxford University, 2017
Harvard Experiments Working Group, 2017
Working Group in African Political Economy (WGAPE), NYU Abu Dhabi, 2016

CONFERENCES

APSA Annual Conference, 2016–2025
ASA Annual Conference, 2016–2018
Copenhagen Business School Money in Politics, 2022–2024
EPSA Annual Conference, 2022–2024
MPSA Annual Conference, 2016–2018, 2022, 2026 (planned)
SPSA Annual Conference, 2024

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

DISCIPLINARY

Reviewer:

American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Business and Politics, Electoral Studies, International Organization, International Interactions, International Studies Quarterly, Journal of Politics, Political Behavior, Social Science Quarterly, Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism, World Politics

Committees:

APSA Experimental Research Section, Board Member (incoming), 2026–
APSA Political Economy Section, Mancur Olson Dissertation Award, 2024.
African Politics Research Group, Ralph Bunche Best Graduate Student Paper, 2023.
APSA Mentor, 2022–2023
APSA Class and Inequality Section, Best Paper on Entrepreneurship and Inclusion, 2022.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT

Vanderbilt Political Science Undergraduate Committee, 2024.
Vanderbilt Political Science Comparative Politics Subfield Convener, 2023–2024.
Temple Political Science Undergraduate Committee, 2021–2023.
Temple Fulbright Campus Committee, 2021–2023.
Columbia Political Science Undergraduate Advisor, 2016–17.
Coordinator, Columbia Political Economy Seminar, 2015–16.
Coordinator, Contemporary African Political Economy Research Seminar (CAPERS), 2013–14.

POLICY WORK

Research collaborator, World Bank DIME Governance Program, 2021.
Consultant, DRG Impact Evaluation, USAID Senegal (contracted by NORC), 2015–17.
Fellow, UN World Food Programme (WFP), West Africa Regional Bureau, Dakar, Senegal, 2012–13.

SKILLS

Languages: French (fluent)
Programming: R, Stata, L^AT_EX, ArcGIS/QGIS, Open Data Kit/SurveyCTO/Qualtrics
Field research: Senegal, Niger, Mozambique, Gambia

Last updated March 2026