

## Problem Statements

This workshop is focused on helping its members find and refine opportunities for making the best possible causal claims in service of answering political science questions. One (unfair) criticism of research concerned about causal identification is that it privileges method over substance. We invite you to put your interests first — tell us about the questions that excite you and use the group to try out and surface ideas about possible research designs.

We hope that writing these problem statements will help you unearth projects that have early buy-in from your peers and advisers. While presentations spaces are limited, we encourage students to try and produce several problem statements each year and present the strongest to the group. If a few of these pan out during your graduate career, you'll be on your way to a strong job market packet.

### Suggested Structure

To have a productive conversation, we need you to provide a clear statement of the question, the causal effect(s) that you're trying to isolate, and some details about the research context. We've provided a template below that we encourage you to use in crafting your problem statement, which should be roughly 5 pages.

- Research Question
- Motivation:
  - Why is this question important?
  - *No extensive literature review*
- Theory:
  - *Brief* sketch of theory
  - Hypotheses
- Research Context:
  - How is treatment assigned in your study area?
  - What data sources exist?
- Ideal Experiment:
  - Ignoring constraints, what experiment could capture the causal effect of interest?
- Preliminary Empirical Strategy:
  - What designs, if any, have you considered to approximate this ideal experiment?

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