

Sean Christopher Rao

Website: seanrao.com E-mail: raosea@gmail.com

Alexandria, Virginia

Education:

University of Maryland, College Park, August 2015-August 2024

- Ph.D., Government and Politics (International Relations and Comparative Politics), GPA 4.0
- courses in quantitative data analysis, survey analysis, and interview methods

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, September 2013-May 2015

- M.A., Political Science, GPA 4.0, courses in quantitative data analysis and research design

University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 2007-May 2011

- Honors B.A., International Studies (Global Security), GPA 3.9

Work Experience:

Grant Writing Technical Consultant, May-August 2025

- advised the client on research requirements for Defense Department grants
- established a convincing academic basis for the client's product development

Instructor, University of Maryland, August 2020-January 2021; January-June 2023

- advised students on effective survey design, including an experiment fielded in Qualtrics
- taught students to analyze survey results in R
- organized discussions and group activities to teach 38 first-year students
- designed a virtual role-playing simulation using Google Sheets

Teaching Assistant, University of Maryland, August 2018-June 2020; January-April 2021

- led discussion sections in international relations and political theory
- advised students on designing empirical research questions and organizing supporting evidence

Research Assistant to the Maryland Critical Issues Poll, August 2017-June 2018

- assisted with survey instrument design to study US public opinion on foreign policy
- cleaned data and created cross-tabulations and bar graphs using R
- systematically searched media sources for convincing evidence to answer the director's research questions

Research Assistant to the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence Project, August 2015-August 2017

- systematically reviewed databases, including Lexis Nexis and Factiva, to score rebel group formation in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East according to the director's metrics
- interpreted regression models and transformed time-series datasets using R software

Program Assistant, Wisconsin Universities UN Summer Seminar, January 2014-July 2015

- scheduled briefings for students at around 40 New York missions of UN member states
- advised undergraduates on finding research topics

Research Assistant to Professor Ora John Reuter, August 2014-May 2015

- collected data on elections and regime transitions in non-democracies since 1972

Teaching Assistant, Political Science, UW-Milwaukee, August 2013-May 2015

- graded and assisted with discussions for international relations, American politics, and political theory

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The Chertoff Group, Intern, January-May 2013

-monitored congressional hearings for staff research priorities

The Heritage Foundation, President's Office Intern, September 2012-January 2013

-reviewed literature and found data to brief the foundation president and chief of staff

US Representative Jim Sensenbrenner's Office, Intern, July-August 2011

-found sources and formatted data for staff research

Senator Ron Johnson's Office, Intern, May-July 2011

-composed a memorandum on Palestinian UN observer membership; trained peers on database software

Data Skill Highlights:

-survey design, survival analysis, R software, Qualtrics, web crawling, natural language processing

Languages:

-advanced high Arabic speaking and reading (MSA and Levantine); intermediate writing

-advanced French reading; intermediate speaking and writing

Fellowship:

-Fulbright Israel Research Award, June-October 2021, political interviews (29 English; 5 Arabic)

Dissertation Research:

“Mechanisms of Religious Rhetoric and Political Mobilization”

-designed 2 survey experiments with Qualtrics, samples: 288 students and 820 US respondents

-showed that Democratic politicians make credible promises with rights rhetoric and that Republicans make credible promises with religious rhetoric

“Praying Together and Staying Together: Faction Survival in Self-Determination Movements”, presented at the Midwest Political Science Conference, 2023

-designed metrics and a workflow to quantify ideology and membership practices in 50 political organizations across 4 countries

-showed that nonpolitical activities help political organizations sustain their political activity over time

“Praying for Peace: Religious Belonging and the Recurrence of Civil War”

-merged datasets from multiple sources for concise analysis and presentation using R

-showed that mobilizing religious recruitment networks can cause civil unrest to resume in post-conflict societies

Other Research Projects:

“Exclusive and Inclusive Religious and National Values: The Case of American Views on Israel”, presented at the Midwest Political Science Conference, April 2021

-designed a survey instrument to measure new dimensions of American identity and views of Israel

“Rebel Groups Origins and Civilian Victimization”, with Leo Bauer, Jessica M. Braithwaite, Kathleen G. Cunningham, and Margaret McWeeney

-synthesized studies of wartime abuse of civilians, integrating the review with analyses written by others