

# ELLIOTT SERNA

elliottserna.github.io

es2242@cornell.edu

(951) 446-5735

Ithaca, NY

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Public administration; Public management; Bureaucratic politics; Decision theory; Causal inference; Computational social science

## EDUCATION

**Cornell University**, Jeb E. Brooks School of Public Policy  
*B.S. Public Policy*

Ithaca, NY  
Expected May 2027

### SELECTED COURSEWORK:

Causal Reasoning & Policy Evaluation; RCTs for Policy and Society; Research Methods; Data Science I & II; Machine Learning; Using Big Data; Data & the State; Market Design; Behavioral Economics, Linear Algebra; Multivariable Calculus

### ACTIVITIES:

Cornell Policy Group; Cornell Economics Society; Cornell Data Journal; Jeb E. Brooks School Student Ambassador & Peer Mentor

## HONORS

- Ronald E. McNair Scholar
- Cornell Institute of Politics & Global Affairs Scholar
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Harvard University, Harvard Kennedy School**  
*Undergraduate Research Fellow* | PI: Elizabeth Linos, Ph.D.

Cambridge, MA  
Jun 2025 – Present

- Conduct applied public administration research at The People Lab under Dr. Elizabeth Linos, focusing on evidence-based policymaking, public management, and behavioral science.
- Contribute to the design and analysis of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with government partners.
- Develop data de-identification workflows; support academic manuscripts, policy briefs, and research reports.

**Cornell University, Brooks School of Public Policy**  
*Research Assistant* | PI: Jan Voelkel, Ph.D.

Ithaca, NY  
Dec 2025 – Present

- Study judgment and decision-making in politically polarized contexts under Dr. Jan Voelkel, focusing on how policy can nudge behavior for social good.

- Scrape Amazon reviews of self-help books and run text analysis of user comments using LLMs to uncover mechanisms of behavior change.
- Design and lead a project experimentally testing a chatbot intervention to reduce administrative burden in social safety net programs.

**Cornell University, Department of Economics**

Ithaca, NY

*Research Assistant* | PIs: Jörg Stoye, Chen Qiu, & Jose Luis Montiel Olea, Ph.D.

Aug 2025 – Present

- Support the multi-year project “(Mostly Harmless) Statistical Decision Theory” led by Professors Jörg Stoye, Chen Qiu, and Jose Luis Montiel Olea.
- Implement empirical and simulation-based analyses across statistical decision theory and microeconometrics projects, including replications, estimator testing, and threshold-based policy experiments.
- Operationalize theoretical results into reproducible code, simulation pipelines, and validation exercises for decision-rule-based policy recommendations.

**American Economic Association, Office of the Data Editor**

Ithaca, NY

*Senior Research Assistant* | PI: Lars Vilhuber, Ph.D.

Aug 2024 – Aug 2025

- Processed replication packages submitted to AEA journals and audited data/code for reproducibility prior to publication.
- Evaluated compliance with AEA documentation standards and drafted pre-approval reports for review by the Data Editor.
- Produced guidance for internal replication manuals (e.g., MOSEK pipelines, High-Performance Computing jobs, etc.) and reproducible research workflows.

**Cornell University, Brooks School of Public Policy**

Ithaca, NY

*Research Assistant* | PI: Jamila Michener, Ph.D.

Mar 2024 – Nov 2024

- Conducted partner-based housing policy research for the Maine People’s Alliance under Dean Jamila Michener.
- Prepared literature syntheses on “what works” for housing insecurity, as well as qualitative analyses of various social housing models.
- Engaged grassroots advocacy partners in Maine in the research process via presentations and feedback sessions.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Office of Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes**

Corona, CA

*District Office Intern*

June 2024 – August 2024

- Conducted district-level demographic and policy research to inform official communications and constituent engagement strategies.
- Drafted policy-relevant communications and briefing materials for district outreach.
- Liaised with community stakeholders to coordinate public service initiatives and local policy engagement.

## Future Caucus

*Policy Intern*

Washington, DC  
January 2024 – April 2024

- Produced policy briefs and evidence-based talking points for a national network of 1,800+ young legislators, synthesizing legislative and demographic data.
- Constructed a comprehensive dataset of state and federal lawmakers under age 45, integrating demographic and institutional characteristics for internal policy analysis.

## PUBLICATIONS

- **Serna, E.** (in prep.). Measuring legislative corruption in Czechia: A generalized synthetic control approach with ML-assisted covariate selection.
- **Serna, E.** (2023). Expanding high-speed rail in the Northeast to reduce U.S. carbon emissions. *Cornell Policy Group Journal of Affairs*, 1(20), 19–22.
- **Serna, E.** (2024). Establishing public campaign support programs to diversify state legislatures. *Cornell Policy Group Journal of Affairs*, 1(21), 24–26.
- **Serna, E.** (2024). ‘Missing Middle Housing’ Wasn’t Always Missing. It’s Time We Bring It Back. *Cornell Policy Group*.

## PROJECTS

APPLIED POLICY LAB

*Founder & Principle Investigator*

Cornell Policy Group  
January 2025 – Present

- Founded the Cornell Policy Group Applied Policy Lab, Cornell’s first student-run computational social science lab, to expand undergraduate engagement in empirical policy research.

ECONOMETRICS: A GUIDE [↗](#)

*Author*

December 2024 – Present

- Writing and publishing a digital collection of notes on core topics from econometrics, written for the curious undergraduate.

CORNELL POLICY SYMPOSIUM

*Principle Organizer*

Cornell Policy Group  
April 2026

- Organized Cornell Policy Group’s inaugural Policy Symposium, a convening of Cornell’s undergraduate policy community to showcase student research done across the areas of domestic, economic, education, environmental, foreign, health, and technology policy during the 2025-2026 academic year.

## SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

- *Student Ambassador & Peer Mentor*, Cornell Brooks School of Public Policy (2024–)
- Co-President, Cornell Policy Group (2025–)
  - *Director*, Center for Domestic Policy, Cornell Policy Group (2024–2025)

- Organize R, research design, and causal inference workshops for Cornell undergraduates [*Online Materials*]

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

LANGUAGES: English (Native), Spanish (Native, Mother-tongue)

SOFTWARE: R, Stata, Python, MATLAB, Git, LaTeX, HTML/CSS, JavaScript, Qualtrics

METHODS: Quasi-experiments, RCTs, game theory, statistical decision theory, econometrics, machine learning

## REFERENCES

Furnished upon request.