

Sylvan Zheng

saz310@nyu.edu

New York University Department of Politics
19 West 4th St, New York, NY 10012

EDUCATION

New York University

PhD Candidate, Wilf Department of Politics

New York, NY
August 2021 - Present

Dissertation Committee: Pat Egan, Joshua Tucker, Hye Young You

New York University

MPS, Interactive Telecommunications, Tisch School of the Arts

New York, NY
2019 - 2021

Yale University

BS, Computer Science, cum laude

New Haven, CT
2013-2017

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND WORKING PAPERS

2025. “Applications of GPT in Political Science Research: Extracting Information from Unstructured Text” (with Kyuwon Lee, Simone Paci, Jeongmin Park, and Hye Young You), *PS: Political Science & Politics*

2023. “A 2 million-person, campaign-wide field experiment shows how digital advertising affects voter turnout.” (with Minali Aggarwal, Jennifer Allen, Alex Coppock, Solomon Messing, Kelly Zhang, Dan Frankowski, et al) *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1-10

Working Paper. “Out of Touch: Economic News and Institutional Trust” (academic job market paper)

Working Paper. “Digital Rubbernecking: Consumption vs. Engagement Social Media Feed Optimization” (with Jennifer Allen and Chris Barrie)

Working Paper. “A Shifting Balance: Ideological Sources in Climate News” (with Hye Young You)

EMPLOYMENT

Local News Lab at Columbia University

Machine Learning Engineer

New York, NY
2021

Design and implementation of network-data powered recommendation system for local newsrooms. Data ingestion, model training, and rec serving infrastructure supports millions of daily page-views.

Acronym

Senior Software Engineer & Data Scientist, Digital Political Ads Measurement

New York, NY
2020-2021

Research, development, and deployment of a statistical model used to predict political messaging effects from social media data throughout the 2020 election season. Development of software used to manage and launch field experiment treatments and surveys on Facebook. Data analysis and presentations of field experiment results.

Facebook

Software Engineer, Civic Engagement and Election Integrity

New York, NY
2017-2019

Technical driver of product intervention experimentation processes, data analysis, and heuristic and metric construction to understand and mitigate politically motivated harassment on Facebook. Launched and analyzed four product experiments across feed ranking, automated content moderation, and user feedback surfaces. Designed international politician data infrastructure initiative along with two other engineers and non profit partner organizations. This data powered the Facebook ballot product in a dozen countries.

TEACHING

(UG) **Power and Politics in America (Teaching Assistant):** 2026

(G) **Quantitative Methods: Causal Inference (Teaching Assistant):** 2025

(UG) **Social Media and Politics: Senior Seminar (Course Assistant):** 2024

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS

NISS Dissertation Grant (Department Nomination): 2025

Institute for Humane Studies Research Award: 2023

Light Fellow, Yale University: 2015

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Data Science Frontiers: Society and Politics: Fall 2026 (poster presentation)

Center for Social Media, AI, and Politics Conference: 2025 (presenter), 2026 (presenter)

American Political Science Association: 2025 (presenter)

Midwest Political Science Association: 2024 (presenter)

Northeast Workshop for Empirical Political Science: Spring 2026, Fall 2025, Fall 2024 (discussant)

Money in Politics, Copenhagen: 2024 (presenter)

Rebecca Morton Experiments Conference: 2024, 2023 (poster presentation)

IC2S2: 2022 (presenter)

ITP Tech and Society: 2020 (presenter)