

The Climate as a Source of Religious Belief

Faculty Member: [Nicholas Ryan](#)

Proposal Description:

There is a long tradition of research investigating the relationship between geography/climate and economic outcomes (geographical determinism). More recently, this theory has been revised and the new research argues that the effect of geography on economic development might be indirect via institutions: geography affects institutions and institutions affect economic development. Our study hypothesizes that geography, and in particular the local climate, affects religious institutions and religious beliefs.

The goal of this project is to connect anthropological measures of religious belief around the world to detailed measures of local climate, particularly rainfall. The idea is that religious authorities are more respected in areas where the climate is more predictable, since authorities in such places may be thought to have successfully intervened in the world, by answering a prayer for rain. The RA would join a team that is working on analyzing the data to test this idea. The contribution of the RA would be to gather, clean and compare global datasets that cover the local climate at a fine geographic scale. The RA would also create tables, graphs and maps to present the analysis of the resulting dataset.

Requisite Skills and Qualifications:

The main qualification sought is experience in Python or another scripting language for use in scraping and cleaning the local climate data. Experience in statistical analysis packages such as R, Stata or Matlab is a plus. The RA would join a team led by Assistant Professors Jose-Antonio Espin-Sanchez and Nicholas Ryan, and including several other RAs working on different aspects of the analysis.

Award: Sophie Lai

Tobin Application Link: [Tobin Application](#)

Project Type: Tobin RA

Project Year: 2021

Term: Fall 2021

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