

Nikita Savin

PHD CANDIDATE · UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES (UCLA)

3376 Bunche Hall, 90095 Los Angeles, CA

✉ nikitasavin@ucla.edu | 📞 (424) 383-3843

EDUCATION

PhD, Political Science

2023 - Current

University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Political Science

Subfields: *Comparative Politics, Methods*

Committee: *Daniel Treisman (co-chair), Cesi Cruz (co-chair), Darin Christensen, Stuart Soroka, Chad Hazlett*

Candidate of Sciences, Political Science, *Cum Laude*

2015 - 2019

Higher School of Economics, Department of Political Science

Dissertation: *The Concept of the Political in Deliberative Democratic Theory*

Supervisor: *Boris Kapustin*

Subfield: *Political Theory*

MA, Political Science, *with High Merit*

2013 - 2015

Higher School of Economics, Department of Political Science

BA, Political Science

2009 - 2013

Higher School of Economics, Department of Political Science

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS

Internet Disruptions and Protest Dynamics: Evidence from India

Summary: This project investigates how government-imposed internet shutdowns affect protest behavior in India, which has accounted for over one-third of global disruptions since 2016. Using event-level data from AccessNow and POLECAT, it applies a difference-in-differences design to identify the causal effects of digital repression on collective action and mobilization.

AI Chatbots, Self-Censorship, and Political Expression

Summary: This project examines how the diffusion of AI chatbots affects political expression and self-censorship in authoritarian contexts. Drawing on original survey data and experimental evidence, it investigates whether citizens perceive AI systems primarily as tools of modernization and economic development or as extensions of state surveillance. The project analyzes how these perceptions shape willingness to express political views, share information, and engage in collective action.

Was Weber Right? Calvinism, Economic Growth, and State Building in Germany *(with Natalia Vasilenok, Stanford University)*

Summary: This project revisits Max Weber's thesis on the Protestant ethic by focusing on the long-term legacy of Calvinism in early modern Germany. Drawing on novel archival data, it examines the spatial distribution of Calvinist parishes founded in the 16th century and links them to modern indicators of social capital and innovation. The project challenges the prevailing emphasis on literacy and Lutheranism by emphasizing Calvinist doctrines and their role in shaping economic development, state-building, and associational life.

Can Changes to the Labor Force Affect Gender Norms? Evidence from the Russo-Ukrainian War *(with Maria (Masha) Arzumanov, UCLA)*

Summary: Due to the Russia Ukraine war and military draft, women took on positions in male-dominated fields. Are these changes to the labor force enough to generate changes in views about women in male-dominated positions, especially with regards to promotions, labor market participation, and salary?

The Ballot After The Bullet: Effect of Exposure to Casualties on Voting Under Autocracy *(with Konstantin Bogatyrev, London School of Economics, and Georgy Tarasenko, Cornell University)*

Summary: This project examines how local exposure to wartime casualties from the Russo-Ukrainian War influences political behavior and electoral outcomes in Russia. Leveraging original data on soldier deaths and precinct-level election results, it investigates how personal costs of war affect support for the regime in an authoritarian context.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Student Researcher

2023 - Current

Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles

- Conducted primary data collection, cleaned and manipulated large datasets, developed and honed quasi-experimental research designs to answer complex questions about the interplay between political violence and political communication

Associate Professor

2020 - 2023

School of Communication, Higher School of Economics

- Taught undergraduate and graduate courses in political communication and research design, advising over 10 MA theses on political protest and media in autocracies
- Directed the MA Program in Public Affairs, managing curriculum development, faculty coordination, and student research oversight
- Conducted original research on political behavior and media effects in authoritarian regimes, resulting in peer-reviewed publications in both English- and Russian-language journals

Senior Lecturer

2016 - 2020

School of Communication, Higher School of Economics

- Taught undergraduate and graduate courses in political communication and research design
- Conducted original research on political behavior and media effects in authoritarian regimes, resulting in peer-reviewed publications in both English- and Russian-language journals

Lecturer

2013 - 2016

Department of Political Science, Higher School of Economics

- Taught core undergraduate courses in political theory and contemporary political thought
- Supervised senior theses on topics including political participation, democratic theory, and public opinion

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

- “*Donald Trump’s Words*”. **Presidential Research Quarterly**, 55(4), 2025 (with Daniel Treisman)
- “*Making Politics Attractive: Satirical Memes and Attention to Political Information in the New Media Environment*”. **International Journal of Communication**, 18, 2024 (with Kirill Chmel and Michael X. Delli Carpini)
- “*Saving Lives or Saving the Economy? Support for the Incumbent during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Russia*”. **Post-Soviet Affairs**, 2023, 39(4), 291-307 (with Kirill Chmel and Aigul Klimova)
- “*The Effect of Risk Framing on Support for Restrictive Government Policy Regarding the COVID-19 Outbreak*”. **PLOS ONE**, 2021 (with Kirill Chmel and Aigul Klimova)
- “*Does Media Matter? Variation of VK and Facebook Deliberative Capacities (Evidence from Discussions on the Crimea Crisis)*”. **Communications. Media. Design**, 2019, 4(3)
- “*Fragility of Strong Media Effects in Authoritarian Environment (Evidence from Russia)*”. **European Journal of Communication**, 2018, 33(5), 471-488 (with Oleg Kashirskikh and Aigul Klimova)

BOOKS IN RUSSIAN

“*Democracy and Political Events*”. Moscow: HSE University Press, 2023.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES IN RUSSIAN

- “*Society in Turmoil*”. **Sociodigger**, 2023, 4(9), 28
- “*Memes as a Tool for Consolidating the Protest Movement (A Case Study of Short Videos on the Social Network TikTok)*”. **Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes**, 2021, 6, 76–96 (with Anastasiya Poretskova)
- “*Toward Audience Representation: Mediatization of Politics and New Challenges for Democracies and Autocracies*”. **Communications. Media. Design**, 2021, 6(2), 33–51 (with Anastasiya Poretskova)
- “*Believe It or Not: Public Opinion and Rumors About the Origin of the New Coronavirus*”. **Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes**, 2020, 6, 266–283 (with Kirill Chmel and Aigul Klimova)
- “*Between Substance and Procedure: Two Traditions in Deliberative Democratic Theory*”. **Polis**, 2019, 4, 26-39

- “Political Theory and the Concept of the Political”. **Politeia**, 2019, 92, 6-21
- “Limits of the Applicability of Media Frame Theory in Non-Democratic Regimes”. **Communications. Media. Design**, 2017, 2(4), 49–66 (with Kirill Chmel)
- “There Is Nothing More Practical Than a Good Theory: Applied Communicology of Wolfgang Donsbach”. **Communications. Media. Design**, 2016, 1, 143–156 (with Oleg Kashirskikh)
- “Cold War and/or War on Terror? Terrorists and Intelligence Agencies in the American TV Series ‘Homeland’”. **Iskusstvo Kino**, 2016, 7.
- “Breaking with Carl Schmitt: The Concept of the Political in Mouffe’s Agonistic Pluralism”. **Logos**, 2015, 108, 163-179
- “Power Discourse and Legitimacy of the Political Regime in Russia”. **Business. Society. Power**, 2013, 17, 62–76
- “Discursive Foundations of Political Participation in Russia”. **Public Opinion Bulletin. Data. Analysis. Discussions**, 2013, 2(115), 35–44
- “Legitimacy of Power in Russia in the Context of Societal Involution”. **Business. Society. Power**, 2012, 12, 45–64

TEACHING

University of California, Los Angeles

- Political Economy of Climate Change (Spring 2025)
- Introduction to American Politics (Winter 2025)
- Politics and Government of Russia (Fall 2024)

Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences

- Democracy and Authoritarianism (Spring 2023)
- Conflicts and Violence in Politics (Spring 2023)

Higher School of Economics

- Political Theory (2013-2023)
- Introduction to Political Communication (2021-2023)
- Introduction to Political Science (2022-2023)
- Research Seminar (2016-2023)
- Contemporary Theories of the Political (2013-2016)

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

- The Best Teacher Award (2014-2023), Higher School of Economics
- Yegor Gaidar Award (2017), The Gaidar Institute
- Oxford-Russia Award for Academic Achievement (2013-2016), The Oxford Russia Fund

SELECTED ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

- American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (2024, 2021)
- Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference (2025, 2023, 2022, 2018, 2016)
- Workshop on Conflict Dynamics (2024)
- Evidence in Governance and Politics (2023)
- British Association for Slavonic and East-European Studies Annual Conference (2016, 2015, 2014)
- International Communication Association Annual Conference (2018, 2017)

SKILLS

Software: STATA, R, \LaTeX

Languages: Russian (*native*), English (*fluent*), French (*intermediate*), Norwegian (*beginner*)

MEDIA

- Commentator on TV Rain, Zhivoy Gvozd, Khodorkovsky LIVE, Current Times, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Belsat TV
- “We Analyzed 9 Years of Trump Political Speeches, and His Violent Rhetoric Has Increased Dramatically”. **The Conversation**, 2024 (with Daniel Treisman)
- “Ideology or Kleptocracy?”. **IStories**, 2024
- “Neo-Putinism Paradoxically Poses a Threat to Putin, as He Becomes an Unnecessary Element in the Construction He Himself Created”. **Russia.Post**, 2024

- *“Putinism Without Putin: What Is It and Is It Even Possible?”*. **Re:Russia**, 2023
- *“Why Putinism Is (Still) Not an Ideology”*. **Re:Russia**, 2023

SERVICE

Reviewer: New Media and Society, Media Psychology, Public Opinion Quarterly, Polis, Social Science Computer Review