

# Curtis Morrill

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## Education

### **University of California, Davis**

Ph.D in Agricultural and Resource Economics, Expected March 2023.

Fields: Development Economics, Political Economy, Natural Resource Use

Committee: Monica Singhal, Ashish Shenoy, Arman Rezaee, Dalia Ghanem

### **Bowdoin College**

B.A., Economics (High Honors) and Government, 2012.

## Working Papers

“Democratization and Political Responsiveness: Evidence from Indonesian Villages”  
(Job Market Paper)

Abstract: Following democratization, how do elected politicians respond to new voters? This paper studies political responsiveness following Indonesia’s transition to democracy, exploiting the staggered introduction of elected district heads for identification. When elected district heads take office, night light growth is 2.37 percentage points greater across villages supporting the winning political party - an effect that’s driven by districts with stronger media presence in the baseline. These effects, however, are not associated with improvements in local public goods. Disparities in night light growth are more pronounced during village head election years, suggesting that local politicians - in addition to voters - are targeted with preferential favors following democratization. Taken together, results suggest that democratization reshapes political responsiveness across new voter constituencies, but may do so through new clientelist systems rather than broader investment in public goods.

“Decentralization and Political Accountability: Evidence from Indonesia’s 2014 Village Law”

Abstract: Theory suggests that decentralization can increase the efficiency of public service delivery - but only if elections are able to select accountable leaders. This paper tests this relationship between elections, accountability, and development outcomes following a large decentralization reform in Indonesia. By interacting simultaneous revenue windfalls with staggered election cycles at the village level, this reform generates plausibly exogenous differences in the exposure of villages to newly-appointed village heads following the reform. Findings suggest that newly-elected politicians generate increases in public service provision and night light intensity. Meanwhile, elections following the reform are associated

with turnover in under-performing village heads, the appointment of better educated village heads, and heightened implementation of accountability measures mandated by the reform.

### “Reelection Incentives and Political Autonomy”

Abstract: Reelection incentives are intended to hold politicians accountable to voters. This paper argues that in weakly institutionalized settings, central administrations may exploit these incentives to control local politicians. I study this phenomenon during Indonesia’s transition to democracy, testing whether village head reelection concerns influenced support for the autocratic regime. Identification exploits the fact that village election cycles were independently staggered prior to Indonesia’s nation-wide democratization. I find that villages with leaders facing more proximate elections are more likely to support the autocratic regime. Results disappear when village heads are not eligible for reelection, suggesting that reelection concerns motivate local politicians to generate support for the central administration. Additional evidence finds that government transfers to villages increase during village head election years, and that village support for winning district politicians is associated with lower rates of village head turnover.

### Work in Progress

“Reelection Opportunities and Political Malfeasance: Evidence from Indonesian Districts”

“Lame Duck Politicians and Deforestation: Evidence from Brazilian Mayors”

### Awards and Fellowships

#### **Henry A. Jastro Graduate Research Award**

For preliminary data acquisition: \$2,800, 2019

For additional data acquisition: \$3,000, 2020

#### **Departmental Fellowship**

University of California, Davis, 2016

### Other Employment

2012-2014 Research Analyst, Industrial Economics Inc., Cambridge, MA

2012 Short-term Consultant, The World Bank

2011 Research Assistant, Synapse Energy Economics, Cambridge, MA.

2011 Psi Upsilon Sustainability Fellow, Conservation Law Foundation, Portland, ME.

### Teaching Experience

**Teaching Assistant**, Intermediate Microeconomics (ARE/ECN 100A):

Spring 2016 (Pierre Merel)

**Teaching Assistant**, Intermediate Microeconomics (ARE/ECN 100B):  
Fall 2016 (Holly Liu), Winter 2017 (John Constantine)

**Teaching Assistant**, Econometric Theory and Applications (ARE/ECN 106):  
Fall 2018 (Aaron Smith), Spring 2018 (Ed Taylor), Fall 2019 (Aaron Smith), Winter 2019  
(Jim Chalfant)

**Teaching Assistant**, Econometrics for Business Decisions (ARE/ECN 107):  
Spring 2019 (Dalia Ghanem), Winter 2020 (Dalia Ghanem), Spring 2020 (Dalia Ghanem)

### Software, etc.

Stata, R, ArcGIS/QGIS, LaTeX, Google Earth Engine

### References

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**Ashish Shenoy**, Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis  
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**Arman Rezaee**, Economics, University of California, Davis  
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**Dalia Ghanem**, Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis  
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