Before the Listing Closes

Civil rights, rental housing and a Seattle budget vote



Illustrated scene from the fictional rental search.

Learning objective

Students explain how unequal treatment can shape who reaches a rule applied the same way to everyone. They read real studies, test a city claim using a wider count, and defend a policy using evidence they can explain.

Two connected rounds

Students begin as a navigator helping Maya weigh school pickup, work, time and rent. They investigate what happens at each step. At City Hall they spend up to five staff units, see how their vote changes a later search, and test their reasoning on two new files.

Plan for about 45 minutes

Plan on 5 minutes to orient, 18 to play and read records, 17 for five short answers, and 5 for the report. The 230-word minimum is spread across five answers. The memo needs one record and one choice on a first-pass route. **For Fun** covers both rounds in about 20 minutes. These are planning estimates.

For an assignment, distribute the HTML and tell students to start **For Class**. Page 4 explains the Class PDF and progress backup. All material needed to play is in the game.

The search and the inbox

Watch for the first change and check what happens next.

Task	Worked result	What it shows
Choose a listing	Juniper first: no link at 4:50. Ask Canal at 5:00 and submit at 5:10 for an offer. Canal first: an offer is possible at 5:00.	An application can arrive right at closing. If Maya moves to Canal, she pays $50 less each month and travels 500 extra minutes over four school weeks.
Test the reply	Two same-time inquiries differ only in the race-associated name cue. A gets no link. B gets a link.	The fictional pair isolates a decision at the inbox. An unpaired silence leaves the reason open.
Keep one vacancy	Usual inbox: B submits at 4:55 and gets the offer. Public link: A submits at 4:50 and gets it. Optional late-A run: A finishes at 5:00 and B gets it again.	Both qualify, and the application rule stays fixed. Who enters the line, and when, can change the recipient.
Read the inquiry study	Replies willing to show drop from 44.6% to 23.4% with a voucher cue, a 21.2-point gap. Any reply drops from 49.4% to 40.1%.	Each percentage uses all inquiries in its group. Replies are an early step, before a visit, offer or lease.
Compare family cues	Estimated changes are +2.1 points for White-associated names and −5.6 for Latina-associated names, a 7.7-point difference.	The same cue has different estimated effects across name groups. The study used names associated with women.
Check Rosa’s screen	Rosa earns $1,800. The owner’s minimum is 3 × $1,500 = $4,500. Subtracting the voucher first gives 3 × $500 = $1,500.	Rosa clears the corrected cutoff. State law governs the rent amount. The owner supplies the three-times-income rule.
Check Jay’s filing time	Jay’s file is ready at 7 p.m., behind another qualified applicant at 6. Evening help gets him ready at 5.	The offer changes hands without adding a vacancy.

Discussion prompt

Ask who disappears from a count of complete applications. Have students use a case and time from the replay before introducing vocabulary.

Inquiry study, Figure 1 and Table 5 · Washington statute, subsection 3 · Seattle’s application-order guidance

The budget and the transfer

Test a policy against the same four households and vacancies.

Household	Usual process	Inbox pilot	Rent calculation	Evening desk
Maya	No link	Offer	No link	No link
Rosa	Income screen	Income screen	Offer	Income screen
Jay	Second in line	Second in line	Second in line	Offer
Linh	No link	Income screen	No link	No link

What can move a vote

A pilot costs three units. A spending limit and report costs two. Four members start in support and five votes pass. The evidence member wants the right purpose, a credible forecast and a relevant record. The oversight member wants a report that begins where the problem appears. A rent-screen audit can start with complete files. Link or filing help needs a report that enrolls people before they apply.

Worked hearing paths

An evening desk with an unrelated exhibit gets four votes. A correctly framed desk proposal using Jay’s filing times gets five. Adding a report that follows every searcher can bring it to six. The local trial can support a test of the desk with a broad report. A failed vote leaves the usual process in place. The replay shows what would happen if funded. Jay’s gain moves another applicant to second. Two pilots could help Linh, above the five-unit budget.

Trial reading key

Signing in a study-selected area was 15.4% versus 53.2%. Signing anywhere was 86.8% versus 87.3%. Both use all households in each group. “Anywhere” includes the study areas. The trial estimates the effect of offering a package. Bergman et al., Figure 3

Transfer key

A’s sketch leaves the path from side door to unit unverified. Sam already clears the income screen. B’s route is confirmed. Its worksheet needs voucher subtraction to bring the minimum from $4,500 to $1,500. Sam earns $1,800. The statewide rule applies to both apartments. Check the new city’s application-order rule.

A landlord offer is one step. The housing authority then checks the unit, rent and voucher requirements. Seattle Housing Authority

What earns credit

Five responses and seven evidence checks document different kinds of work.

Prompt	Floor	Credit strong reasoning
Maya’s note	30	Uses a time, cost or trip detail to explain the search and relates a decision to Maya’s priorities.
Inbox and line	50	Uses a time to explain why the same rule produces different offers, compares the family-cue estimates, and names something the real study leaves open.
Trial brief	45	Compares both lease outcomes and explains what the package comparison can say about any one service.
Budget defense	60	Uses a relevant record, traces one gain and barrier, and explains a tradeoff or how to measure results. States the assumption if the vote fell short.
Handoff	45	Uses the route sketch in A and the worksheet in B. Explains both changes and identifies the state rule.

Score each response 0 to 2

2 links specific evidence to a sound explanation, with the relevant limit or tradeoff. **1** identifies the main mechanism or gives usable evidence, but leaves the link incomplete. **0** misidentifies the mechanism or lacks usable evidence. A defense can earn full credit at four, five or six votes.

Calibrate two budgets

A failed proposal can earn 2 if the student shows how Jay’s 5 p.m. file passes the 6 p.m. file, who loses the offer, and why the result is conditional. A student who says six votes prove the desk created a vacancy or caused the trial’s lease results earns 0 on that explanation.

Collect the report

Students can type, dictate, or paste within the same answer. Use **Save answer to report** for each response. At the end, enter a name, open the report, save as PDF, check it and upload it to Canvas. The PDF shows first and current checks and links each saved defense to its vote. Save an edited answer to the report again before exporting.

Choose Restore progress for a 1.0 or 2.0 progress backup. A restored 2.0 run keeps its answers and votes and returns to the memo if it reached a later step. If saving is unavailable, download a progress backup before closing the tab.

Read the records at their level

The household files, inbox messages, council seats and budget are fictional. The cited research and rules are real.

A randomized inquiry study

Faber and Mercier varied cues across 4,058 inquiries to listings in 31 cities in 2017–19. The samples were 2,033 inquiries without and 2,025 with the voucher cue. Table 5 model 8 estimates a +2.1-point White-reference coefficient and a −7.7-point Latina interaction. The implied Latina estimate is −5.6. The study supports a difference across name groups and leaves individual motives, lease outcomes and Seattle unmeasured. Faber and Mercier, Figure 1 and Table 5

A local randomized trial and a survey

The 2018–19 phase enrolled households receiving a voucher with at least one child under 15. Figure 3 analyzes 204 usual-services and 221 offered-help households. Five port-outs were excluded and offer estimates were adjusted for housing authority. A 2023 City Auditor survey found 406 of 635 respondents ranked First-in-Time among their hardest rules. Those respondents came from properties sold or with lapsed registrations. Bergman et al., Figures 3 and 8 · City Auditor, Exhibit 22 and Appendix F

Who has authority

Federal law sets broad fair housing protections. Washington requires subtracting a voucher before applying an income minimum. Seattle’s first-complete-qualified rule governs offers and includes accommodations and procedures for requesting additional information. Council adopts budgets, the civil rights office enforces applicable rules, and the housing authority checks the voucher unit. Federal · State · City · Enforcement · Budget · Housing authority

Debrief after play

Ask students to distinguish a decision in the inbox from the application process that carries its effect forward. Name interpersonal racism and institutional racism after they explain that contrast. Use the inquiry study’s family cues to introduce intersectionality. Ask what changes if A cannot submit early and how a report could capture exclusion before an application is filed.

The three-edition comparison documents wording, mobile, recovery and report checks. Classroom timing, spoken screen-reader output, native mobile PDF and Canvas upload remain unmeasured.

Which people count?

A fictional before-and-after record. Students choose a record before interpreting the numbers.

Who was counted	Before the public link	After the public link
People who contacted a listing	20	20
People with a complete application	10	18
People who received an offer	8	9
Offer rate among complete applicants	8 of 10 (80%)	9 of 18 (50%)
Offer rate among people who contacted a listing	8 of 20 (40%)	9 of 20 (45%)

The record the aide needs

Ask for the count from the first inquiry. The records on signing or review time answer useful questions about later steps. They leave the number of people who could never submit a complete application unknown.

The finding and its limit

In this example more people completed an application, and the share of all people who contacted a listing and got an offer rose five percentage points. To attribute the change to the link, ask what would have happened in the same period without it. For example, compare similar listings that kept the old process. Changes in the number of units could also affect the result.

> **Debrief the two designs**
>
> The one-vacancy replay fixes the applicants and the filing rule. The memo compares rounds at several buildings. Ask why the reply experiment and the voucher trial support stronger causal claims than the memo. Grade the interpretation independently of which city pilot students prefer.

Follow-up discussion. If offers rise among people who inquire, what evidence would show whether people who never contacted a listing gained access? Name where the record would have to start.