Summer Research College (SRC) 2016 Project Descriptions

Middle Eastern State Formation
Professor Lisa Blaydes
If political institutions are a key determinant of economic growth, can a better understanding of regional institutional history help to explain disparities in economic development across world regions? This project will explore political development of the Middle East from a long-term, historical perspective. The student researcher will be responsible for reviewing literature in history and related fields, as well as creating and managing data sets based on historical records. Experience with data analysis and ArcGIS are helpful but not required. Careful bibliographic skills and an interest in the Middle East are required.

Mapping Militant Organizations
Professor Martha Crenshaw
Research assistance for the “mappingmilitants” project: mappingmilitants.stanford.edu. The project identifies and analyzes militant groups in specific conflict theatres and produces a public interactive website. Students research and write individual profiles of the groups, using a standard format. They also trace changes in relationships among the groups. Students should have excellent writing and research skills and be attentive to detail and accuracy. A computer science background would be helpful. The ability to take the initiative is most welcome. An interest in international security and the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and south and central Asia is also important.

Does Contemporary Armed Conflict have ‘Deep Historical Roots’?
Professors James Fearon and David Laitin
Professors James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin seek undergraduate RAs in the context of the Department of Political Science’s Summer Research College. This research project entails an extension of the Fearon/Laitin statistical analysis of civil war onsets since 1945 published in the American Political Science Review in 2003. The research question is whether violent conflicts in years going back to the 15th century that were fought on a particular territory are associated with higher likelihood of civil war onsets in the post-World War II era on that same territory. RAs will read historical accounts of violent conflict to help extend an existing dataset allowing for tests of the persistence hypothesis. They will code each conflict from that dataset as to precisely where it was fought, both in terms of today’s country boundaries and geocoded to test for whether there is a geographic foundation for persistent warfare. RAs will work 20 hours per week and meet regularly in a lab setting with the two professors and several graduate students. Preference will be given
to students with experience in statistical coding, reading ability in foreign languages, and a keen interest in history.

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**Do the Decision-Making Rules Governing International Organizations Matter?**

**Professor Erica Gould**

Do variations in the voting rules of international organizations make a difference for IO activity? Why do IO voting rules vary, and why have some rules become increasingly prevalent over time?

I am searching for one or two undergraduate research assistants who will help with two tasks. First and primarily, they will help complete an original dataset of international organizational rules. Second, the student(s) will be responsible for one analytical or research project. We will work together to choose a research focus that serves the student’s strengths and the project’s goals. This could include qualitative research (for example a history of the consensus decision-making rule and its proliferation) or quantitative analysis (utilizing the abovementioned dataset to test competing hypotheses). The ideal student will be detail-oriented, self-motivated and independent, as well as intrinsically interested in finding out what are the formal rules governing international organizations and how they influence international organizational activity. Strong knowledge of French is not necessary, but may be useful as some of the international organizations’ documents are in French. The ideal candidate will also have demonstrated their work ethic through prior work experience and/or prior research experience and have comfort working both with Excel and with archival materials.

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**Immigration and Integration Policy Lab**

**Professors Jens Hainmueller and David Laitin**

Professors David Laitin and Jens Hainmueller are seeking two research assistants to assist in the Immigration and Integration Policy Lab’s research on the impact of integration policies in the United States and Europe. The Immigration Lab (https://immigrationlab.stanford.edu) has a number of projects underway, including a large-scale randomized study to assess the impact of naturalization in the United States and a longitudinal survey of asylum seekers in Germany. The research assistants will be responsible for assisting in data collection, preparing literature reviews, producing journal quality graphics and conducting descriptive data analyses. Interest in immigration is a must, and a background in social science and statistics is preferred.
Understanding Corporate Political Strategies
Professor Andrew Hall
Clearly, money plays an important role in politics. Yet fewer than 3% of publicly traded firms contribute any money to political campaigns in the U.S. Why do so few firms participate? In this project, we will collect and analyze new data on firms to understand the characteristics that predict firm engagement in politics, and to assess its consequences for the political process. Professor Hall, himself a proud alum of the SRC program, seeks interested and engaged students to join the research team. Enthusiasm and organizational skills are a must. Coding and web-scraping skills are a plus but not at all required.

The Psychology of Americans' Political Decisions
Professor Jon Krosnick
Political psychology is an exciting interdisciplinary enterprise blending psychology with the study of politics. The Political Psychology Research Group at Stanford is a large team of undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs, visiting scholars, and staff exploring all these issues to generate academic publications and to write white papers to disseminate research findings to the non-academic community. You would join this group and work closely with Professor Jon Krosnick (Professor of Communication, Political Science, and Psychology).

This summer, the team will be working on a variety of projects. One will explore what the American public thinks about global warming and what they want the federal government to do on the issue. We will also be conducting statistical analysis of survey data and experiments conducted in recent years exploring the forces guiding Americans' views on issues related to climate change. In addition, we will be conducting more general investigations into the forces that inspire some people to vote in national elections while others decline to participate, and the forces that shape voters' candidate choices.

No special background is necessary for an undergrad to join our team, although comfort with mathematical/statistical write-ups and some experience with statistics would help you take on more challenging tasks. This job is just right for students interested in close collaboration with a faculty member and a fun and challenging summer. Students who have statistical skills may be able to conduct original analyses of existing data to write papers for publication.

Criminal Violence in Latin America Project
Professor Beatriz Magaloni
Professor Magaloni is seeking two Undergraduate Research Assistants, who will work on projects related to violence prevention in Mexico and Brazil.
One project examines urban youth involvement in gangs and crime in Mexico. This study will provide critical insight into who participates in youth gangs, how are these linked to criminal groups, and what can help kids escape from violence. The second project focuses on the use of deadly force by police in Brazil. The study will investigate whether body-worn cameras are effective in reducing the use of lethal force by police in Rio de Janeiro’s poorest neighborhoods.

The Research Assistants will be involved in quantitative data preparation, analysis and visualization. Additional duties include preparing conference presentations and manuscripts for publication. The assistants will interact with graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and other collaborators regularly in a team-oriented environment. This role serves as an ideal bridge into graduate studies for undergraduate students interested in empirical research and social development issues in Latin America.

Applicants should be rising juniors or rising seniors majoring in economics, political science, public policy, or other related disciplines. Ideal candidates must have strong quantitative and data analysis skills and excellent written and verbal communication skills. Fluency in Spanish or Portuguese and proficiency in the use of STATA or R are highly desirable.

Interest Groups on the Inside: Public Sector Pensions and Special Interest Capture

Professor Terry Moe and UC Berkeley Professor Sarah Anzia

Public sector pension funds are among the biggest pools of investment money in the entire country. As systems for providing retirement benefits to public workers, however, they are also seriously underfunded and mismanaged, threatening government budgets and crowding out other public services. In this project, we explore the extent to which pension funds have become the captives of special interests—public sector unions—and the role these interests have played in bringing about the pension problems that now plague America’s state and local governments. Students will help us examine the composition of the boards of trustees of the 114 major state-operated pension plans in the United States, the interests these trustees represent, the statutes and rules under which they operate, the decisions they make in pursuit of their interests, and the financial consequences of those decisions—with special attention to the role of public sector unions. The results will not only enhance our understanding of a crucial policy issue in American government, but will also shed light on broader questions of interest-group capture and democratic governance.

Stalin and Europe

Professor Norman Naimark

This project covers the early Cold War period, 1945-1953, and focuses on a series of case studies of the interaction between Soviet foreign policy aims and actions and the domestic
political dynamics of European countries. The case studies include: Finland (1944-47), Denmark (the Bornholm crisis, 1945), Germany (Berlin Blockade), Italy (Elections of 1948), Austria (State Treaty), Albania (the Yugoslav split, 1944-48), and Poland (the Gomulka problem). The idea of the project, which will result in a book, is to assess the relative flexibility of Soviet policy in face of the goals of European political parties and movements. Ideally research assistants will know one or more of the relevant languages (Russian, Polish, German, Italian, Finnish, Albanian, Serbian, and Danish) in order to work in primary sources. Translated sources are also a possibility.

**The Road to Division: Interstate Highways and the Politics of Place**  
*Professor Clayton Nall*

I am seeking a student to contribute to an ongoing project that examines the distributive politics of transportation projects in the United States in both historical and contemporary perspective.

Students will contribute in three ways. They will help me finish a geographic database of the construction and expansion of the US highway system from the 1920s to the present. Students will become geographic information system (GIS) experts as they convert historical paper maps from Stanford’s map collection into usable geospatial data that will be used in several research projects. They will help me collect and analyze contemporary transit data from American metropolitan areas. Finally, the project will involve primary-source research on congressional and state legislative debates over transportation policy and historical records and publications of interest groups concerned with the development of the American transportation system.

All students with an interest in the study of urban politics, transportation, geography, or American politics are encouraged to apply. While previous experience with GIS and some coursework in math or statistics would be appreciated, students will receive training in ArcGIS, R, government documents research, and other project-specific skills.

**The Soviet Union and Afghanistan**  
*Professor Rob Rakove*

Much is known of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, but relatively little is known about the longer history of Soviet-Afghan relations or the Cold War in Afghanistan. An undergraduate research assistant, fluent in Russian, with a deep interest in either Soviet history or contemporary Russian foreign policy, is sought for a summer research project. The research assistant will be asked to research, analyze, and translate Soviet records pertaining to Afghanistan. Our shared objective will be understanding the roots of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan during the Cold War, charting Moscow’s changing goals in and perceptions of the country, and—ultimately—grasping the deeper history of the 1979 invasion.
Race and Representation in St. Louis County, MO
Professor Jonathan Rodden

Political scientists have shown that when African Americans are a geographically concentrated minority in a community, they are more likely to be able to elect African American representatives under a system of single-member districts than under at-large forms of representation. This observation is at the heart of Section Two of the Voting Rights Act.

However, researchers have done very little to examine an increasingly common scenario in inner-ring and middle-ring suburbs of American cities, where African Americans are often geographically dispersed and make up half the population or more. In this setting, African American candidates might be better off under at-large electoral systems, while single-member districts favor white candidates.

St. Louis County, Missouri provides a natural experiment. By Missouri state statute, all school boards are elected through the same at-large electoral system. At the same time, the same people are represented in winner-take-all wards for city council and aldermanic elections. For each census block group in St. Louis County, we will explore whether African American candidates run, and whether they win, in both school board and city council elections, and how this is shaped by underlying demographic conditions. We will collect data based on records of the St. Louis County Board of Election Commissioners since the 1990s.

The SRC student will be responsible for collecting as much information as possible, including race, past experience, and education, for every candidate who has run for any school board or city council position in any of St. Louis County’s 90 municipalities. If time allows, we will extend the same approach to Kansas City, and search for additional U.S. cities that allow for similar natural experiments in representation.

The student will likely be working in collaboration with a counterpart at Washington University in St. Louis.

‘Atomic Aversion: Revisiting Hiroshima in Iran’ and ‘Nuclear Threats to Deter Chemical Attacks: Is there a Commitment Trap?’
Professor Scott Sagan

The summer research assistants will work as a team to help Professor Sagan draft a scholarly article about “Atomic Aversion.” The research assistants will a) review responses to a survey that was conducted in 2015 and analyze previous poll data, b) conduct background research, identify and report on literature on topics including U.S. wartime decision-making, the concept of “nuclear taboo,” and “reverse culpability,” and c) analyze how the public might weigh and interpret ethical considerations in decisions to support nuclear bombing.
Professor Sagan also seeks research support for follow-on work on “The Commitment Trap.” The research assistant will a) identify and review literature on “Commitment Trap” problems in experiments, including experimental evidence on audience costs with a focus on domestic political costs and international reputation costs, b) assist in coding and analyzing survey responses, for example by investigating why respondents in the survey preferred or approved of U.S. nuclear weapons use in response to a chemical weapons attack by the North Koreans in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) while others didn't, and whether domestic audience costs or international reputation concerns were highlighted, and if so, by whom?

No prior social science research experience is required, but students should have experience conducting research using Stanford libraries, web-based resources, and e-journals and preparing footnotes and bibliographies. Preference will be given to students who have taken POLISCI 1/101: Introduction to International Relations, POLSCI 114: International Security in a Changing World, MS&E 193: Technology and National Security, and/or Thinking Matters 19: Rules of War.

**Education Policy and Inequality**

**Professor Ken Scheve**

What causes countries to invest in primary, secondary, and higher education and what are the consequences of these investments for inequality? This research examines the political origins of education policies and their consequences for inequality. The data collection for the project includes collecting new measures of educational investments across 20 countries from 1800 to 2015 and across the 50 U.S. states over the same period. This position is for collecting data on investments in higher education in U.S. states and for writing selected case studies for the U.S. states on the historical evolution of higher education policies. Students with previous coursework in statistics, computer programming, and/or the political science data science sequence are particularly encouraged to apply.