

2023 SRC Project Descriptions

Depicting the Religious “Other” in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods

Professor Lisa Blaydes

This project will examine how people in historical Europe and the Middle East have characterized each other through time. While medieval Christian writers often represented Muslims as “Saracens” capable of violence and destruction, medieval Muslims described European Christians as barbarians, ignorant of even basic information regarding personal hygiene or medical science. That said, there was no single European response to Muslims in the Middle East; nor did Muslims characterize the people of Latin Christendom in a unified way. In this project, we will explore how characterizations of the religious “other” varied over time and space. To do this, we will engage in both qualitative and quantitative analysis of different types of historical texts, including political treatises, travelogues, religious documents, epic poems, and prose tales. Student researchers will be responsible for identifying and preparing texts for automated text analysis as well as researching background information about each text to understand the context in which it was created. We will undertake empirical analysis to identify patterns of continuity and change with regard to these cross-cultural portrayals. We are seeking students with a strong interest in history and familiarity with statistical analysis. Knowledge of Middle Eastern or European languages is a plus but not required.

Tracking and Disrupting Election Deniers

Professor Justin Grimmer

Increasingly, a motivated group of conspiracy theorists are spreading election fraud conspiracy theories in local public presentations and meetings with local election officials and election administrators. Over the past two years my research group has assessed these claims and we have shown that they are false. We have created some resources for local officials to help them understand why the claims are false (<https://electioninsights.org/>). This summer students working on this project will build a data set tracking where these conspiracy theorists have gone,

develop a strategy for informing elected officials about why the claims are false, and help implement research designs to improve communication with elected officials.

The Impact of Migration Policies and Interventions in the United States, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa

Professors Jens Hainmueller, David Laitin, and Jeremy Weinstein

We are seeking up to four students to assist in the Immigration Policy Lab's research on the impact of migration policies in the United States, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, and Africa. IPL has several projects underway, including a project examining the impact of state and local policies on immigrant intergenerational health in the U.S.; a multi-country project creating a new global dataset on national policies for refugees and asylum-seekers; a project examining how different refugee resettlement programs in the U.S. work; and a project examining the impact of climate adaptation and resilience interventions on migration in Latin America, the Middle East, and/or Africa. The research assistants will be responsible for developing and drafting literature reviews, data collection (quantitative and qualitative), data coding (of policies and interventions), data analysis, and producing journal-quality graphics and tables. Students will be fully welcomed into the Immigration Policy Lab for the summer, which includes weekly lab meetings with faculty, staff, and students to learn about IPL projects, along with a weekly reading group/speaker series, where they will read leading research on migration policy to learn about new methods and applications and to further explore their own individual interests. This is a great opportunity to experience working in a multidisciplinary applied policy research lab with multiple projects. Interest in migration is a must, and a background in social science and statistics is preferred.

Race and Identity in American Politics

Professor Hakeem Jefferson

Professor Jefferson is looking for one or two research assistants to support ongoing research efforts focused on race and identity. Research assistants will assist with a range of tasks, including helping find and synthesize various research articles for a review piece on stigma and politics. Additionally, and as time permits, students will assist in the development of surveys and experiments that focus on two other projects (1) a series of studies funded by the Russell Sage Foundation to try and mitigate the racial divide in Americans' reactions to police shootings of Black Americans and (2) research focused on ingroup policing and the politics of respectability. Ideal candidates have an interest in questions related to race and identity, can work independently, have familiarity with reading academic articles, and are proficient users of Qualtrics and related software.

Impacts of Climate Change on Political Behavior and Institutions

Professor Amanda Kennard

Voters around the world are facing unprecedented disruption to their lives and livelihoods as a result of increasing climate volatility. These challenges—including new exposure to disease, droughts, and resource scarcity—will translate into greater pressures being brought to bear on political institutions. Yet there have been few systematic attempts to evaluate how these pressures will influence governance outcomes or the nature of political institutions themselves. This project seeks to evaluate the impact of climate on political behavior and institutions. Successful candidates should have an interest in the politics of climate change and strong communication skills. Research assistants will be responsible for data collection (quantitative and qualitative), data cleaning, analysis, drafting literature reviews, and producing data visualizations. Experience with quantitative data, R, python, or GIS are valued, but not required.

American Public Opinion on Climate Change

Professor Jon Krosnick

This summer will continue a project of the Political Psychology Research Group exploring American public opinion on climate change. We have built a website reporting our findings from 25 years of surveys (climatepublicopinion.stanford.edu). Other research groups have produced different findings, possibly because of differences in question wording. This summer, we will conduct online survey experiments to test the effects of question wordings and see whether they can explain differences in prior results. Undergraduates on the PPRG team will be involved in all stages of this work: study design, questionnaire programming, questionnaire testing, data collection, data cleaning, data analysis, report writing, and coding the website to present the findings. Experience with social science data collection and statistics will equip students to play more of leadership roles in the project. Our goal is to produce publishable articles in professional journals.

Entrepreneurship and Political Ideology

Professor Neil Malhotra

Professor Neil Malhotra (of the Stanford Graduate School of Business and a courtesy professor in the political science department) is looking to hire a research assistant to support a project on the relationship between entrepreneurship and political ideology. One trend in American politics is that business owners, both large and small, are increasingly identifying as Republicans and conservatives. This study will investigate the reasons underlying the changing relationship between occupational class and political identification. Students will be involved in data collection, data analysis, literature review, and research design. Although previous experience with data analysis is preferred, it is not required. Applicants should have familiarity with basic computer software (e.g., Excel). Diligence and attention to detail are important components of the job. This project is an especially good fit for students interested in business and politics.

Hiding in Plain Sight: How China Became a Great Power

Professor Oriana Mastro

Professor Oriana Mastro is seeking two full-time research assistants with first-rate analytical capabilities and outstanding academic credentials. The RA will work directly with Professor Mastro on a portfolio of research, teaching, and public policy activities on China military and security policy. Activities include conducting literature reviews, revising and editing documents, and providing inputs to projects on Chinese strategic thinking regarding foreign policy, military, economic and tech competition. An interest in IR theory and experience working on policy-relevant research are preferred but not required. Chinese language abilities a plus, but not required. Additional important skills include professionalism, self-motivation, and organization.

21st Century Great Power Relations and Competition between Russia, China, and the United States

Professor Michael McFaul

Professor Michael McFaul is looking to hire a student research assistant to support a book project about great power relations and competition between China, Russia, and the United States. The research assistant should be prepared to work both individually and collaboratively with Professor McFaul's Research Assistants on thematic and historical chapters that discuss themes such as power, ideology, multilateralism, and interdependence in the 21st century. Previous research experience, fluency in Russian or Chinese, and demonstrated interest in Russia or China are preferred.

Stalin's Terror, 1930-1953

Professor Norman M. Naimark

The project examines the dramatic period of Stalin's terror in the 1930s. Students with a reading knowledge of Russian and/or Ukrainian will be given preference, but there is much English-language material to be examined, as well. The final product will be a comprehensive book on the subject.

Keeping Women Working: Strategies to Reinforce Women's Retention in the Indian Labor Force

Professor Soledad Prillaman

Female labor force participation in India has been declining for several years, but few researchers have analyzed the barriers faced by women who have already entered the labor force. Where and when do Indian women drop out of the labor force, and how can we support women's labor force retention? This project will evaluate the potential of an informational intervention targeting employers across a variety of industries to improve employment outcomes for women.

Undergraduate research assistants will help with the facilitation of the informational intervention and the analysis of large-scale administrative data on the correlates of women's employment. Core responsibilities will include cleaning large data sets, merging complex data sets, generating figures and graphics of statistical relationships, conducting preliminary statistical analyses, and literature reviews. Experience working in Stata or R is preferable. By the end of the summer, we will aim to have a better understanding of the best strategies for supporting Indian women's labor force retention.

Calculated Ambiguity and the Ethics of Nuclear Deterrence

Professor Scott Sagan

International law categorically prohibits the intentional targeting of civilians and civilian objects. Yet, despite the US claiming that it will apply the law of armed conflict (LOAC) to all nuclear operations, different U.S. officials have interpreted that commitment in different ways, and it is not clear how other nuclear states interpret their legal commitments regarding nuclear weapons. One area of particular concern is calculated ambiguity. States may ambiguously threaten the use of nuclear weapons in response to the use of non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Are these threats effective at deterrence, and are they ethical?

Professor Sagan will be researching these questions, with a particular focus on calculated ambiguity in the case of the First Gulf War in 1991 and regarding the USSR during the Cold War. Students will be responsible for reading and analyzing past literature, government documents, and negotiation records in support of Professor Sagan's writing. Students will provide their analysis to Professor Sagan in the form of a series of short research memos. Professor Sagan will meet with students once or twice a week, providing feedback on students' research and writing. Students with interest and experience in studying international security, nuclear weapons and/or the Law of Armed Conflict should apply. Students may find classes like Rules of War or PS 114S helpful in providing a background to the issues studied, but these are not strictly necessary.

Gaslighting: Comment Moderation on Chinese Social Media

Professor Yiqing Xu

We will study comment section control by government-affiliated accounts on Sina Weibo, a popular social media platform in China. Using a unique high-frequency dataset and two survey experiments, we will attempt to answer three questions: First, why and when do government-affiliated accounts choose to censor their comment sections? Second, what are the causal effects of comment section censorship on user engagement? Third, how does comment section censorship shape public opinion toward government policies? Students will perform various data management & analytical tasks, e.g. using machine learning tools to predict

comment moderation/censorship; describing patterns of comment moderation; and conducting quantitative case studies on particular events. The ideal applicant would be proficient in Python or R; have taken extensive classes in machine learning & programming; be familiar with at least one deep learning pipeline; and/or read Chinese and be interested in Chinese politics.