



Undergraduate Research Assistantship

In Michaelmas 2017, The US Centre launched the Undergraduate Research Assistantship programme as a way of encouraging US related interdisciplinary research collaborations between academics and undergraduate students at LSE. The programme was an opportunity for students to involve themselves directly in internationally oriented scholarship on America's changing role in the world.

The Research Projects

Return to Mercantilism

Faculty: James Morrison, International Relations
Research Assistant: Olivia Horn

This project looked to rethink mercantilism using the political and economic work of John Locke, to assess that theory in light of modern developments in political economy, and to explain the return to mercantilism (particularly in the United States) today.

US State Level Partisanship and Political Blogging

Faculty: Peter Trubowitz, International Relations
Research Assistants: James Sanders and Gabriel Chua

This project explores the connection between state political blogging and, among other variables, state-level partisanship. Using text mining, Gabriel and James have been investigating the 'language' of state-based political blogs on the left/right spectrum and then examining how this data is linked with other characteristics of important states.

Funding

The 2017-18 programme has been generously funded by LSE alumnus Stefan Guetter (Msc Accounting and Finance 1995, and Executive Summer School 2010). Mr Guetter outlined his motivation for donating to the programme:

"My gift is supporting the provision of internships for undergraduate students, enabling them to work with faculty on professional research programmes that emanate from the Centre. I thought it was a very good idea as it provides a different academic challenge that would otherwise be undertaken in undergraduate study."



"The programme expanded my skills in a way that my other work experience could not." Olivia



"It's a great opportunity to learn and study alongside faculty." James

Benefits and Opportunities of the Programme

"The programme has given me a unique opportunity to work with staff outside of my department." Gabriel



Student Recommendations

The programme has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from our students. When asked if they would recommend the experience, one student commented: "it's a great opportunity to learn and study alongside faculty. Even beyond that, it is great experience to have on your CV if you want to pursue a career in research or continue to post-graduate study."

Wider Impact for Students

Along with helping to shape their time at LSE, the assistantship is having a positive impact on their future. Two of the students are starting graduate jobs in September, in financial PR and at the Bank of England, while the third student is beginning postgraduate study at MIT. Students felt that the programme equipped them with both research and soft skills that would help them thrive in the workplace and in further education once they had left LSE.

"Every interview I went to, they all commented on my research assistantship. It was definitely something that stood out on my CV." Olivia

Impact on Learning Experience

Students were given the opportunity to engage with world class academics and develop advanced research skills. Students said they felt more confident as researchers and subsequently better equipped to navigate the research process. Students felt encouraged to engage more deeply with their own department and their fields of study. One student commented: "this programme helped me and others like me to get a taste of research and hopefully ignite an interest which could change people's aspirations for the future."

Running the Programme Again

The success of the programme for both the students and the centre would not have been possible without the generosity of Mr Guetter. Olivia Horn, Research Assistant said: "... this research assistantship made me feel part of a community. This is invaluable." Students praised the rare opportunity the programme afforded undergraduates to be able to engage in research with faculty members, demonstrating the uniqueness of the assistantship in the school. Running the programme again would enable a second cohort of students to receive the chance to collaborate on meaningful projects with academics which would greatly benefit them in the future.

