

Department of Political Science

Junior Fellows Program

Overview

Course Objective

The conduct of research and the profession of political science are somewhat of a mystery even to advanced and highly-qualified undergraduate students, regardless of their participation in the Honors Program or the University Scholar Programs. The Junior Fellows Program rectifies this neglected area by providing meaningful research experience, insight into the profession of Political Science, and the ability to work closely with a faculty member or an advanced (ABD) graduate student. The program is designed for advanced juniors and seniors wishing to gain the experience that will prepare them to succeed in their senior thesis work and stand out as they apply for research opportunities and advanced degrees. Junior Fellows will have a hands-on experience with the innovative research performed at the Department of Political Science and gain valuable professional insight by working closely with their supervisor on a weekly-basis, attending a seminar series exploring the diversity of methods and approaches, and participating in a capstone research presentation workshop.

Course Credit

Students will register for a 2-3 credit special topics undergraduate course depending on the weekly hours required, as determined by the supervising professor/graduate student. Supervisors are responsible for identifying the weekly research requirements of their project ahead of time and ensuring Junior Fellows do not go over their hourly requirements. No undergraduate will be paired with a project requiring more weekly hours than they are available. If a project requires a front-loading or back-loading of research hours, approval must be acquired from the Program Director and coordinated with the Junior Fellow to ensure their schedule fits the projects requirements. It is the equal responsibility of the Junior Fellow and Supervisor to keep track of the research hours conducted.

2 credit course will carry 6 weekly hours

3 credit course will carry 9 weekly hours

* hours include research, weekly meetings with supervisor, and seminar series.

Matching of Junior Fellows with Supervisors

Faculty and advanced graduate students (ABD) are encouraged to identify and recruit prospective Junior Fellows from their own classroom experiences, or voice their interest in working with a Junior Fellow by providing the Program Director with an open pool request form or a one-page research prospectus detailing the field and topic of research, the time commitment and desired expertise of the Junior Fellow, and a brief statement of how they feel their research project would benefit the professional development of the Junior Fellow. The Program Director will assign Junior Fellows according to Faculty nominations and the needs of the projects, but not all projects or Junior Fellows are guaranteed to be matched unless nominated directly by a faculty member. Junior Fellow applicants from the open pool will be chosen and assigned based on merit and fit with the research projects available that semester. These assignments are based strictly on a competitive basis and the needs of the Department - not every student is guaranteed to be matched.

Supervision of Undergraduate Students

Faculty or graduate student supervisors will meet weekly to discuss research objectives, assign tasks, and maintain progress. The initial meeting should serve as an introduction of the research question, the methodological approaches used and the rationale behind them, and the project expectations. Subsequent meetings should focus in developing the research and the Junior Fellow by mentoring the conduct of research and tracking the progress made. It is the expectation of the Junior Fellows program that supervisors will teach and mentor their Junior Fellows in the conduct of research and professional development to prepare them for future research opportunities and advanced degrees.

Faculty Supervision of Graduate Students

Graduate student researchers will require their dissertation chair to approve and supervise the involvement of the undergraduate Junior Fellow. While the advanced graduate student is responsible for the weekly progress of both the research and Junior Fellow, the dissertation chair will be responsible for submitting the progress reports (see below) on behalf of the graduate student.

Progress Reports

Junior Fellows and their supervisors must submit a progress report halfway through the semester and another at the end of each semester evaluating the collaboration between supervisor and Junior Fellow, the research progress made, and the overall scope of the program. Progress reports will be used towards calculating the final grade.

Seminar Series

All students enrolled, regardless of credit hours, must attend the initial introductory seminar, three special topic presentations (Departmental RSPs, Graham Center guest speakers, or similar events), and the capstone research presentation seminar workshop at the end of the semester. The first half of the introductory seminar will bring in a diverse group of scholars to discuss the origins of their research agenda, their own entrance into the discipline, and the reasons why they decided to pursue their particular career path. The second half of the introductory seminar will serve as a professional introduction to the wide variety of method and the diversity in ways on knowing. Beyond this initial introduction, students must attend three special topic presentation of their choice and write a one-page, single-spaced critical summary of each of the three presentations (due to the program director no later than one week after attending the event). Seminar attendance and summaries will be used towards calculating the final grade.

Research Presentation Workshop

The final research presentation workshop serves as a capstone experience preparing Junior Fellows to be able to understand their own research agendas, synthesize their research for an audience, and receive feedback in a professional setting. Junior Fellows will present the research they have undertaken over the semester with the guidance of their supervisor and will present it as their own project. Research presentations will be used toward calculating the final grade.

Grading

50% of the final grade will derive from the research progress report submitted by the faculty supervisor.

30% of the final grade will derive from participation in the initial seminar and the three critical summaries of the special topics presentations.

20% of the final grade will derive from the presentation during the final research presentation workshop.