



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY REU SUMMER PROGRAM IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Accountability, Behavior, and Conflict in
Democratic Politics (ABCD)



THREE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

1. What does a PhD in political science entail?
2. How do you prepare for graduate school?
3. What is the ABCD REU summer program (Vanderbilt University) and how does it help prepare you?



WHAT IS A PHD IN POLITICAL SCIENCE?



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WHAT IS POLITICAL SCIENCE?

- Political science is the study of government, political actors, and systems of power

THREE AREAS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

American politics: The study of American institutions (e.g., Congress, the courts, the presidency), the behavior and opinions of the American public, and their interactions.

Comparative politics: The comparative analysis of political institutions, actors, and outcomes, typically with a focus outside the US.

International relations: The study of the relations of countries with each other and with international organizations and certain subnational entities (e.g., bureaucracies, political parties, and interest groups).

WHAT IS A PHD IN POLITICAL SCIENCE?

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Training to conduct research and teach in political science
- Develop theories to answer questions in political science
- Test theories through systematic analysis (e.g., case studies, interviews, data collection, and quantitative analysis)

HOW DO I GET A PHD IN POLITICAL SCIENCE?

- 5 to 6 year doctoral program in political science
- Tuition is fully funded, with living stipend provided*
- Teaching and research assistant requirement
- Bachelor's degree required; Master's degree not required
- 2 to 3 years of coursework in substantive areas and methodological areas (w/ comprehensive exam)
- Generate a capstone project (dissertation)

EXAMPLES OF COURSES

- Research Design
- Political Institutions
- Race and Racism in Politics
- Political Parties
- Political Behavior
- Conflict and Violence
- Human Rights
- Statistics, Surveys, Experiments, Field Research, Game Theory

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A PHD IN POLITICAL SCIENCE?

- Professor at college or university
- Government agency (e.g., State Department, Congressional Research Service)
- Think tanks (e.g., Brookings Institute)
- Survey firm (e.g., PEW, Gallup Poll)
- Non-profit organizations
- Political consulting
- International development, organizations, NGOs
- Other private industry jobs (e.g., Meta, Amazon Research)



HOW CAN YOU PREPARE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL ?



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WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO A PHD PROGRAM?

- Bachelor's degree in any major
- Statement of purpose
- Resume
- Transcript
- Sometimes GRE scores
- Letters of recommendation from faculty
- Writing sample

WHAT ARE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEES LOOKING FOR?

- Passion for **research** in political science
- Connection between student interests and faculty expertise
- Experience conducting research
- Capacity for comparative analysis of evidence
- Potential to thrive in PhD program

PREPARING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

- Course prep
 - Substantive courses on political science topics
 - Methods courses – e.g., statistics, game theory, programming
 - Summer programs (e.g., ICPSR, Spelman College’s INSPIRE U2, Bunche Institute, REUs)
- Conduct research projects
- Work/volunteer in political-adjacent or research organizations
- Attend research conferences

REUs provide lots of these opportunities!

WHAT IS AN REU?

- Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)
- Programs for undergrads to actively participate in independent and collaborative research projects
- Students receive training to develop research skills
- Funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF)
- Different REU programs focus on different types of research



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PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Provide **mentored research experiences** in political science to a diverse group of students
2. **Build students' interest and skills** in developing, interpreting, and communicating political science research
3. **Prepare and support** students pursuing **research-oriented** careers

THE ABC'S OF ABCD

- 8-week summer program at Vanderbilt University, Political Science Department
- June 5 – July 28, 2023
- Travel to Nashville, housing, and living stipend funded
- Students paired with faculty mentors to:
 - ✓ Produce independent research projects
 - ✓ Work on faculty projects as research assistants



FOUR RESEARCH AREAS

1. Conflict and Cooperation: Why do governments use violence to get what they want, against other countries or their own people?
2. Regime Legitimacy in Latin America: What shapes Latin American citizens' experiences, evaluations, and system preferences?
3. The American Public and Electoral Accountability: What is the role of the public in effective and responsive democracy?
4. Effective Institutions in the United States: What are the causes and consequences of effective US political institutions (legislatures, executives, bureaucracies, courts)?

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Weekly skills-based seminars on:
 - ✓ Research design
 - ✓ Scientific inference
 - ✓ Statistical analysis and programming
 - ✓ Reading groups on political science research articles

WHAT YOU'LL EXPERIENCE

- Develop your own research project
- Collaborate on a faculty research project
- Weekly opportunities for professional development:
 - ✓ Career panels with social science PhDs
 - ✓ Dinners with faculty mentors and panelists
 - ✓ Professionalization and research communication seminars
 - ✓ Research groups with peers and graduate student mentors

THE WHO'S WHO OF ABCD

- Co-directors: Professors Ritter, Thrower, & Zechmeister
- Mentors: Professors Bartels, Hiskey, Ritter, Sides, & Zechmeister
- Research centers: ROCCA, LAPOP, RIPS, CSDI
- Graduate student mentors
- Small group of undergraduate student participants
- Individuals at partner institutions

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN

- Social science research and communication skills
- Poster presentation of research
- Support for presentation at a political science conference
- Foundations of a writing sample for future applications
- Guidance in applying to and succeeding in graduate school or research-oriented careers
- Networks with peers, faculty, and other professionals
- Continued mentorship beyond end of program

WHO CAN APPLY?

- US citizens, US nationals, or permanent residents
- Current undergraduates (excluding graduating seniors)
- No research experience required
- Interest in political science and research-related career
- Students of all backgrounds!

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

- Application materials:
 - Indicate research area
 - Short essay questions on motivation, goals, and preparedness
 - Unofficial transcript
 - Resume
 - Writing sample
 - Two letters of recommendation
- Online application: <https://lab.vanderbilt.edu/political-science-reu/application/>
- Deadline: February 6, 2023
- Decision by end of March



**WHAT DO YOU
WANT TO KNOW ?**



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