



# DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

## **GVPT Research Assistant Program – Fall 2026**

The Government and Politics Research Assistant program provides students with an opportunity to develop their research, analytical, writing and presentation skills. Students accepted as Research Assistants (RAs) are paired with a GVPT faculty member whom they will work with throughout the semester. There are two components to the RA position. The first is assisting with the faculty member's research, which can involve a number of activities including collecting data, coding data, and compiling and summarizing literature reviews. The second is developing your own unique research project under the direction and guidance of the faculty member. At the end of the semester each RA will give a presentation on their project.

In exchange for their work throughout the semester—both for the faculty member and on their own project—the RAs enroll in an independent study course and receive three upper-level credit hours of experiential learning which can count towards GVPT and IR major requirements under the GVPT departmental experiential learning policy. Please review the experiential learning policy on our website to determine how this course may apply for you.

The GVPT RA Program is capped at 5 students. This ensures that each student will have the individualized attention needed to succeed in the program. It is recommended that students have a sponsoring faculty before applying, but it is not required.

### Requirements

- Declared Government & Politics or International Relations major
- Strong interest in researching issues related to political science/international relations
- A desire to gain and improve research skills
- Successful completion of GVPT201
- Minimum 60 credit hours completed
- Minimum 3.3 cumulative GPA
- A completed research assistant program contract, signed by your faculty mentor before the end of the Schedule Adjustment period (*not due at time of application*)

### Benefits

- Receive training by a GVPT graduate student on the basics of how to conduct research, analyze data, use statistical programs and run basic statistics (descriptive, crosstabs, bivariate correlations, etc.)
- Work one-on-one with a faculty member and assist with their ongoing research
- Strengthen your research, writing, and presentation skills by conducting your own research project and presenting your findings to faculty and other guests at an end of semester symposium
- Improve job prospects and/or graduate school applications by developing your research and analytical skills
- Earn upper-level GVPT course credit (experiential learning)
- Network with other undergraduate students doing similar work

## Time Commitment

- Students are expected to spend 10 hours per week doing research. The hours are split evenly with 5 hours spent doing work on the faculty member's research and 5 hours of work on your own research project. You should discuss how this time will be allocated with your faculty member.
- One hour per week will be reserved for a classroom component where a GVPT graduate student will train you on research skills and provide guidance on your project. This component switches every other week between a traditional classroom setting and individual meetings. This classroom component is mandatory and your participation and attendance will be a factor in your final grade for the course. The dates and times of the classroom component will be determined once the next RA cohort has been selected.
- You are also expected to meet regularly with your sponsoring faculty member.

## Application Materials

- A cover letter answering the following prompts:
  - Why you are interested in the research assistant program and what you hope to gain from the experience.
  - If selected for the RA program, which political science/international relations topic you intend to research and why.
  - If you have a specific faculty member with whom you would like to work.
    - *Note: You do not need to have secured faculty sponsorship to apply to this program, but if you've previously discussed participating in this program with a faculty member and they've agreed to work with you, please specifically note that in your cover letter. If you do not have faculty sponsorship, we encourage you to review the faculty page on the GVPT website to identify faculty who may fit your research topic.*
  - Please include your UID, full name, and class standing at the beginning of your cover letter. Strong cover letters are typically two pages, double-spaced, and should highlight your familiarity with your proposed research topic as well as your personal motivations for pursuing the project. You should be able to speak to the research methods you hope to utilize.
- A one-page resume detailing educational and employment background that highlights courses and other experiences relevant to conducting research in political science.
- A writing sample (ideally a writing assignment for a GVPT course that best shows your writing skills and familiarity with your research topic).

## Deadline

The application deadline is **Sunday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at midnight.**

Please submit application materials to [GVPTAdvising@umd.edu](mailto:GVPTAdvising@umd.edu) (email subject "Your first and last name: GVPT URA Program Application"). The application materials can be separate pdf files (label with your first and last name) or combined into a single pdf file.

Students with successful applications will be contacted for an interview. An interview is not a guarantee of acceptance. Students will be notified about the result of their application to the program via email.