

Engaging in Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities

Scholarly Research in the Arts & Humanities

According to Diana Hacker, author of [Research and Documentation Online](#), research in the arts and humanities “generally involves interpreting a text or a work of art within a historical and cultural context, making connections, exploring meaning, or uncovering contradictions.”¹ At the University of Washington, undergraduates doing research in the arts and humanities often work to develop their own original ideas.² In the creative arts the artistic process and research are often considered the same.³ If you are creating an artistic work, you are already doing a type of research!

Below are examples of research projects that UW students have done in the arts and humanities. These are actual project titles from students awarded Mary Gates Research Scholarships and should give you a starting point for thinking about the areas of research you might pursue.

Art

- Creating a documentary of land art
- Investigating a small hand-weaving business in Nepal and (its) impact on the health of the local community in conjunction with a commissioned artwork

Classics

- Independent research on Roman Law
- Eighteenth-century programmatic symphonies and their cultural meanings

Comparative Literature & Cinema Studies

- Studying Spanish surrealism and the production of a surrealist inspired film
- An analysis of one woman’s relationships by studying her in film
- The cultural history of cinema and its relation to industry

Drama

- New training methods that are aimed at improving actors’ body, voice and imagination
- Translating the novel *L’amante anglaise* by Marguerite Duras following dramaturgical methodology

English

- How poetry developed at the beginning of the 20th century and poetry’s contemporary relevance
- Tracing the discourse of the ‘Modern Girl’ in the US circa 1918-1930
- The life and work of poet, artist, and designer Mina Loy and her influence on literary modernism

History

- Research on the history of Wapato, WA from the 1970-present, focusing on the issue of city identity after the fall out of economic stagnation, ‘white flight’ and the Latino population boom
- The role symbolism in monuments plays in creating a national memory of the Holocaust in the United States and the Netherlands

Linguistics

- Using event related functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) techniques to identify language cortex
- Interviewing Native Tribes in the Northwest about their language programs and what they are doing to preserve their languages

¹ <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities.html>

² Beyer, J. (2003) 2002 UW Undergraduate Research Study. Unpublished research.

³ Ibid.

Music

- Discovering hierarchical structure in Bach

Scholarly Research in the Social Sciences

Research in the social sciences often requires social scientists to “interpret and analyze human behavior, generally using empirical methods of research,” according to Diana Hacker, author of Research and Documentation Online.⁴ At the University of Washington, undergraduates pursuing research in the social sciences may assist faculty with their research projects or work on a research idea the student comes up with on her/his own.⁵ Regardless of whether the research is initiated by a faculty member or the student, faculty will often advise students throughout the research process—helping them with their research question, methodology, analysis, and presentation of results.

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Anthropology

- Return to The Gambia, West Africa, to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on clandestine emigration
- A study on the messages conveyed to Native American students about further education and the correlation between that and the rate of Native American enrollment in higher education
- Pressures, values and coping methods among emergency medical technicians

American Ethnic Studies

- Researching how domestic violence serves as a path that leads to the feminization of poverty, and its effect on black women
- Creating a new database of information regarding the victims of lynching during the post-Reconstruction era in Southern United States to better understand domestic race relations

Economics

- Analysis of the Income Tax: Does the Tax Structure Determine State Expenditure Levels?
- An analysis of the effects of state tax progressivity on access to four-year postsecondary institutions

Geography

- The networking abilities of incoming Somali refugees and evaluation of how this networking relates to Somali refugees' housing situation
- Assessing the lives of children in Washington and Oregon through the Pacific Northwest Rural Communities Project

International Studies

- How fuel wood consumption of the Lianshan Yi minority of Sichuan province in China affects ecological sustainability
- Investigating the viability of introducing private sector participation in an urban water system in Cochabamaba, Bolivia

Social Work

- The effect that ethnic identity has on academic outcomes, using data from the UW Social Development Research Group
- Social support for biracial individuals and interracial families and their self-identity

Sociology

- The effects of minimum competency testing on drop out rates
- The relationship between social norms, alcohol consumption and the effect of web-based interventions on binge drinking college freshmen

⁴ <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/social.html>

⁵ Beyer, J. (2003) 2002 UW Undergraduate Research Study. Unpublished research.

Women Studies

- Micro-credit programs in India as economic development policy that is directed toward women

Resources for Undergraduates Interested in Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities Research

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAM

<http://www.washington.edu/research/urp/>

The Undergraduate Research Program (URP) supports research experiences for undergraduates with UW faculty member across disciplines. URP assists UW undergraduates by helping students: plan for an undergraduate research experience; identify faculty mentors and projects; define her/his research goals; present and publish her/his research findings; and find funding for her/his research costs.

Below are just a few services that the Undergraduate Research Program offers.

Undergraduate Research Information Sessions & Individual Research Advising

<http://www.washington.edu/research/urp/courses/infosessions.html>

Drop by MGH 120 or email urp@u.washington.edu to set up an individual research advising appointment.

Information sessions help undergraduate students from all disciplines identify and pursue his or her research interests. Additionally, you may also receive individual research advising. During your research advising appointment, you may also get help applying for research positions, including writing a resume and cover letter and information about how to communicate with potential research mentors.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Database

<http://webapps.ued.washington.edu/opportunities/Opportunities.aspx>

Search the Undergraduate Research Program (URP) database of current undergraduate research opportunities. Search research opportunities by your discipline!

Research Exposed! (GEN ST 391)

<http://www.washington.edu/research/urp/courses/researchexposed/index.html>

This 1-credit seminar offers you the opportunity to learn about current, exciting research in a wide variety of disciplines, including the process of discovery, how faculty come up with an idea for research, how inquiry is structured in the different disciplines, and how students can become involved in research.

Summer Institute in the Arts and Humanities

<http://www.washington.edu/research/urp/sinst/>

Learn more about research in the humanities while earning full-time academic credit during the summer. The Summer Institute fosters undergraduate research by providing students with intensive study and an environment where students may pursue their own scholarly work. Participants are selected through an open, competitive application process and are provided a scholarship to participate.

DEPARTMENTAL RESOURCES

Check with your department to see if they offer research methods courses that could help you with your research idea. You might also meet with an advisor from your department to ask for any other resources or forms of support the department that would help you in any stage of your research.

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS PROGRAMS

Many departments encourage students to do research and write a final paper as part of their departmental honors requirements. You may choose to do research with the guidance of your departmental honors program that goes beyond the department's expectations and be eligible for a Mary Gates Research Scholarship.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/>

The UW Libraries offer various resources to help students with their research, among them research databases, and electronic journals. Also, librarians are available to speak with you about a research question via email, chat, phone or in-person 24/7 (click on “Ask Us” on their main page for contact information).

Additionally, the University of Washington libraries offer the following resources:

Subject Librarians

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/librarians/>

Subject librarians have specialties and in-depth knowledge of certain fields. Students may meet with a librarian who specializes in their research field receive guidance on the research tools and methods of their discipline.

Free Workshops Addressing Various Research Topics

These free workshops open to all UW undergraduates address topics as varied as how to cite your sources correctly, improve your information searching methods, and find the resources you need within the huge network of UW libraries.

Online Research 101 tutorial

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/uwill/research101/>

Want an introduction to research skills, like how to select a topic and search for, find and evaluate sources? Learn the skills to help you improve *how* you research by visiting this online tutorial.

CREDIT FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ABROAD

<http://www.ipe.washington.edu/forms/IndependentResearchPacket.pdf>

Do research abroad of your own design under the direction of a UW faculty member. Earn UW credit while you do!

UW PROFESSORS

Use your professors as a resource. Interested in what you’re discussing in class? Meet with your professor during office hours or schedule an appointment. Beforehand, consider learning more about the type of research your professor specializes in to see if it relates to an area you’re interested in researching yourself.* If so, ask your professor if they or someone they know could use a research assistant. Bring your resume and clearly articulate your skills and interests when you meet.

MARY GATES ENDOWMENT RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

<http://www.washington.edu/uaa/mge/>

Get paid \$4,000 to \$6,000 for your research with a Mary Gates Research Scholarship! Full-time UW undergraduates doing research in any discipline may apply autumn or winter quarter of every year.

And lastly... a Reminder about the Human Subjects Division

If you are doing work that involves research and people AND there is the *possibility* that you will use any part of the research in future publications, you will need to receive approval from the Human Subjects Division (USD) at the University of Washington. Schedule an appointment with an Undergraduate Research Program staff member at urp@u.washington.edu and visit <http://www.washington.edu/research/hsd/index.php> for more information.

* Often, your professor’s department will have more information about the activities and research your professors have been involved in. Department homepages generally post professors’ CVs, website URLs, and/or brief summaries of professors and their work. If you still can’t find it, you may try searching the UW homepage.