

Research at CSSH

A student guide to research in the social sciences and humanities — how you can find answers to real questions about society, culture, politics, and ethics. Students conduct research at every stage of their degree. No prior experience is needed to begin.

1 — What is research?

Definition, methods & approaches, and student examples

2 — Find an opportunity

Courses, centers & institutes, and co-ops

3 — Share your work

Present, publish, and make your findings known

4 — Deadlines and support

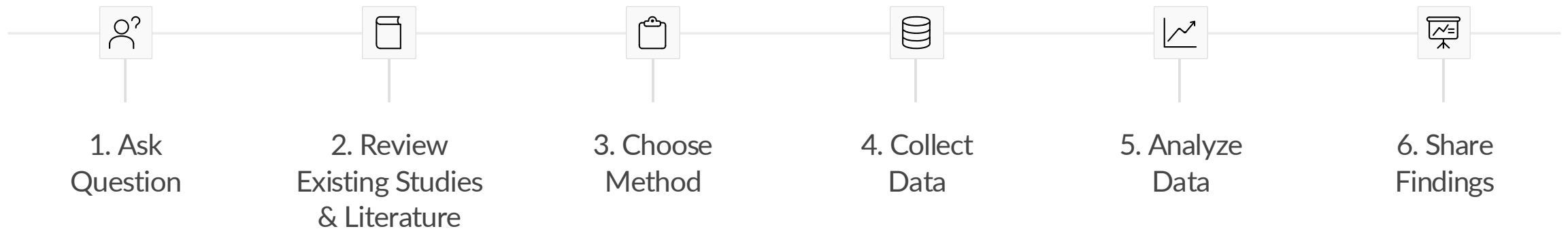
Key dates, funding, and who can guide you to meet your goals



PART 1

What Is Research?

Research is a systematic process for creating new knowledge — discovering something not yet known, answering a new question, building a new model, or combining existing ideas in a new way. Research also involves revisiting what is already known, whether by reviewing the existing literature, replicating earlier studies, or re-examining familiar sources and data from a new angle.



Research builds skills that graduate programs and employers value: framing questions, building a theoretical framework, writing a literature review, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up and presenting results to multiple audiences.

Turning an Idea into a Good Question

Ideas come from classes, co-op, service, clubs/orgs, and everyday curiosity. A strong research question says what your project will discover, create, or invent. Test yours with four checks:

Answerable

- ☐ Can it be answered with facts or evidence you can actually find or gather?

Unbiased and Open-ended

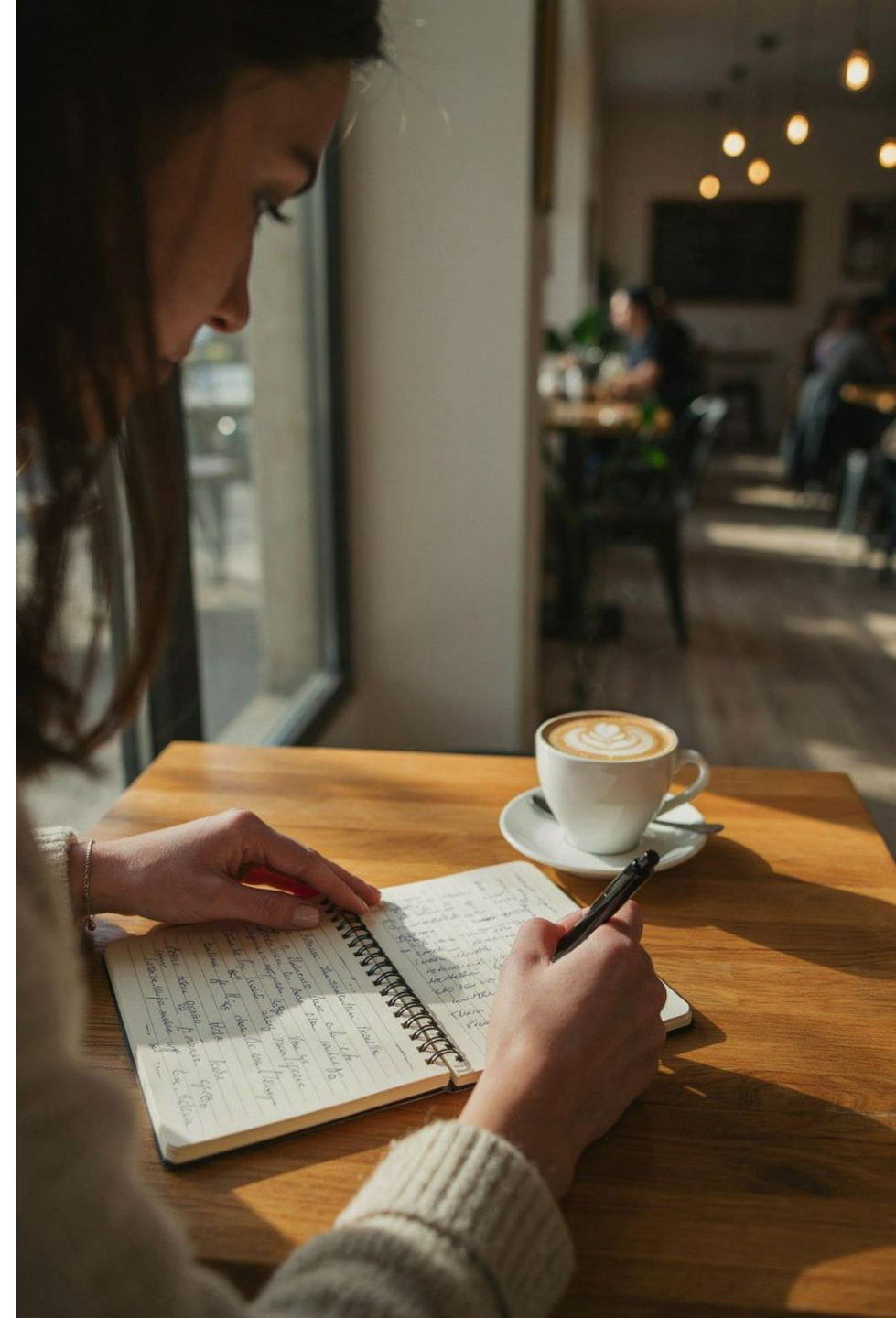
- ☐ Does it avoid assumptions that point toward one particular result?

Significant

- ☐ Is it filling a gap in the scholarship or the policy conversation, for example?

Not Obvious

- ☐ Do you already know the answer or is there something to explore?

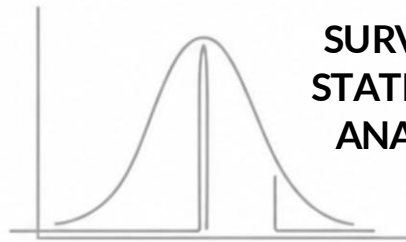


Methods & Approaches

CSSH faculty and students use many research methods, and most projects combine more than one.



EXPERIMENTS



**SURVEYS &
STATISTICAL
ANALYSIS**



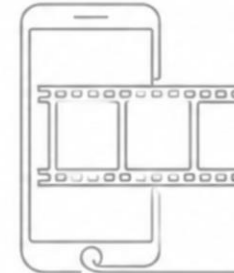
INTERVIEWS



**ETHNOGRAPHY,
FIELDWORK, &
COMMUNITY-
ENGAGED**



**ARCHIVAL &
HISTORICAL
RESEARCH**



**TEXTUAL &
MEDIA
ANALYSIS**



**DIGITAL &
COMPUTATIONAL
METHODS**



**ETHICAL &
PHILOSOPHICAL
ANALYSIS**



**POLICY &
EVALUATION
RESEARCH**

Student Research in Action

Examples of real projects by CSSH students across the social sciences and humanities.

English

**Stylometry-based Analysis of
Potential Louisa May Alcott
Pseudonyms**

Connor Brown

Political Science & Economics

**Employment Impacts of
CHIPS and the IRA: A
Preliminary Evaluation**

Edmund Lowney

Criminal Justice

**Prescription Oversight:
Mandatory Drug Monitoring
and Intimate Partner Violence**

Dylan Black

Cultural Anthropology & Economics

**Financing Loss & Damage: A
Virtual Ethnography of a New
Global Fund**

Abigail Malmud

Urban Studies

**Democratizing Vacant Public Lots and Native Planting as a Strategy
to Combat Climate Change in Boston**

Janaki Mehta

Spanish & Sexuality Studies

**Developing a Spanish-language Homosaurus: Using Multi-language
Linked Data to Enhance LGBTQ+ Resource Discoverability**

Sophia Zamora Morales

Student Research in Action, Continued

More examples of real projects by CSSH students across the social sciences and humanities.

Philosophy & Religious Studies

The Ethics of Religious Borrowing

Elizabeth Thorne

Africana Studies & History

**The Cotton Chronicles:
Enslavement, Pain, and Global Perceptions, 1650-1850**

Shanthi Hegde

Asian Studies & Economics

The Breached "Bamboo Curtain": The PRC's Interaction with the Global Economy

Jingyang Zou

International Affairs

Wrecked by Corruption: The 2023 Tembi Train Crash and Greece's Institutional Failures

Maria Theoharis

Human Services

Engaging Communities Through Play: Evaluation of London Play's Go-Kart Program

Emma Lapena, Finn Seifert, Kaelyn Silva, and Antonio Weissinger

Sociology

Dating at a Distance: Navigating Sexual and Romantic Relationships and Emotional Intimacy during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kaitlyn Lee

☐ [Learn about more example research projects here](#)

PART 2

Find an Opportunity

Northeastern offers several ways to do research. Many students combine more than one route over time.

Foundational Research Courses

Develop disciplinary methods while fulfilling a requirement for your major or minor. Learn alongside peers.

Advanced Research Courses

Earn credit or a transcript distinction for your own research project. Learn independently with support from a faculty member.

Research Centers and Institutes

Join a team of faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students already doing research on a larger project.

Research as a Co-op

Spend four to six months immersed in research full-time with a partner organization or employer.

Foundational Research Courses

Consult with your degree audit and academic advisor to understand course pre-requisites (if any) and plan when you want to enroll.

- **ANTH 3410.** Ethnographic Field Experience
- **ECON 2560.** Applied Econometrics
- **CRIM 3600.** Criminal Justice Research Methods
- **ENGL 1400.** Introduction to Literary Studies
- **ENGL 1410.** Introduction to Research on Writing
- **HIST 1201.** First-Year Seminar (4 Hours) + **HIST 1200.** Historical Research and Writing (1 Hour)
- **HIST 2301.** The History Seminar (4 Hours) + **HIST 2302.** Historical Writing (1 Hour)

- **HUSV 2970.** Research Methods for Human Services
- **INTL 2718.** Research Methods in International Affairs
- **INSH 3101.** Research Methods in the Social Sciences
- **PHIL 3000.** Interdisciplinary Methods for PPE
- **POLS 2399.** Research Methods in Political Science
- **SOCL 2321.** Research Methods in Sociology
- **SOCL 2323.** Ethnographic Methods

☐ **Next Step: Enroll in one of these courses in an upcoming semester**

Advanced Research Courses

CSSH Transcript Recognition

- **INSH 2992** (1st/2nd year) or **INSH 4998** (3rd/4th year): Simple recognition (0 credits) for research not credited elsewhere

Major or Minor Credit

- **2991 Research Practicum** (2–4 credits): Collaborative research under faculty supervision
- **4991 Research** (4 credits): Independent advanced research supported by a faculty member

☐ Next Step: Connect with your academic advisor and faculty to enroll in one of these courses in an upcoming semester

Two Honors Options

- **Honors in the Major** (4970/4971):
 - Original research project over two semesters or more
 - "Honors in [Your Major]" appears on your transcript
 - You do not need to be a part of the University Honors Program

☐ Next Step: [Learn more here](#)

- **University Honors Program:**
 - Honors Directed Study
 - Interdisciplinary Thesis

☐ Next Step: [Learn more here](#)

Research Centers & Institutes

CSSH research teams of faculty, students, and staff tackle pressing problems using diverse methods and community partnerships, with priority areas in sustainability, health, security, and AI.

What is a center or institute?

- A **center** is a faculty-led research community built around a theme, such as crime and justice, policy, or the humanities. Many host smaller labs with specific projects.
- An **institute** works across disciplines on a broad challenge.
- Undergraduates are welcome: you can join real projects alongside faculty, graduate students, and staff.

☐ Next Step: Review CSSH research centers and institutes on the next two slides and [Learn more about specific centers and institutes here](#)



CSSH Research Centers

Center for Atypical Language Interpretation (CALI)

Center for Crime, Race, and Justice

- Brudnick Center for the Study of Violence & Conflict (Sociology)
- Corrections and Reentry Lab (CRL)
- Crime Prevention Lab (CPL)
- Lethal Violence Data Lab (LVDL)
- Northeastern University Public Evaluation Lab (NU-PEL, with Bouvé)
- Race and Justice Lab (RJL)
- Violence and Justice Research Lab (VJRL)

Policy Innovation Hub

- Boston Area Research Initiative (BARI)
- Center for International Affairs and World Cultures (CIAWC)
- Global Action Policy (GAP) Initiative
- Kitty & Michael Dukakis Center for Urban & Regional Policy
- Plastics Center
- Social Impact Lab

Humanities Center

- Arts & Humanities Social Action Lab (AHA Lab)
- Digital Archive of Indigenous Language Persistence (DAILP)
- Digital Scholarship Group (DSG)
- Digital Transgender Archive (DTA)
- NULab for Digital Humanities and Computational Social Science
- The Reckonings Project

Research Institutes

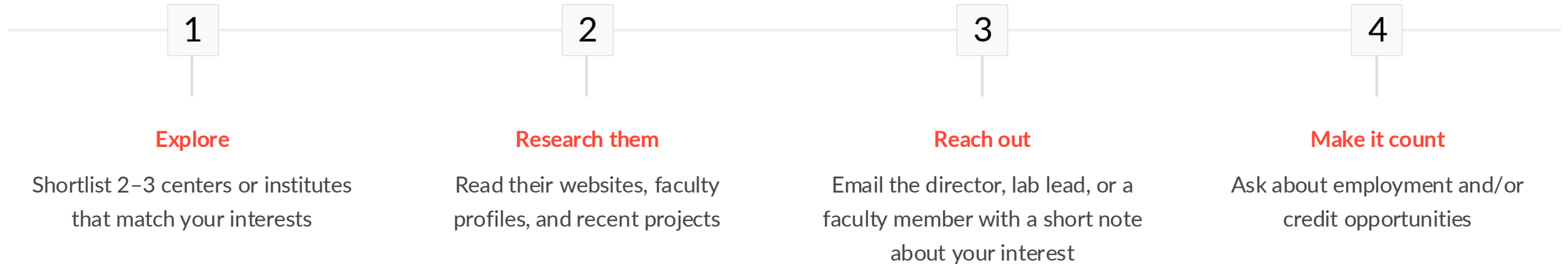
CSSH

- Ethics Institute
- Global Resilience Institute (GRI)
- Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute (SSEHRI, with Bouvé)

University-wide

- Defense Industrial Base Institute (DIBI)
- Institute for Information, the Internet and Democracy (IIID)
- Network Science Institute

Next Steps:



☐ **Not sure where to start?** Talk with a faculty member in your major or minor

Research as a Co-op

Research as a co-op can be in a variety of formats with a diverse range of organizations and employer partners.

1. University and academic research labs and centers

Co-ops inside a university lab, research center, or university-affiliated institute, usually alongside faculty and graduate researchers. The work typically supports ongoing studies: literature reviews, data collection and coding, and preparing materials for publications or presentations.

Examples:

- Harvard Center for International Development
- Meaning and Modality Lab at Harvard University
- PFAS Project Lab
- Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute
- Harvard School of Public Health
- Global Resilience Institute at Northeastern University
- Centre for Urban Science and Engineering (Mumbai)

2. Think tanks, institutes, and policy research organizations

Nonprofits and institutes that produce research meant to inform policy, programs, or public debate. The work typically involves gathering and analyzing data, drafting briefs and reports, helping evaluate programs, and tracking policy developments.

Examples:

- J-PAL North America
- Institute for Economics and Peace
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement
- Boston Municipal Research Bureau
- Associate for International Research, Inc
- MassBudget & Policy Center
- The Global Council for Science and the Environment

Research as a Co-op, Continued

3. Government and public-sector analysis

Analytical roles inside city, state, or local agencies, where research supports operations and decision-making. The work typically includes analyzing local data, mapping trends, and preparing reports that inform staff, leadership, or the public.

Examples:

- Crime Analysis Unit, Cambridge Police Department
- Boston Planning and Development Agency
- MA Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS)

4. Archives, libraries, museums, and humanities research

Research rooted in primary sources, collections, and scholarship at cultural and historical institutions. The work typically involves handling documents, maps, and collections, cataloging or interpreting materials, supporting scholars, and preparing public-facing educational content.

Examples:

- Kluge Center at the Library of Congress
- Massachusetts State Archives
- Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center, Boston Public Library
- Commonwealth Museum

Research as a Co-op, Continued

5. Industry research, analytics, and risk intelligence

Research roles inside companies that sell or use analysis, such as threat intelligence, risk modeling, consulting, and investment research. The work typically involves data analysis and modeling, market or country-risk research, and producing briefings for clients or investment teams.

Examples:

- Recorded Future
- Control Risks
- Tyton Partners
- Wellington Management
- MFS
- Amundi Pioneer

Next Steps

- ☐ Complete the co-op preparation course
- ☐ Understand when your next co-op search can be
- ☐ Develop your research skills through courses, extracurriculars, and on-campus or off-campus work opportunities
- ☐ Leverage the expertise of your faculty and your co-op coordinator to update your resume and create strategies for interviewing
- ☐ Search and apply for research co-ops through NUworks when eligible or follow the guidelines to create your own co-op position

PART 3

Share Your Work

Sharing is part of the research process, not an afterthought. It tests your ideas, builds your resume, and connects you with future collaborators.



Present at URF or RISE

The CSSH [Undergraduate Research Forum](#) (URF) gathers students, faculty, and staff across the college to learn from 15-minute student research presentations followed by Q&A.

The NU [Research, Innovation, Scholarship, and Entrepreneurship Expo](#) (RISE) allows students an opportunity to share their findings to the university community through a poster expo or oral presentations.



Publishing & Conferences

Undergraduates present at national and international conferences and publish in scholarly journals. Your faculty mentor can recommend the right venue and stage to consider.

Example: “An Ethical Framework for Integration: Evaluating the Conflict Between Cultural Freedom and Social Cohesion.” By: Anjali Zyla

Published in Falsafa Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy



Student Publications

Consider sharing your work with your NU peers and beyond:

[ECONPress](#)

[The Global Journal](#)

[NU Political Review](#)

Deadlines

Funding from the University: [PEAK Awards](#)

University-wide support from first year to last — for collaborating with faculty, developing an independent project, or traveling for research.

- ☐ August 15 for Fall
- ☐ December 1 for Spring
- ☐ March 15 for Summer

Funding from CSSH: [Undergraduate Research Initiative](#)

Covers data, software, archive trips, and in some cases a stipend.

- ☐ November 16

Share Your Work: CSSH URF and University RISE Expo

College- or university-wide opportunities to present your results.

- ☐ February 16 for RISE
- ☐ March 3 for URF



Deadlines, Continued

Course Registration

For foundational or advanced research courses, review the [University Academic Calendar](#) and note when registration begins and ends for a given semester to ensure you meet the deadline.

Research Assistant and Co-op Positions

Review the [student employment database](#) and [undergraduate research database](#) on an ongoing basis for research assistant positions. In addition, reach out to individual faculty and leaders of research centers and institutes to understand their hiring needs and deadlines.

Your co-op coordinator can help you understand when to begin searching for and applying to research co-op positions.



Support

You don't have to figure it out alone. Reach out any time to one of these resources.

Undergraduate Research & Fellowships Office

- [Meet with an advisor](#) to understand research pathways at the university and fellowship and scholarship opportunities
- Fund your project: Project-Based Exploration for the Advancement of Knowledge (PEAK)
- Share your results: Research, Innovation, Scholarship, & Entrepreneurship Expo (RISE)

CSSH Dean's Office

- Share your story to inspire prospective and current students
- Provide feedback to improve the student research journey
- Fund your project: Undergraduate Research Initiative (URI)
- Share your results: Undergraduate Research Forum (URF)
- INSH 2992 and INSH 4998 course registration (0-credits)
- [Contact: Liza Weinstein and Eric Winter](#)

Faculty Mentor

- Learn about research in your major or minor, including methods and approaches, courses, and centers, labs, and institutes
- Gain research project guidance from start to finish, including how to begin and where to consider presenting or publishing

Academic Advisor

- For foundational research courses: understanding degree audit, pre-requisites (if any), and planning when you want to enroll
- 2991 and 4991 advanced research course registration support
- Navigate how credit for Honors in the Major or a University Honors Program course can apply toward degree requirements

Co-op Coordinator

- Understand the co-op process and research co-op opportunities
- Find or design a co-op meeting your interests and qualifications
- Connect and network with students who have completed a co-op involving research

CSSH Students

- Reach out to contacts for the ECONPress, Global Journal, or NU Political Review to learn how you can be involved
- Connect and network with an upper-class student in one of your courses; Ask your faculty for students you can reach out to