



Phelan United
States Centre

The Undergraduate Research Assistantship Programme

LSE Phelan United States Centre
Donor Report, 2024-25

SUMMARY 2024-25



Left to Right: Lila Rota, Maria de Gregorio, Savannah Culpepper, Ines McCairley, Nooralhoda Tillaih, Isabel Magnum, Tongxin Li (LSE Master's student and Eden Centre Research Assistant)

The Undergraduate Research Assistantship programme enjoyed another successful year in 2024-25, with nine projects completed and over 200 student applications received. The programme maintained its strong interdisciplinary focus, with applications submitted from over 15 LSE departments - a unique aspect of the Phelan US Centre's scheme.

Students had two opportunities to meet and discuss their research throughout the academic year, first at our annual meet & greet in November 2024 and next at our half-way check-in in March 2025.

A new aspect of this year's programme was our successful application to the LSE Eden Centre to conduct a student-led evaluation of the impact of the programme on students' personal and academic development, students' career goals, and academics' research outputs. The research was conducted by LSE student Tongxin Li and will help to shape future editions of the programme.

As in prior years, student participants have exciting plans ahead, ranging from an internship in the UN Secretary-General's office, to a law firm contract, and an MPhil at Oxford University. This is a testament to the students' own excellence and the continued impact of the programme in opening further opportunities for its participants.

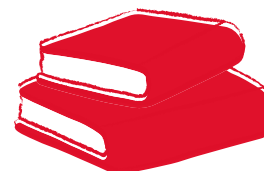
The Phelan US Centre Undergraduate Research Assistantship programme, 2024-25



9 Research Assistants



210 Applications



15 LSE Departments



Title: Conflicts over Public Lands

Faculty: Professor Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey (Department of Government)

Research Assistant: Ines McCairley (Department of Government)

"I helped to build a large, systematically coded database of public-land legal disputes decided by the U.S. Ninth and Tenth Circuit Courts of Appeals."



Title: The Politics of Housing Tenure

Faculty: Dr David Madden (Department of Sociology)

Research Assistant: Victoria Epshtein (Department of Social Policy)

"I collected government reports and statistical data demonstrating changes in access to homeownership, tenure and social housing overtime, and located potential interviewees with expertise in 4 different sectors."



Title: Passing the Torch of Anglo-American Financial Cooperation

Faculty: Dr James Morrison (Department of International Relations)

Research Assistant: Lila Rota (Department of Government)

"My role focused on organising and reviewing archival documents, contributing to the development of a digitised database on trans-Atlantic economic relations."



Title: Political mobilising among Chicago's police and teachers' unions

Faculty: Dr Johann Koehler (Department of Social Policy)

Research Assistant: Nooralhoda Tillaih (Department of Anthropology)

"I was tasked with reading, coding, and synthesising a digital archive of monthly newsletters published by the unions across 2014-2023 for key sentiment and their overarching themes."

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Title: Globalisation and its historians

Faculty: Dr Elizabeth Ingleson (Department of International History)

Research Assistant: Savannah Culpepper (Department of International History)

"My role in this research consisted of three main parts: a literature review, assessing the different temporal framings of globalization, and researching alternative visions of globalization."



Title: The role of nuclear weapons in US alliance politics

Faculty: Dr Lauren Sukin (Department of International Relations)

Research Assistant: Maria de Gregorio Cattaneo di S. Elia (Department of International Relations)

"My primary task involved analyzing a wide range of archival documents - official letters, meeting summaries...with a focus on NATO's internal dynamics and nuclear strategy."



Title: US grand strategy in the digital age

Faculty: Professor Peter Trubowitz (Department of International Relations)

Research Assistant: M Aditta Arian (Department of Economics)

"My primary task this year was to build a reliable literature base...Working from library databases, think-tank portals, and major journals, I located 42 core texts published between 2018 and 2025."

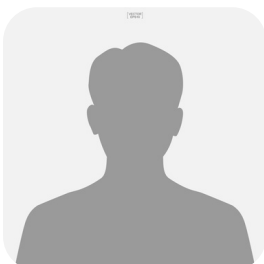


Title: The State of the States

Faculty: Professor Peter Trubowitz and Chris Gilson (Phelan US Centre)

Research Assistant: Isabel Magnum (Department of International History)

"I had a variety of responsibilities, including data collection, analysis, writing, and updated the website. Qualitatively I worked to provide research and write case studies."



Title: How presidents justify the withdrawal of US troops

Faculty: Dr Jonny Hall (Department of International Relations)

Research Assistant: Han Chia (Department of International Relations)

"My focus was on the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan...my job was to provide a sample of primary and secondary sources for Dr Hall to take a closer look at in order to uncover broader, similar/different ontological dynamics across war-ending presidential acts."

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How do you feel you benefitted from the programme?

"It taught me resilience and self-discipline, especially when handling tasks that were challenging and outside my comfort zone."

"I have learned to be more tech-savvy, to work independently and within my own discretion, while still meeting internal deadlines."

"Beyond academic interest, this project improved my analytical skills in ways that are transferrable across disciplines and real-world settings."

What are your plans for the future?

"I plan to pursue a career in research, either within academia or in political consultancy."

"This fall I will be heading to either Oxford University or Cambridge University to study an MPhil in American history."

"I plan to work in energy hedging and renewable energy consulting."

"I have a training contract at a law firm."

How has the programme contributed to your goals?

"I plan to pursue a career in research, either within academia or in political consultancy."

"This programme has strengthened key skills such as attention to detail, organisation and critical thinking."

"I benefitted by getting an insight into academia behind the scenes, learning more about globalization from new interesting perspectives, and having flexible paid work that fit well with my degree and my university schedule."

What was the stand-out aspect of the programme?

"My favourite memory from the programme was the first Meet & Greet...it was a standout experience because I have not had the opportunity to meet academics and students from across LSE."

"Learning directly from the academic, and having conversations about the research topics, was enjoyable and I found I learned the most during these hands-on moments."

"I appreciated the programme's social dimension, as events organised by the Phelan US Centre made me feel part of a cohesive cohort and a wider research initiative."