

Hiring Undergraduate Research Assistants to Code News Articles about Black Protests

Principal Investigators: Professors Pamela Oliver and Chaeyoon Lim, Department of Sociology

We are hiring undergraduate research assistants for our NSF-funded project “Generating High-Quality Verifiable Relational Data About News Coverage of Black Protests and Other Events.” This position will begin at the start of the spring semester in January 2020 and the project is expected to continue through the summer of 2021. Starting pay is \$12 per hour and will be paid through the university’s undergraduate hourly payroll system. Alternatively, you may do this for course credit as Sociology 320, but you cannot receive both course credit and pay. The minimum commitment for one semester is 8 hours per week with 10-15 hours per week being preferable.

Research assistants who do consistent, accurate, and efficient work for several months will be given a raise in hourly pay. Research assistants who stay with the project for a second year will be considered for promotion to second-level coding in the project. The maximum pay for an undergraduate research assistant is \$15 an hour.

Responsibilities

Undergraduate research assistants will use a web browser interface to read electronic copies of articles from Black newspapers, identify Black protest events in them, and mark text relevant to those protests. These news articles come from the early 1990s to the 2010s and the main goal is to fill in a gap about the Black movement and Black people’s protests in this time period. Reading and marking text in these articles can be very interesting if you are interested in the topic, but the work can also get tedious, so some self-discipline is needed. You can work anywhere you have a computer and an Internet connection, but we will be fostering group work sessions to make the work more social and pleasant and give you a chance to learn from others.

Expectations: (1) Read background materials and training manuals. (2) Attend weekly team meetings that will focus both on practical aspects of the project and general principles of social research. (3) Keep a work log and stay current with time commitments to the project. Students who cannot keep up with their agreed upon hours will be asked to leave the project.

Qualifications

This project requires the ability to read news articles in English fairly rapidly and with good understanding. Accuracy and attention to detail are essential. You should have a track record of reliability and quality work in classes or jobs. We prefer sociology or other social science or media studies majors, Afro-American Studies majors, or others with a genuine interest in the project and prefer students who have taken a basic research methods class. Students who are from disadvantaged or historically underrepresented groups are especially encouraged to apply.

To apply for a PAID position: Submit application materials via the [UW Student Center](#).

To apply for a FOR-CREDIT position: By January 15, 2020, email Pamela Oliver pamela.oliver@wisc.edu and Morgan Matthews mmathews5@wisc.edu with the following information:

- (1) A **written statement** of (a) why this position interests you, (b) what your academic/career goals are, (c) how this position fits into your academic and career goals, (d) your relevant skills and background. The suggested length for this statement is two to four paragraphs
- (2) An **unofficial transcript** printed out from MyUW Student Center that shows your names and the courses you have taken and grades received. If you are a transfer student, also submit a transcript from your previous school if you can (unofficial is ok), otherwise summarize your prior record in your application.
- (3) The names & contact information (email address and telephone number) of **references**. Include at least one reference who has knowledge of your academic ability, preferably at UW Madison, and at least one reference who can attest to your reliability as a worker or volunteer or student or other activity that requires getting work done regularly.
- (4) The **hours** you expect to be available for this position
- (5) Your **contact information**
- (6) Other information you consider relevant.

We expect to hire up to eight students. If more than eight students apply, we will attempt to select students who seem most likely to contribute to and benefit from the project.

We will contact you in January to discuss your application. Applications received after January 15 may be considered if there are still open positions.

You can either get course credit or be paid, but not both. If you are interested in both possibilities, you can submit one application for both, stating your preference between the paid position and course credit. Course credit participants will earn 3 credits for a 10 hours/week commitment (135 hours total) (and 2 credits for a 7 hours/week commitment (90 hours total).

To learn more about this project, you may read this working paper which is based on the same methodology using mainstream newswire stories: <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/aq5xj/>

You are also welcome to send questions to Pamela Oliver or Morgan Matthews prior to applying.