

Graduate Assistantship Job Description

Position Summary:

Title: Research Assistant

Department: Political Science

Hours per Week: 10 hours/week

Location(s): Portland

Lab (if applicable): N/A

Duration: Fall 2026 semester, Spring 2027 semester

Anticipated Start Date: 9/1/2026

Total Stipend: \$6,000 for master's-level students / \$7,000 for doctoral-level students, paid biweekly

Tuition Waiver: up to 3 graduate credits per semester during each the Fall 2026 semester, Spring 2027 semester

Supervisor Name: Francesca Vassallo

Supervisor Email: francesca.vassallo@maine.edu

Supervisor Phone: 2077804294

*** Per [CBA, Art. 38, § 7](#), graduate workers who are on approved remote work arrangement may need to physically come to campus periodically to perform work or attend meetings. Check with the supervisor for any on-campus requirements.*

Other Information:

- The University offers a GA/TA/RA health benefit plan to USM graduate workers through Gallagher Health. Additionally, effective July 1, 2026, workers have access to dental and vision insurance options and voluntary retirement savings plans; USM will not cover these costs.
- Graduate workers are also eligible for resources through the UMS Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Position Details:

Statement of Job:

The graduate research assistant (RA) in this position is expected to split the weekly working load between functioning as a teaching assistant in an undergraduate course and working as a research assistant on a research project on political behavior worldwide. For half of the weekly commitment (5 hours), the RA will assist the faculty member in the classroom, and guiding students in the completion of quantitative assignments in a Political Science methods course (POS 203) during office hours (Fall 2026 and Spring 2027). For the other half of the weekly commitment (5 hours), the RA will work with the faculty member to learn how to set up a research framework, find appropriate data and variables to complete the research project, develop statistical models and complete calculations for the project, and finally apply the learning from the ongoing research project to the work with the undergraduates in the research methods course and/or personal graduate projects.

Average weekly time required: 10 hours.

Professional and academic benefit to the student:

- Development of advanced quantitative skills using SPSS (useful for both professional and academic work).
- Experience with quantitative research methods, including formulation of research framework and preparation/execution of data analysis in an applied setting.

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- Possibility of publishing journal article on political behavior analysis with faculty member.
- Possibility of conference presentation at undergraduate research conference (for instance Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago in April 2027 or Thinking Matters on campus).
- Advanced methodological training in preparation for application to a doctoral program (if applicable).

Essential Functions:

- Attend POS 203 Introduction to Political Science Research course in Fall 2026 and Spring 2027, twice a week (Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30 AM to 10:45 AM in Portland) during the semester. The course is in a face to face format, but some online sessions may be possible, especially for students who need more hands-on digital tutoring in between classes.
- Grade a series of assignments during the semester: on average 2 hours a week.
- Meet with undergraduates in person or digitally when necessary (up to 2 hours a week).
- Work with faculty member in a current project on the development of competing political behavior models using large datasets with many countries from all over the world (up to 3h a week). Examples: assist faculty with quantitative and qualitative research project components, including data collection and analysis or indexing manuscript.

Supervisory Responsibilities:

Occasional minimal supervision of undergraduates in the classroom or during office hours.

Budget Responsibilities:

N/A.

Public and Professional Activities Related to Job Performance:

N/A.

Internal Contacts:

Political Science.

External Contacts:

N/A.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Very good Oral/Written Communication skills
- Good level Research Skills or better
- Interest in Presentation Opportunities
- Interest in Publishing Opportunities
- Familiar with Use of Digital Technology
- Very good at Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Some experience with Global/Intercultural Fluency
- Interest and/or experience with Data Analysis

Required Qualifications:

- This is a position that would be interesting to students who like to:
 - 1) do quantitative analysis using a statistical software (SPSS will be the software used in the classroom and for the research project, but experience with other statistical packages is

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certainly useful, although not required. RA does not need to have prior experience with SPSS).

- 2) learn about advanced statistical methods.
 - 3) help undergraduates improve their quantitative skills in applied Political Science/Social Sciences exercises and other mathematical computations.
 - 4) explore political behavior trends globally.
- Minimum requirements for this position:
 - 1) some experience with research methods and quantitative analysis in the sciences or social sciences.
 - 2) a strong interest in quantitative analysis/mathematical approaches to interpretation of global trends and data.
 - 3) very good verbal and written communication skills, especially when dealing with undergraduates.
 - 4) a decent sense of humor always helps.
 - Must not be a non-student University of Maine System employee.
 - The use of a personal computer or laptop IS required for this position. Note: designated [on-campus computer lab workstations](#) are available on a first come, first served basis.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Some experience with research methods and quantitative analysis in the sciences or social sciences.
- A strong interest in quantitative analysis/mathematical approaches to interpretation of global trends and data.
- Very good verbal and written communication skills, especially when dealing with undergraduates.
- Ideal program/major: Any social sciences or math/statistics programs.
- Suggested academic programs: Any social sciences or math/statistics programs.

This position shall be covered by the University of Maine System and University of Maine Graduate Workers Union Collective Bargaining Agreement.

To Apply:

Submit your application, including your resume and cover letter, via the [Graduate Assistant Application form linked here](#) by 8/24/2026. In your cover letter, include a self-assessment about how this position relates to your academic program and professional aspirations. Candidates should receive notice of employment decisions by 8/31/2026.

Please direct any questions specific to this position to the supervisor at francesca.vassallo@maine.edu or 2077804294. For general questions about the GA program, or the Graduate Assistant Application form, reach out to the Office of Graduate Studies, usmgradstudies@maine.edu or 207-780-4872.