

Webster Vienna Training Scholarship (WVTS)  
Research Assistant

Department: International Relations  
Duration: Full Academic Year  
Estimated weekly workload in hours: 4  
Program Level: Graduate  
Supervisor/Professor: Ralph Schoellhammer

Expected tasks and responsibilities to fulfill during the scholarship:

Tasks	Percentage of Time Spent on Responsibilities (equaling 100%)
Interest in Political Theory and Economics (particularly Schumpeter's Theory of Democratic Decay) – Literature Research	25%
Coding of Newspaper Articles for quantitative content analysis	25%
Writing of data reports	50%

Qualifications needed to accomplish tasks and responsibilities:

- In order to be a good fit for this position the RA should have a profound interest in social, cultural, and economic change. The main task will be to support a research project that attempts to measure by quantitative means (automated content analysis) attitude changes towards free market economies and capitalism. A good knowledge of quantitative methods would be a plus.
- The research the student would support is a powerful new method of computer supported text analysis to examine broad changes in public support for the free enterprise system in Great Britain and the United States over the last 145 years, from 1861 to 2006. We will try to introduce innovative theoretical and methodological ways to inquiry societal change in Great Britain and the United States between 1861 and 2006. Based on an interdisciplinary approach between economics and communication science, we attempt to build a model that will allow us to test theories of cultural change over the last 145 years. The basic assumptions of our research agenda can be summarized by the following points:
- Norms and identities are the main pillars of what we understand as culture. We assume that culture is not static, but changes occur only slowly over time as a result of technological, political, and economic transformations and the effects they have on society.

- Culture is understood as the dominant framework through which a society and individuals interpret their social, political, and economic environment.
- While past research in the field of culture was limited to historical records and opinion polls, we propose an innovative way of using media contents as ways to inquire social contexts and norms.
- We fully realize that modern media (print, radio, television, social networks) is not only reflecting but also shaping the prevailing culture of different epochs. We nevertheless believe that especially opinion oriented pieces do reflect a certain Zeitgeist of the period in question, most likely expressing elite views before they were disseminated throughout the broader society.
- We argue that policy options of states and other institutions are shaped and limited by the prevailing norms of their times. To get a better understanding of the interaction between norms and institutions in the past could be a helpful way to interpret contemporary ideas of political and economic reform and their feasibility.
- The methodological approach of content analysis has never been employed for such an ambitious project, even though the use of computer supported content analysis has produced promising results for shorter time frames. To apply these methods to test general theories of societal change (in our specific case Schumpeter's evolutionary theory of democratic and capitalist societies) would lead to possible new connections between the quantitative and qualitative disciplines in the social sciences.
- Due to data limitations and their almost uninterrupted history of press freedom we are forced to limit our study to the major two Anglophone societies, but we hope that our project will trigger efforts to produce similar data for other countries as well.
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Documents required for application:

- CV
- Letter of Motivation explaining why the student chose this particular RTA position