Archer Center
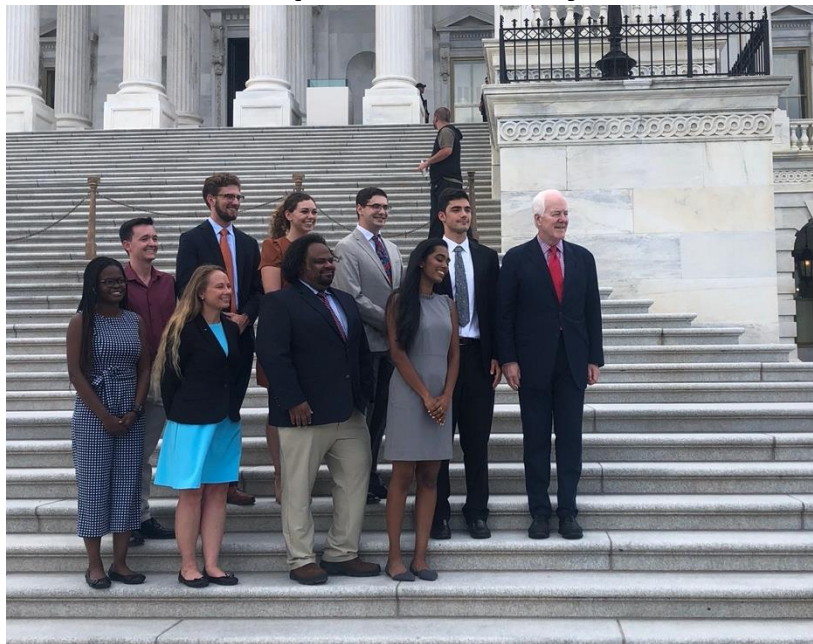# Graduate Independent Study & Research

Course Information
PA 8331
Archer Center Independent Study & Research

Summer 2025
Mon 6-8 p.m. ET

Class meets in person at the Archer Center except where noted

Professor Contact Information

Professor	**Dr. Mary Nugent, Ph.D.**
Email Address	Mary.Nugent@UTDallas.edu
Phone	802-777-0654
Office Location	1750 Pennsylvania Ave NW Suite 900, Washington, DC 20006
Office Hours	by appointment

Lecturer Contact Information

All Lecturers hold office hours by appointment.

Education & Labor Policy Working Group
Lecturer: Prof. Allison Dembeck, MA (email: ada210000@UTDallas.edu)

Health Policy Working Group
Lecturer: Prof. Waverly Gordon, MHA, JD (email: Waverly.Gordon@UTDallas.edu)

General Domestic Policy Working Group
Lecturer: Prof. Yvette Badu-Nimako, JD (email: Yvette.Badu-Nimako@UTDallas.edu)

Global Affairs/Homeland Security Policy Working Group
Lecturer: Prof. Malcolm Warbrick, MPS, *LTC (Ret) (*email: Malcolm.Warbrick@UTDallas.edu)

Class Materials

The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class, as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, they are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Admission to Graduate Archer Fellowship Program.

Course Overview

This course is tailored to each student's graduate program of study. Each student will work independently with the Archer Center Lecturers to develop a policy research project that aligns with and advances the student's professional, academic and/or research goals. Dr. Nugent is responsible for compiling and reporting all of the final course grades; but each lecturer will be responsible for reporting grades for the students assigned to their policy working group.

Students are required to participate in policy working groups (listed below), where Fellows will meet in person each week with their assigned Archer Center Lecturer and relevant policy experts to discuss their policy proposals. Weekly meetings will take place at the Archer Center; however, lecturers reserve the right to meet off-site at locations relevant to the course experience.

The policy working groups are:
- General Domestic (GEN) Policy Working Group (**Yvette Badu-Nimako**)
- Education (ED) Policy Working Group (**Allison Dembeck**)
- Health Policy (HP) Working Group (**Waverly Gordon**)
- Global Affairs & Homeland Security (GAHS) Policy Working Group (**Malcolm Warbrick**)

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Upon completing the class, students will be able to:
1. Students will identify knowledge resources that are unique to D.C. or which are otherwise more easily obtainable in D.C. than in Texas.
2. Students will identify a public policy problem and will describe and develop strategies for assessing the policy problem.
3. Students will develop strategies for resolving or addressing the policy problem.
4. Students will determine linkages between their specific academic/research interests, their internship experience, and knowledge resources noted above (#1).

Required Textbooks and Materials

eLearning
All course materials available on eLearning. All assignments, except where noted, should be submitted to eLearning. Login to your eLearning account here.

Required materials
- Access to a computer and reliable internet service.
- *You should be able to access the required readings online through the links provided (some may require your UTD credentials to access) or posted to the course website on e-Learning. You can access the UT Dallas Eugene McDermott Library's online catalog and databases here: https://www.utdallas.edu/library/.*

General reading
- *Federal Register* (The daily journal of the United States Government) – Become familiar with the website: https://www.federalregister.gov/.
- **Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports** (https://crsreports.congress.gov)
  - **"Policy and Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: Finding Documents, Analysis, News, and Training,"** CRS Report (Updated June 28, 2019) - https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43434.pdf.
- General periodicals that cover federal policymaking and politics
  - Congress & White House
    - *Politico* (https://www.politico.com/)
    - *Roll Call* (https://www.rollcall.com/)
    - *The Hill* (https://www.thehill.com/)
  - Federal Agencies
    - *Government Executive* (https://www.govexec.com/)
  - General coverage
    - *Axios (*https://www.axios.com)
    - *Congressional Quarterly* (http://library.cqpress.com.libproxy.utdallas.edu/index.php (use UTD credentials to access)
    - *Morning Consult* (https://morningconsult.com/washington/)
    - *National Journal* (https://www.nationaljournal.com/)
- Topic-specific periodicals – There are many journals focused on specific policy domains. You should identify the leading journals in your topic area of interest. Work with your lecturer to identify these periodicals.

Policy Working Group
Identify at least one **federal agency** that has jurisdiction over the policies that interest you. Then:

a. Read the **public law that authorizes the agency**. When was it adopted? What was the congressional vote? Read a few news articles related to the agency's founding to get a sense of the public and political support for the agency. Compare the original coverage to contemporaneous coverage to see how the agency's public/political support has changed.

b. Read the **agency's strategic plan**. What are the agency's priority goals? How do these goals relate to the preferences/priorities of the President and Congress?

c. Read the **agency's organizational chart**. Who are the leaders of the agencies' key components? How many of these components are staffed by political appointees? How many political appointees have been nominated but are not yet confirmed?

d. Read the **FY 2025 budget** for the agency that was issued by OMB. What are the Administration's priorities, based on the allocation of resources in the proposed budget?

e. Read the actual FY 2025 budget adopted by Congress to see how much the agency received in FY 2025 appropriations. What are the differences between the President's proposed budget and actual congressional appropriation?

2. Identify and read the public law that pertains to your policy interest. *Example*: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) authorizes federal pre-K-12 education programs. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination by direct providers of housing. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act revised the structure of the Defense Department. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 authorized the E-Rate program to provide telecommunications to schools and libraries. The Social Security Act authorized the system of benefits for old-age workers, benefits for victims of industrial accidents, unemployment insurance, aid for dependent mothers and children, the blind, and the physically handicapped.

Writing resources (Not required, but listed for reference)
- **Drafting a policy memo**
  o Thompson Writing Program, Duke University (https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/policy-memo.original.pdf)
  o Harvard Kennedy School of Government (https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/lb_how_to_write_pol_mem_9_08_17.pdf)
  o "Writing a Policy Memo" Bush School Texas A&M University (https://sites.google.com/site/bushschoolwriting/policy-documents/policy-memos)
- **Use of Social Media**
  o "Effective Social Media = Storytelling," Tim Jones, *Inside Higher Ed*, April 26, 2016 (https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/call-action-marketing-and-communications-higher-education/effective-social-media-storytelling)
  o "Mind the Gap: Social Media Engagement by Public Health Researchers," B. Keller, A. Labrique, K.M. Jain, A. Pekosz, O. Levine, *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, January 14, 2014 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24425670).
  o *Social Media Strategy: Virtual Social Media Working Group and DHS First Responders Group*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, January 2012 (https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Virtual%20Social%20Media%20Working%20Group%20VSMWG%20Social%20Media%20Strategy.pdf)
  o *Social Networking and National Security: How to Harness Web 2.0 to Protect the Country*, James Jay Carafano, *Backgrounder*, The Heritage Foundation, May 18, 2009 (https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/social-networking-and-national-security-how-harness-web-20-protect-the-country)

- **Op-eds and Letters to the Editor**

- o "How to Write an Op-Ed or Column," Harvard Kennedy School of Government (https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/HO_NEW_HOW-TO-WRITE-AN-OPED-OR-COLUMN.pdf)
- o "Tips for Aspiring Op-Ed Writers," Bret Stephens, *The New York Times*, August 25, 2017 (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/opinion/tips-for-aspiring-op-ed-writers.html)
- o "Writing an Op-Ed," American Association for the Advancement of Science (https://www.aaas.org/page/writing-op-ed)
- o "Op-ed Writing: Tips and Tricks" The OpEd Project (https://www.theopedproject.org/oped-basics/)
- o "Pitching" The OpEd Project (https://www.theopedproject.org/pitching/)
- o "Submission Information" The OpEd Project (https://www.theopedproject.org/submission-information/)
- o "Tips for Writing Op-eds to Respond to Breaking News," Tyler Creighton, *rethink,* April 4, 2017 (https://rethinkmedia.org/blog/tips-writing-op-eds-respond-breaking-news).

Course Policies

Course Details
Each class meets weekly on Monday from 6-8 pm at the Archer Center, or other locations as noted. Lecturers reserve the right to meet off-site at locations relevant to the course experience.

Assignments
Students must produce these deliverables by the posted dates.

    i. **Participation** (20%) – Lecturer to keep track of these grades
1. List of knowledge resources (such as reference materials/sources, advocacy organizations, policy stakeholders, thought leaders) in DC that are relevant to the policy paper. Submit on eLearning (worth 5%) by **June 21,** 11:59 pm local time.
2. Create spreadsheet with information about relevant policy network sources. Submit to your lecturer (worth 5%). Also include notes of any meetings with real world policy stakeholders to discuss the policy recommendation. Also include notes about relevant linkages to your specific academic/research interests, and/or your internship experience. Due in eLearning by **July 7**, 11:59 pm local time. Note: You should aim to work on this spreadsheet *from the beginning of the summer term.*
3. Weekly attendance and interaction with guest speakers (worth 10%).

    ii. **Policy Paper** (70%) – Lecturer to keep track of these grades (except for first draft submission)
1. Upload to eLearning and bring draft of policy paper to class on June 2.
2. Practice Workshop Presentation – July 14 (worth 5%)
3. *Final Policy Research/Background Paper* electronic copy due in eLearning by July 17, 11:59 pm local time (worth 60%).
4. Policy Murder Board presentation – July 21 (worth 5%)

    iii. **Advocacy Materials** (10%) – Lecturer to keep track of grades for these items.
1. *Advocacy Materials due* by WORKSHOP meeting July 7 (5 pm CT/ 6 pm ET). Submit materials to eLearning.
   a. 1-page summary of your policy recommendation (worth 5%)
   b. PowerPoint presentation (worth 5%)

NOTE: Meet independently with your Archer Center Lecturer to get feedback on written drafts of your policy research/background paper before the final due date of July 17.

Details: Policy Research/Background Paper

- *Paper Specs*: No more than 10 pages (excluding Title page, Works Cited/Bibliography, and Appendix), 12-pt font, double-space, APA/MLA format. Each page following the title page should include a header with your full name and the page number.

- *Description*: Papers will address a policy topic relevant to the student's academic and research goals. Students must draw on and incorporate knowledge resources to describe and develop their strategies for assessing and addressing the policy-related issue. The topic can be one that aligns with a student's internship work and/or graduate studies, and the topic that the student has selected in Professor Shute's course.

- *Organization:* The paper should be organized as follows:

  - **Title Page**: Your name, title of the paper, date.
  - **Abstract**: Brief description of research and findings.
  - **Overview/Introduction**: What's the policy topic and specific problem to be analyzed? Why is it important or salient at this time?
  - **Background**: What is known about past and present federal or state government responses to the policy problem? Summarize the legislative history of the policy problem. Who are the stakeholders impacted by the policy?
  - **Analysis of Solution Options**: What are options for solving the policy problem? What are the costs/benefits of these various options? Who benefits and who is disadvantaged by implementation of the options? What governmental policy actors are responsible for the adoption/implementation/enforcement of the options? What are political obstacles to success in adoption/implementation/enforcement?
  - **Recommendations**: Which solution do you recommend and why? Under what political conditions do you expect to achieve success?
  - **Appendix**: In this section, you should include a list of empirical research questions that emerge from your research on this policy topic, and also provide a proposal(s) for publications, conference presentations and/or future research projects.
  - **Works Cited/Bibliography**: Complete list of citations.

Late Assignments
Late work may be penalized at the discretion of the student's supervising lecturer. Students should contact their supervising lecturer to request any accommodations or additional time to complete the assignment.

Grading Policy
All writing assignments must be submitted before a final grade will be posted.
20% - Participation
10% - Advocacy Materials
70% - Policy Research/Background Paper/Abstract

Grading Scale
A+ (98+)   A (94-97)   A- (90-93)
B+ (88-89)   B (84-87)   B- (80-83)
C+ (78-79)   C (74-77)   C- (70-73)   D (60-69)   F (59 or lower)

Final grades will be reported to UT Dallas and your home UT System institution by **August 9, 2025** and posted in accordance with their respective grade submission deadlines. ___*Note*___: UT System campuses vary in their use of

the +/- grading scale. Grades for students enrolled at campuses that do not follow this system will be reported as follows: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (59 or lower).

Academic Integrity
Students are expected to abide by the academic rules and regulations established by the University of Texas at Dallas, which is the academic home for the Archer Center (see https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/integrity/ for a guide to ensuring academic integrity).

Harassment Reporting Requirements
Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), which took effect as of January 1, 2020, is a Texas State Law that requires all employees (both faculty and staff) at a public or private post-secondary institution to promptly report any knowledge of any incidents of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking "committed by or against a person who was a student enrolled at or an employee of the institution at the time of the incident." Please note that both the instructor and the TA for this class are mandatory reporters and MUST share with the Title IX office any information about sexual harassment/assault shared with us by a student whether in-person or as part of a journal or other class assignment. Note that a report to the Title IX office does not obligate a victim to take any action, but this type of information CANNOT be kept strictly confidential except when shared with designated confidential employees. A confidential employee is someone a student can go to and talk about a Title IX matter without triggering that employee to have to report the situation to have it automatically investigated. A list of confidential employees is available on the Title IX website.

Comet Creed
This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

"As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do."

Academic Support Resources
The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students. Please see http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures
The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor and Lecturers.

Academic Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, the Policy Working Groups will meet **in-person AT THE ARCHER CENTER** each Monday from 6-8 pm ET. Use the time to work with your lecturer to complete your policy recommendation. This class does *not* meet during the first week of the Fellowship (i.e., during D.C. Orientation).

Date	Class topic	Weeks tasks
June 2	**Overview of Policy & Budget Development**	*Meet with your lecturers to discuss your policy proposal and the plan for refining your policy recommendations, in addition to discussing how the federal budget process impacts your policy recommendations.*
June 2	**ASSIGNMENT: Bring working draft of policy proposal to class and upload to eLearning*	

June 9	**Role of Congressional Leadership**	*Meet with your lecturers to discuss the role of congressional leadership in the policy process and how their actions affect your policy recommendations.*
June 16	**Role of Congressional Member Office**	*Meet with your lecturers to discuss the role that Congressional Member Offices play in the policy process. Be prepared to discuss how you plan to shop your policy proposals to congressional staff and Members.*
June 21	*ASSIGNMENT: Knowledge resources spreadsheet due in eLearning*	
June 23	**Role of White House Policy Advisors**	*Discuss the role of the White House in framing policy problems and solutions. How can you engage with White House policy advisors to effectively advocate for your policy recommendations?*
June 30	**Agency Roles in Policy Development**	*Meet with Executive Branch agency representatives relevant to your policy working groups to discuss the role that federal agencies play in the policy process and plan your strategy for engaging with these policy stakeholders.*
July 7	**Role of Committees in Congress**	*Meet with committee staff relevant to your policy working groups to discuss the role that congressional committees play in the policy process and plan your strategy for advancing your policy proposals.*
July 7	*ASSIGNMENTS: Submit Policy network spreadsheet & Advocacy Materials due in eLearning. Bring working draft presentation to class.*	
July 14	**Workshop for Presentation**	*Each Policy Working Group presents to their lecturer and provides peer-feedback on the proposals.*
July 17	*ASSIGNMENT: Submit final paper to eLearning by 11:59 pm ET*	
July 21	**Policy Murder Boards**	*Each Policy Working Group presents their policy recommendations to a panel of experts.*
July 28	**Final Evaluation**	*Each Policy Working Group also meets with their lecturer to discuss their final proposals and to determine the final audience and action for the recommendation.*