



Applying for Graduate School Fellowships and Awards

*Office of Funding Opportunities
and
Center for Writing & Oral Communication*

December 2024



Graduate School

Competitive Fellowships & Awards

- AY 25-26 Competitions occur in the Spring 2025.
- Students must be nominated.
- Departments/programs are limited in the number of nominations they can submit.
- Nominations are reviewed by a multidisciplinary committee.

Departments nominate students: [View Nomination Deadlines](#)



Dissertation and Research Fellowships

Summer Research Fellowship (Summer 2025)

- 5,000, cost-share with department
- Eligibility: Candidates must be mid-career, need to reach a specific benchmark
- Full Support for over the summer
- SRF Fellows cannot work while on the Fellowship
- Departmental deadline is March 5.

Semester Dissertation Fellowship (Fall 2025 or Spring 2026)

- \$15,000 full-time fellowship for one semester
- Eligibility: Candidates must be in latter stages and plan to graduate by August 2026
- Full support for one semester
- Dissertation Fellows cannot work while on Fellowship.
- Departmental deadline is February 12.



Application Components

1. Student-written statement (or abstract)
 - Follow Instructions
 - State the importance and impact of your work
 - Describe research and provide a timeline
 - Write for a General Audience
 - Seek feedback from others
2. Recommendation Letter from Advisor
3. DGS Questionnaire
4. Student's CV



Selection Committee and Evaluations

Multi-disciplinary, On-campus faculty

12-14 faculty members
(likely NOT in your discipline)

Committee Members will look at several factors:

- Your eligibility
- Significance (or potential significance) of the proposed work
- Feasibility of your research plan
- Your record of productivity and ability to do the work
- Completeness and clarity of proposal



Process

- **NOW:** Inform your advisor/department of your interest
- **NOW:** Prepare student portion of the application and submit to the department
- **Soon:** Request Advisor Letter & DGS Questionnaire
- **February:** Department prepares the nomination package and submits to the Graduate School
- **April:** Award notifications are sent



Student Portion of the Application

- ✓ an abstract of no more than 500 words written for an educated lay audience. The abstract should include: a) the title; b) a description of the study; c) the significance of the study; and d) sources of information or data, if applicable
- ✓ A student-authored one-page statement of: a) work completed; b) work remaining; c) timeline; and d) expected completion date
- ✓ the student's curriculum vitae (two pages)



Writing Your Abstract

- Rhetorical situation:
 - Author
 - Purpose
 - Topic
 - Audience
 - Exigence
 - Constraint



Application materials from Kate Rice, doctoral student in Psychology,
now Dr. Kate Rice Warnell, Assistant Professor at Texas State University

TITLE: Developmental Neural Correlates of Social Interaction

From an infant playing peek-a-boo to an adolescent navigating peer relationships, children develop in a world filled with reciprocal social interaction. Such interaction is crucial for typical social and cognitive development. Moreover, social disabilities such as autism and social anxiety are often most acute during interaction. Thus, understanding the brain bases of social interaction would provide critical insight into typical and atypical development. Current research into social brain function, however, almost exclusively employs non-interactive contexts (e.g., looking at photographs of strangers or listening to recorded speech) that fail to capture real-world social dynamics. Consequently, a key question about the neural correlates of social processing remains unanswered: how does the brain support social interaction?

Opens with
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Application materials from Kate Rice, doctoral student in Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, now Dr. Kate Rice Warnell, Assistant Professor at Texas State University

Provides context for why this matters

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now Dr. Kate Rice Warnell, Assistant Professor at Texas State University

TITLE: Developmental Neural Correlates of Social Interaction

From an infant's babbling to an adolescent navigating peer relationships with reciprocal social interactions, social interaction is crucial for typical social and emotional development. Moreover, social disabilities such as autism spectrum disorders and social anxiety are often most acute during interaction. Thus, understanding the brain bases of social interaction would provide critical insight into typical and atypical development. **Current research into social brain function, however, almost exclusively employs non-interactive contexts (e.g., looking at photographs of strangers or listening to recorded speech) that fail to capture real-world social dynamics.** Consequently, a key question about the neural correlates of social processing remains unanswered: how does the brain support social interaction?

Shows us that there's a GAP: Tells us what ISN'T being done and provides a sense of why that matters.

Application materials from Kate Rice, doctoral student in Psychology,
now Dr. Kate Rice Warnell, Assistant Professor at Texas State University

TITLE: Developmental Neural Correlates of Social Interaction

From an infant playing peek-a-boo to an adolescent navigating peer relationships, children develop in a world filled with rich social interaction. Such interaction is crucial for cognitive development. Moreover, social autism and social anxiety are often most prominent. Thus, understanding the brain bases of social interaction would provide critical insight into typical development. Current research into social brain function, almost exclusively employs non-interactive contexts (e.g., looking at photographs of strangers or listening to recorded speech) that fail to capture real-world social dynamics. **Consequently, a key question about the neural correlates of social processing remains unanswered: how does the brain support social interaction?**

Closes the paragraph by asking a QUESTION. The question clearly responds to that gap. And it's interesting.

Student Portion of the Application

- ✓ an abstract of no more than 500 words written for a general lay audience. The abstract should include:
 - a) the title;
 - b) a description of the study;
 - c) the significance of the study;
 - and d) sources of information or data, if applicable.



Take a minute to brainstorm. . .

Take three minutes to brainstorm how you will. . .

1. Open with a topic of wide interest.
2. Provide context for why the topic matters.
3. Demonstrate that there's a gap in how the topic is addressed.
4. Articulate a question that will help fill that gap.

Summer Research Fellowship Proposal Requirements

Nomination package requires the nominated student to write a two page proposal. It must include:

- a) the nature of the work to be accomplished during the summer;
- b) a plan for its execution;
- c) the specific benchmark(s) that this award will enable the student to meet; and
- d) a clear indication of how the summer project fits within the program's timetable for completing graduation requirements



Benchmarks

The nominee must be able to show that a summer of focused **work will enable them** to prepare for or complete a key benchmark in their program's requirements. Given disciplinary and programmatic differences across campus, programs and their nominees will have broad latitude in defining the benchmarks that students will prepare for or complete. Some humanities programs, for example, have extensive reading lists that students must master for candidacy exams; some science programs may require students at a particular stage to acquire and demonstrate new laboratory methods or other techniques; programs in many disciplines across campus require dissertation prospectuses and, often, formal prospectus defenses. These benchmarks, among others, would be appropriate.



Simone Durham, doctoral student, Sociology
Summer Research application 2019 (unsuccessful)

The University of Maryland's doctoral program in sociology requires the completion of two substantive comprehensive exams. Generally, students choose from our four primary areas of scholarship: Social Psychology, Political Psychology, Demography, and Stratification. In addition to these current focus areas, our department also accommodates previously offered exams in Development; Gender, Work, and Family (GWF); Globalizing Theory; Military Sociology; and (less commonly) Critical Race Theory (CRT). Students have the option of creating and completing alternative comprehensive exams in closer alignment with our individual research agendas and scholarly identities. In addition to completing a standard Social Psychology comprehensive exam, I will be undertaking my RSEI alternative comprehensive exam to prepare me for my future career in academia focused on critical race scholarship .

Simone Durham, doctoral student, Sociology
Summer Research application 2019 (unsuccessful)

The Graduate School Summer Research fellowship is designed to support students working on major benchmarks in their programs. Because of this, I originally felt it was important to provide details about the requirements of my specific program. As a result, this paragraph provides general information about the requirements of my program but provides almost no information about me as a scholar.

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This is the only sentence in this paragraph that directly talks about my work. However, it doesn't contextualize this work in terms of its importance to my scholarly development or link it back to the need for funding.

Simone Durham, doctoral student, Sociology Summer Research application 2020 (successful)

Both of these exams are critical to my scholarly development not only as required benchmarks, but also in building my research agenda. While both are standard exams in our department, they both offer some flexibility to allow students to focus on their own specific interests and those bodies of literature. In addition to the standard asked of all students, my Social Movements exam was tailored to my research interests at the intersection of race and identity. This theoretical preparation will be integral to my ongoing research project on Black millennial perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement. To date, I have conducted 15 interviews for this project and recently submitted to publication for analysis at the American Sociological Association. I plan to publish multiple articles and eventually a book from this research. As a Psychology specialty area, students are encouraged to tailor their exam reading list and questions to fit our research interests. I have constructed a reading list focusing on identity development in Black people which will serve as the foundational literature for my research using Pew's 2015 Survey of Multiracial Americans, as well as for my dissertation research. Through interviews with multiracial people and their family members, my dissertation will investigate the idea that interracial families and multiracial populations and people are symbols of racial progress and a post-racial society.

My essay is a proposal for funding to support a summer of studying for my comprehensive exams. In this paragraph, I provide an argument for the importance of these exams to not only my advancement in the program, but the development of ongoing and future research projects. This shows that I have a clear academic trajectory and helps justify the fellowship as a good investment in me as a scholar if I were awarded

What about the prose?

Academic writing uses a lot of noun phrases because what we talk about in academic writing focuses on nouns/subjects/things.

Find your nouns!



What about the prose?

On the other hand, conversation often revolves around verb—we talk about what we did, where we went, what we want—and more concrete subjects—often ourselves 😊.



What about the prose?

And in academic writing, it's not just the nouns all by themselves. They are often premodified by adjectives or other nouns:


reports



What about the prose?

And in academic writing, it's not just the nouns all by themselves. They are often premodified by adjectives or other nouns:

The most recent of the new teacher education reports



What about the prose?

Or postmodified by prepositional phrases:

*The most recent of the new teacher education reports **from the Department of Education***



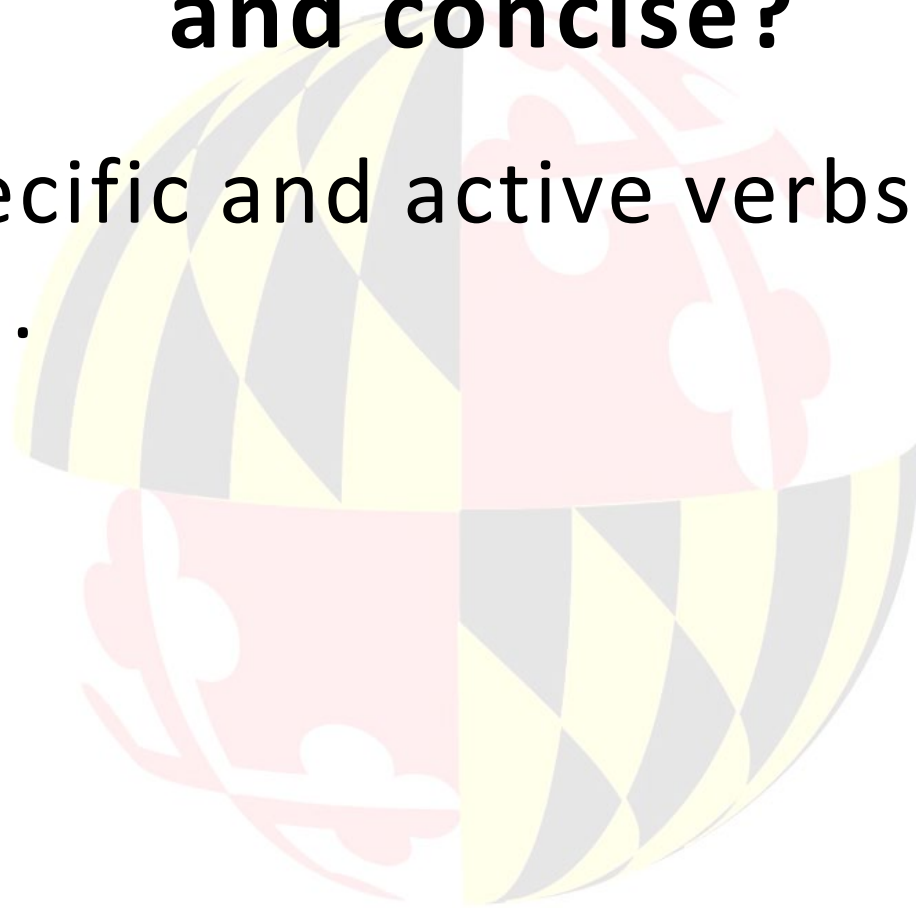
What about the prose?

All of those pieces challenge the reader to pull pieces together (cohere) and then also challenge concision.



So how can I be more coherent and concise?

- Use specific and active verbs when you can.



Jesse Zarley, doctoral candidate in History, Summer Research Fellowship Application, now Dr. Jesse Zarley, Assistant Professor of History, St. Joseph's College, New York

Unlike indigenous groups in much of the Americas, the semi-nomadic Mapuche of Southern Chile successfully resisted incorporation into the Spanish and Chilean states from the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1540 until 1883. Numbering over half-million people today, the Mapuche defended their territorial independence through political alliances, patronage, raiding, commerce, and treaty negotiations with first Spanish and then Chilean officials. During eight weeks in Chile in 2012, I examined Chilean and Spanish government, military, and religious documents as well as the writings of naturalists and travelers. These sources revealed concrete examples of how Mapuche leaders first developed these methods for keeping Spanish colonists at bay and then continued to apply them in their interactions with Chilean officials after independence in 1821. In particular, the documents revealed the importance of a form of political negotiation developed by the Mapuche known as the *parlamento* (or parlay) that helped them defend their over sovereignty for three centuries.

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So how can I be more coherent and concise?

- Keep subject and verb close together – that way, readers know WHO is doing WHAT and then they can more easily manage the details



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Finally, be the hero of the narrative

These are awards TO YOU. The funds are based on what the audience thinks about the value of **your** work, **your** ability to carry it out in a timely fashion, and **your** promise as a scholar.



Carly Muletz, doctoral candidate in Biology, Summer Research Fellowship, now Dr. Carly Muletz Wolz, Robert and Arlene Kogod Secretarial Scholar, Molecular Pathogen Scientist, at the Center for Conservation Genomics, Smithsonian National Zoo

Work remaining and timeline: Currently, I am sequencing culturable bacterial isolates from salamander skin that inhibited a fungal pathogen to determine bacterial species identity of these antifungal bacterial isolates. These cultures were obtained from the same salamander species along the same gradients as in Chapter 1. I plan to complete sequencing by the end of Spring 2014. Once completed, I will perform multivariate statistical analyses to determine what influences the distribution of these antifungal bacterial species. Also, I will determine how these putatively protective members are distributed in the entire bacterial community from Chapter 1 data. I plan to complete analyses and begin preparing a manuscript to submit to the journal *Environmental Microbiology* during Summer 2014.

**AN 80,000 WORD THESIS
WOULD TAKE 9 HOURS TO PRESENT.**

YOUR TIME LIMIT... 3 MINUTES!

UMD THREE-MINUTE THESIS COMPETITION

Register to compete by February 26, 2025

[Register HERE](#)



The Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) is an academic competition developed by The University of Queensland (UQ), Australia for research students.

[MORE INFO](#)



THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Advancing graduate education. Enhancing the graduate student experience.

Thank you

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