

Faculty Name	Laurel Harbridge Yong
Summer 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fall 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Winter 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Spring 2019	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Title	Partisanship and passing the buck for inaction
Project Description	<p>Policy gridlock and an inability to negotiate successful agreements in Congress is at the forefront of concerns by scholars and the public. In fact, in June of 2016, just 13% of Americans rated the job Congress was doing as excellent or good, and almost half of those who said it was doing a poor job cited congressional inaction as the top reason for their view. Clearly the public disapproves of Congress, in large part because of its inability to address pressing policy issues. However, the separation of powers embedded in the American political system can make it difficult for citizens to determine who is to blame when policy solutions are not reached. Strategic politicians may take advantage of this by blaming the opposing party or those in other institutions when gridlock occurs, harming the opposing party and further undermining institutional reputations in the process. If legislators can avoid electoral punishment for inaction by blaming others, this would suggest that the separation of powers provides elected officials with an avenue for avoiding electoral accountability. To study how legislators respond to gridlock in Congress and whether they engage in efforts to "pass the buck," this project examines legislators' communication with constituents. The primary task I'll be working on with my RA is a content analysis of email newsletters sent by sitting national legislators since 2013. In addition to examining these newsletters to understand how legislators respond to inaction and whether they blame others, I also plan engage my RA in some of the data analysis - understanding how we move from the data we've collected to systematically analyzing it with statistical software, and brainstorming substantive hypotheses of interest. More broadly, we'll be seeking to understand how well our political system holds elected officials accountable, and how partisanship (by elected officials and the public) limits this accountability.</p>
Position Expectations	<p>Students will be expected to: 1) Read and analyze newsletters from members of Congress. 2) Brainstorm hypotheses that can be tested using this data. 3) Research biographical information on members of Congress or particular policies. 4) Read and analyze news coverage. 5) Meet regularly (e.g., once a week) with me to discuss the project.</p>
Skills/Experience	1) Attention to detail 2) Critical eye when evaluating written work 3)

Required	Ability to think systematically 4) Some knowledge of Congress and the legislative process is a benefit but is not essential.
What Will the FF Gain?	Through this project I hope that my Farrell Fellow (1) gains a greater understanding of political science research – including how we move from research questions, to hypotheses, to data and to analysis, (2) improved critical thinking skills, and (3) exposure to specific tools and skill sets that may be relevant in other research (e.g., content analysis, analyzing data in R, etc.).
Time Requirement	Up to 30 hours a week in the summer (note that I would be happy to work with a student for fewer hours as well (e.g., 10-15) if that flexibility is desirable), and 5-10 hours/week during the academic year