

PLSC 197 / SODA 197N: Social Data, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence

Christopher Zorn

January 22, 2026

Semester in Washington

Department of **Political Science**

SEMESTER IN WASHINGTON PROGRAM

Live and work as an intern while gaining first-hand exposure to the inner workings of politics!



- Available summer and fall semesters
- Only open to Political Science, International Politics, and Social Data Analytics majors



PennState
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Extended Deadline!

APPLICATIONS FOR FALL 2026 PROGRAM ARE OPEN

Applications due
Friday, January 30

Two-Part Submission Process

COMPLETE THE APPLICATION

pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6yxPZT4ZHSXHE0u



LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FROM A FACULTY MEMBER

Request a letter from a Political Science faculty member who can address your suitability for an internship and a semester in Washington, D.C. and have them send it to Melissa Guthrie (mqg5938@psu.edu).

Your application is not complete until we receive the letter.



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONTACT

Marie Hojnacki

DIRECTOR OF THE SEMESTER
IN WASHINGTON PROGRAM

 meh11@psu.edu



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The Point Of Collection: “the moment when data becomes data”

1. Data sets are the results of their means of collection.
2. As we collect more data, we prioritize things that fit patterns of collection.
3. Data sets outlive the rationale for their collection.
4. Especially combined, data sets reveal far more than intended.
5. Data collection is a transaction that is the result of an invisible relationship.

Where Do Social Data Come From?

Sources:

- **Official Records** (birth records, census, court data, school records, etc.)
- **Digital Archives** (news stories, press releases, historical records)
- **Commercial Data** (credit scores, purchase histories, loyalty programs, etc.)
- **Social Network Data** (posts/photos, comments, “likes”/reactions, etc.)
- **Platform Traces** (“digital exhaust”: clickthroughs, search data, geolocations, etc.)
- Others?

Data Types: Table

	Example	Who Controls?	What's Missing?
Official Records			
Digital Archives			
Social Media			
Commercial Data			
Platform Traces			