

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

Christopher Zorn

January 13, 2026

The Course...

From the course description:

...Students will unpack how human-generated data is collected, structured, and transformed into machine learning models, discovering both the technical and human sides of AI. Through real-world case studies, interactive projects, and critical discussions, students will gain hands-on experience with data systems and analytics tools while examining the social, political, and ethical questions that surround AI in practice.

Course attributes:

- PLSC B.A. majors can use this course toward the 100-level-or-above requirement and the requirement for any political science or related area.
- PLSC (B.A. or B.S.) majors can receive GS credit if they register for the course as SODA 197N, since PLSC majors must take GS credits outside of the discipline of political science.
- SoDA majors can use this course toward the requirement of six credits of additional political science.

Various things:

- Course meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:35-11:50 a.m. ET.
- Location is [Willard](#) 258
- No class on January 15 (conference) or March 10 & 12 (spring break)
- Teaching Assistant: [Arif Memovic](mailto:Arif.Memovic@psu.edu) (aqm6729@psu.edu)
- Course materials: <https://github.com/PrisonRodeo/PLSC197-SP2026-git>

Grades will be based upon:

- Course attendance / participation: 100 points
- Three (of twelve possible) short assignments: 100 points each
- Two applied labs: 150 points each
- Final examination: 300 points

Other things:

- The grading scale is [here](#).
- “**Bounty Hunter**” for extra credit (up to 20 points) – see the syllabus.

Find me at:

- E-mail: zorn@psu.edu
- (Non-virtual) Office: 221 Katz Building
- Office Hours: By appointment
- Zoom: <https://psu.zoom.us/my/prisonrodeo>
- Mobile Phone / Text: 803-553-4077
- Bluesky (rarely): [@prisonrodeo](https://bluesky.social/@prisonrodeo)
- As a rule, CCing Mr. Memovic is a good idea.

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!

 **FUNDING SUPPORT AVAILABLE**

 **TWO UPCOMING INFORMATION SESSIONS**

Wednesday, January 14
6:00 p.m. | 111 Chambers

Thursday, January 15
6:00 p.m. | 111 Chambers



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Department of **Political Science**

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Live and work as an intern
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- Available summer and fall semesters
- Only open to Political Science, International Politics, and Social Data Analytics majors

PROGRAM PERKS

- Get help finding and applying for internships based on your career goals
- Live in arranged housing with other Penn State students
- Make connections with Penn State alumni in the D.C. area as well as college students from around the country
- Earn 3 credits for your internship
- Take a 400-level PLSC course taught in person by department faculty*
- Take an in-person course focused on professional development and the D.C. experience*

*These experiences are only offered during the fall semester program.



(this is getting ridiculous)

INTERNSHIP FUNDING

Students are encouraged to apply for enrichment funding from the Liberal Arts Career Enrichment Network and additional funding from the department to help cover costs.

DEPARTMENT FUNDING

[polisci.la.psu.edu/undergraduate/
honors-and-scholarships/scholarships/](http://polisci.la.psu.edu/undergraduate/honors-and-scholarships/scholarships/)



ENRICHMENT FUNDING

[la.psu.edu/current-students/current-students-funding/
enrichment-funding/](http://la.psu.edu/current-students/current-students-funding/enrichment-funding/)



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(are we done yet?)

APPLICATIONS FOR FALL 2026 PROGRAM ARE OPEN

Applications due
Friday, January 23

Two-Part Submission Process

1
**COMPLETE THE
APPLICATION**



pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6yxPZT4ZHSXHEQu

2
**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

TWO UPCOMING INFORMATION SESSIONS

 Wednesday, January 14
6:00 p.m.
111 Chambers

 Thursday, January 15
6:00 p.m.
111 Chambers

CONTACT

Marie Hojnacki

DIRECTOR OF THE SEMESTER
IN WASHINGTON PROGRAM

 meh11@psu.edu



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Things To Do Before Next Week

1. Bookmark: <https://github.com/PrisonRodeo/PLSC197-SP2026-git/>
2. Read the following:
 - Christine L. Borgman. “Data, Disciplines, and Scholarly Publishing.” *Learned Publishing*, 21(1):29-38, 2008.
 - Mimi Onuoha. “The Point of Collection.” *Data & Society*, February 2016.
 - Nicola Jones. “The AI Revolution is Running Out of Data. What Can Researchers Do?” *Nature*, 636(8042):290-292, December 2024.