Fall 2020 Project Menu
Round 2
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Science Rules!: An Investigation into the Rules and Norms of Scientific Integrity

Office of Science and Technology Cooperation
Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Overview:

Science intrinsically operates on certain principles, which are essential to a healthy and vibrant international research ecosystem. An important activity of our Office is outreach to international partners to discuss scientific cooperation as anchored to the shared values and principles that underpin research: values and principles such as transparency, peer-review publication, consideration of ethical ramifications, etc. Part of this exciting project will be determining just what exactly those principles are for us and for our international partners.

To better inform our efforts in discussing shared principles of science with partners, we’d like to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how the principles of research integrity (and what those principles are!) are discussed and deliberated in scientific bodies worldwide – such as scientific societies, universities, or research funding institutions. For instance, both the U.S. National Academies and European Academies have deliberated such principles and values (see 2017 Fostering Integrity in Research by NASEM and 2017 The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity by ALLEA (All European Academies)); no doubt, many others exist as well. By researching existing efforts in this space – both domestic and international – your team will enable our office to amplify these principles and more effectively engage new partners on conversations mapped to shared principles. We will rely on your team’s public policy and research skills and meaningful analysis of why these case studies matter. Your team taking on this project would advance our efforts to include meaningful and powerful science and technology relationships around the world. This is a great opportunity to think about science from a scientific, philosophical, sociological, and/or ethical lens. We can’t wait to work with you.

Format of Final Project:

We would like to receive a PowerPoint presentation of case studies – domestic and/or international - along with a more detailed written report with greater levels of detail, information, and data.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Science and Technology; Sociology; Statistics;

Comments:
Were your team to be selected, we'd work with you to identify background readings and other materials. We don't anticipate this project would last longer than a semester. For more information, our office's website is:
Follow the Money: A Statistical Investigation into the Relationship between Funding Levels, Cooperation, and Science & Technology Agreements

Office of Science and Technology Cooperation
Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Overview:

The Office of Science and Technology Cooperation manages the negotiation of nearly 60 international bilateral science and technology agreements. Because the U.S. approach to science funding is diffuse and bottom-up, we often don't have direct insight into the amount of cooperation that takes place under these agreements. It would be extremely useful to our office’s work and in bilateral relationships to have a sense of the effect of the presence of an S&T Agreement on bilateral scientific cooperation.

We would love to work with a team that has rigorous statistical analysis skills, as well as the ability to set variables and explore relationships between those variables in a way easily translated into policy documents. This would be a chance to design an original analysis and work with international data sets among a variety of policy and social settings.

Format of Final Project:

We would like to receive a written report, which includes statistical analysis, and a data set.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Science and Technology; Statistics;

Comments:

Were your team to be selected, we'd work with you to identify background readings and other materials. We don't anticipate this project would last longer than a semester. For more information, our office's website is:
Overview:

Open science policies, practices, and attitudes vary greatly around the world. Many countries are beginning to more closely at open science—both the benefits and the risks to domestic equities—and put in new policies. In the Asia-Pacific region, the 21 member economies of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) are beginning to discuss the topic in more detail, with a focus on the potential economic impact. In 2020, one of the primary topics of discussion in the APEC Policy Partnership for Science, Technology, and Innovation will be open science and what best practices or policies can be put in place to increase economic growth in the APEC region.

Your team’s work to survey and document current open science-related policies, practices, and perceptions amongst the 21 APEC member economies would equip the U.S. government and other APEC stakeholders throughout the region with information to guide discussions and policy development. This is a great opportunity to develop your own survey methodology, explore the connection between policies and social norms and practices, and contribute to the advancement of science diplomacy worldwide.

Format of Final Project:

We would like to receive a written report on open science-related policies of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member economies, as well written report on 10 case studies on perceptions on open science in APEC economies.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

East Asian/Pacific Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Relations; Science and Technology; Statistics;

Comments:

Were your team to be selected, we'd work with you to identify background readings and other materials. We don't anticipate this project would last longer than a semester. For more information, our office's website is:
Overview:

International research and development infrastructure (RDI) is in the middle of expansive growth, both domestically and internationally. Your team’s work to survey and document current and planned RDI around the world would equip the U.S. government and U.S. scientists to have access to state-of-the-art facilities through scientific cooperation, understand where global gaps exist to invest in RDI smartly, and how to engage specific countries on RDI investments and cooperation. This is a great opportunity to develop your own survey methodology, explore international cutting-edge science, and contribute to the advancement of science diplomacy worldwide.

The U.S. Government is developing a definition of research and development infrastructure (RDI) to better understand the scope of both domestic and international research infrastructure. International infrastructure is of interest to the United States because it may provide American researchers with access to novel capabilities and reduce wait times for access to similar facilities. The Department has an interest in providing the interagency with information relevant to the needs and missions of the science and technology enterprise. An inventory of major international infrastructure could be valuable in developing our own domestic inventory and assist science agencies in assessing the state of American scientific leadership. A research team devoted to surveying the international landscape for present advanced facilities and planned major infrastructure investments could be helpful in maintaining America’s science and technology edge while preserving our status as a destination for the world’s most coveted science and engineering talent.

Format of Final Project:

We would like to receive a written report of the survey, as well as a matrix for evaluating capabilities of the infrastructure projects.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Development; International Relations; Science and Technology; Statistics;

Comments:
Were your team to be selected, we'd work with you to identify background readings and other materials. We don't anticipate this project would last longer than a semester. For more information, our office's website is

Overview:

Bangladesh returned to democracy after an extended caretaker government with the 2009 parliamentary elections. That election marked the first poll since Bangladesh had truly entered the internet era, with mobile phones proliferating throughout a country the size of Georgia with a population half as large as the United States (160 million people). It was also marred by violence between rival student wings – with each other and amongst themselves. In Bangladesh’s winner-take-all politics, demonstrations are too often measured in the number of casualties. Since 2009, there have been two more elections. The ruling Awami League has won all three. In 2014, most opposition parties boycotted the polls. In 2019, the opposition parties participated yet the Awami League won an even larger share of the vote. In between the national polls there have been municipal elections, political movements, and unrelated skirmishes among the student wings at Bangladeshi universities. Recently, Bangladeshi politicians have suggested that student wings be introduced into private universities where student movements have existed for decades but are not allowed to organize openly to prevent disruption (which their students explicitly pay for).

This purpose of this project is to have a university team analyze open source reporting of violence available on the internet; both in traditional media like newspaper and TV and social media. Using the elections as different chapter markers, we want the winning team to map out where clashes occur, who it involves, what the motivations were, and what if any positive response followed those incidents. This project will enrich our existing data sets with qualitative insights; i.e. the “why” in addition to the “where” and “how many.” The project will further inform our efforts to reduce and eventually end the violence in Bangladeshi politics.

Format of Final Project:

Monthly and Final Reports, Powerpoint Summary/Presentation, and Posterboard Display for Potential DC Showcase

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations;
Overview:

Over the past 10 years, the debate on police oversight in Africa has shifted from one of actors like APCOF justifying its importance, to its formal acknowledgement in regional human rights instruments and policy documents as central to the achievement of democratic governance and human rights. APCOF now seeks to undertake a study to map and analyse the ways in which external police oversight manifests across the continent, at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.

The research will be the first of its kind to demonstrate how police accountability is understood and implemented in Africa, and whether the influence of regional mechanisms and their security sector reform and governance agendas are contributing to national reform. Critically, it will also provide examples of innovations in design and delivery of police oversight that respond to the particular policing challenges experienced in Africa as a result of the colonial legacy inherent in modern policing practices, post-independence policing governance deficits, and chronic resource constraints. The research will provide a much needed stocktake of the police accountability debate 10 years on, against the backdrop of significant investment by APCOF and others in this work, and identify both the good practice from which other states can draw on, as well as critical challenges in the progressive realisation of police accountability as central to democratic governance and the realisation of human rights at the regional and domestic levels.

Format of Final Project:

Ideally, APCOF would like to receive a 20 – 30 page research paper that identifies: (a) police oversight mechanisms, both formal and informal, in each African state, with information on the background to their establishment (in particular, the socio-political context); (b) the mandate and function of the mechanism; (c) any information on how their performance is measured, and how they are performing against that framework; and (d) challenges or innovations observed in the design and functioning of the mechanism. The type of mechanisms to be mapped include, but are not limited to, both formal and informal structures such as statutory bodies dedicated to police oversight, national human rights institutions; national preventive mechanisms; and civil society organisations who perform a range of functions from research, to the provision of medico-legal services. Other actors, such as parliamentary committees the judiciary, may play an important role in police accountability in a national context, and can be included in the mapping exercise where appropriate. APCOF has an extensive network of police oversight practitioners across the continent, and can share this information with the US research institution to aid in the identification of relevant mechanisms. Ideally, the US research institution would have the capacity to draw on information in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic, though the research itself would be
presented to APCOF in English.

APCOF will then use this research paper to develop a broader publication that will look broadly at the last 10 years in terms of normative standard development at the regional level, how it has manifested in police accountability at the national level, and draw conclusions on what the police accountability agenda can and should look like for the next 10 years, based on the research findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; International Relations;
Explain A Complicated Process - Passport Website Instructional Videos

Bureau of Consular Affairs, Passport Services, Community Relations (CA/PPT/S/PMO/CR)

Consular Affairs

Overview:

Travel.State.Gov is the only official resource customers can access to get the most up-to-date information on all things passport. The website tends to be text-heavy due to the amount of information that must be communicated to the customer, and a series of videos would help condense that information. This project seeks to develop a series of visually coherent videos that explain the complicated passport process in a way the public understands. The topics would likely include renewing a passport, applying for the first time, and minor passports, but are up for discussion.

Format of Final Project:

A series of 4-5 short videos explaining how to undertake basic passport tasks, such as renewing a passport, applying for the first time, getting a child’s passport, etc. Ideal production would include a mix of animation, graphics, and text. Any sound would need to meet current 508 Compliance for the disabled or hard of hearing (example: closed captioning).

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Marketing, Graphic Design, Photography, Film, Advertising, Tourism Studies;

Comments:

We are very open to suggestions for how these videos might look- and we will provide you all of the content you need.
Overview:

Over 300 U.S. diplomatic buildings in almost every nation in the world rely on closed-circuit television systems (CCTV) as part of their physical security apparatus. Many video cameras are installed outdoors in harsh conditions of sand, sun, and salt spray and suffer from a range of maladies. Dust, dirt, salt, lichen, and atmospheric pollution on the camera bubble degrade the quality of an image. A camera that is out of focus suffers a similar loss in quality. A broken camera may not produce an image at all. Pan, tilt, and zoom (PTZ) functions may not function. Over time, foliage can grow to block key parts of a camera view. Each of these situations degrades our ability to protect the people who work at and visit our diplomatic facilities.

Since dirty camera bubbles are the biggest problems, proposals must address this issue at a minimum. Teams can choose to address problems of focus, foliage, missing images, and PTZ functionality, as desired. Teams can also choose to use analog cameras, digital cameras, or both. If requested in the proposals, ST may loan the actual cameras and control systems that we use. Since we are looking for autonomous problem detection, the outcome must notify a person who is sitting at a computer. This could be done through email, SNMP trap or table, or any other method teams come up with.

Format of Final Project:

Teams can choose how they will communicate the results of their research. Keep in mind that the project’s sponsor only has about 15 minutes to dedicate to understanding your efforts, as she has several solutions to review. You can provide an in-person demonstration -- recorded on video -- write a short paper, provide a dissertation with an executive summary, or come up with your own way of presenting your results. You must both communicate your results and document your project well enough that someone else can reproduce it.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Science and Technology;
Comments:

For proposal purposes, teams can plan for Samsung SNP-6320H cameras for IP-based systems and SCP-2373 for analog. Both of these are capable of pan, tilt, and zoom; teams can use these features or not. Proposals can request additional hardware to build a system. When a proposal is accepted, ST will provide current hardware from our stock, which may differ from what is requested.
Evaluating the Process and Outcomes of Cabo Verde’s Graduation: Contributions and the Price of Graduating from Low-Income to Middle-Income

Political/ Economic Affairs

Economic and Business Affairs to Cabo Verde

Overview:

In 2008 Cabo Verde became the second country in the world to graduate from the list of least developed countries (LDC) to become a lower-middle income country (MIC). As an independent country since 1975 and once considered “unviable” by the IMF and the WB, it soon became clear that economic growth would depend on a strong development strategy and vision to face fundamental challenges. Cabo Verde is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS): natural resources – including water – are scarce, the arid climate limits agriculture and industry, and the small market and population make external interest hard to attract (approximately 550,000). Despite substantial difficulties, the progress made on various fronts – education, infrastructure, health, water and sanitation, political will for ambitious reforms, embracing modernization and technology – has been commendable. The graduation to MIC status represents the international community’s recognition of this small archipelago’s development strategy, its respect for human rights, and its commitment to democracy and socio economic progress. Progress made since 1975 reflects continuous good performance based on two of the three UN established evaluation criteria for graduation: GDP per capita and the Human Development Index. However, Cabo Verde still struggles with a variety of vulnerabilities including addressing poverty, transportation, high public debt and unemployment rates, and other fundamental needs; it is also heavily dependent on external financing such as remittances, official development assistance, and favorable attention from European tourism operators.

Ten years following graduation, it is important to understand and evaluate if and how graduation – as a prize for good performance – is contributing positively and practically towards economic growth and sustainable development. Although graduation is considered a positive development, it can have a complicated impact on the country’s relationships with IFIs, IOs, and multi- and bilateral partners. The country’s own role in promoting graduation versus remaining at the top end of the LDC list and the role of the international community in the transition period, especially as regards access to finance, are important. Cabo Verde’s experience may contribute to smoother transitions for other SIDS.

The proposed project would use a variety of data and analysis (obtained via reports and records as well as direct interviews) including from the United Nations, World Bank, and various entities in Cabo Verde (public, private, academic, and civil society) to evaluate the process, the transition, and the outcomes. The evaluation should address, but not be limited to, the following questions and topics: Who drove the graduation initiative, and why? Was it sufficiently consultative? What has changed in the country, specifically as regards poverty, spending choices, investment, and development? What are Cabo Verde’s short- and medium-term future prospects? What lessons learned and recommendations can be made to
Cabo Verde and to the IFIs/ IOs who make the decisions? How can Cabo Verde’s experience help shape other SIDS’ graduation processes?

Format of Final Project:

Strategy paper with actions and actors identified

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Development; International Relations; International Finance;

Comments:

This question is, clearly, broader than Cabo Verde.
Overview:

A sprawling archipelago with a young population, an abundance of unexplored maritime and terrestrial biodiversity, and dozens of government research agencies covering areas ranging from public health to space exploration, Indonesia should easily make a list of countries central to modern science. But, despite this immense potential, Indonesia has long lagged behind its regional peers in attracting and training scientists due to systemic issues like limited multi-year research funding, complex regulations, and a lack of job opportunities in STEM fields. According to the most recent OECD statistics, Indonesia invests less than .01 percent of GDP on research per year, with the majority coming from government grants. Moreover, only a small number of Indonesian universities manage to enter global ranking lists, a source of considerable concern for policymakers. To make the matters even more complicated, Indonesia imposes restrictions on foreign scientists through a research permitting system and material transfer agreements that can result in criminal penalties including jail time and large fines.

In 2019, Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo announced that boosting Indonesia’s human capacity is one of his administration’s top priorities. As a part of this effort, in August 2019, the Indonesian government passed a new comprehensive science and technology (S&T) management law (UU 11/2019) to tackle systemic challenges and reform its sprawling science bureaucracy. The law proposes new funding mechanisms for government research grants, peer ethics boards to review projects, and directs the national government to reorganize its science agencies under a national research coordinating body. These proposals will be implemented via Ministerial and Presidential regulations over the next two years, meaning policymakers face a significant challenge to figure out how to tailor regulations to create an open academic environment that supports President Jokowi’s vision to boost the capacity of Indonesia’s scientists, students and universities. This multi-disciplinary Diplomacy Lab collaboration will pair teams from U.S. public policy, comparative politics, or STEM-focused programs with the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, the State Department’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, and prominent Indonesian science policymakers to produce reports detailing international and American best practices to promote scientific collaboration that will be presented to the Indonesian government as possible avenues forward for implementation of their new S&T bill. Teams will work closely with policy analysts at the Embassy and Indonesian government, and be expected to engage in comparative research and analysis of how countries, municipalities and universities successfully promote scientific collaboration and innovation.
Format of Final Project:

This Diplomacy Lab collaboration should result in an actionable report to be delivered to Indonesian policymakers on best practices that can be used to develop discrete regulations (such as peer ethics panels or grant funding) as the government seeks to implement the August 2019 S&T bill. This analysis can be presented as a research paper, data analysis, or otherwise, as long as it is in a form that is actionable and comprehensible to the wider policymaking community. Accompanying presentations summarizing key points would be a plus.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

East Asian/Pacific Studies; Education & Cultural Studies; Global Health; International Law; International Relations; Science and Technology;
Designing For Diplomacy: Appropriate Architectural Representation for a U.S. Embassy of the Future and Façade Explorations with parametric Digital Design

PDCS/DE/AD

Overseas Buildings Operations

Overview:

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is seeking academic proposals for the study of Embassy design at both the urban scale and at the detailed level of façade exploration utilizing parametric digital design.

Part I: Embassy of the Future
The U.S. Department of State has historically commissioned architectural designs for U.S. Embassies through a variety of methods ranging from competitions to mandated standardized designs. The resulting buildings have also ranged from the iconic embassies in Beijing, London and Lima to a more architecturally understated group in Manama, Berlin, and Islamabad.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is seeking academic proposals for the study of appropriate architectural representation through the design of a U.S. Embassy of the Future. Student work should answer these questions:

1. At an urban scale, what is the role of architecture in creating the appropriate representation of the United States diplomatically for its centers for engagement, and define what constitutes that architecture?
2. Further, how does the architecture of an American embassy engage and compliment the culture and context of the host country?
3. How much does the local contemporary or vernacular architectural context, materials, landscaping, climate and infrastructure influence the embassy’s design?
4. How can the need for security and the desire for openness be achieved through design and technological advancements?
5. In times of heightened security how can an American embassy of the future operate as a totally self-sufficient entity?
6. How does the embassy of the future create a better community within for its staff and visitors?

Part II: Façade Exploration
The U.S. Department of State has historically built the new U.S. embassies with poured-in-place concrete due to its inherent strength, versatility, durability, and local availability nearly everywhere in the world. These concrete buildings are often clad in stone, pre-cast concrete, or masonry which is all considered traditional building materials. The biggest challenge in embassy design is how to balance need for security with the desire for openness.

The semesters work shall include the study of advanced building façade concepts and materials using
parametric digital design analysis. Proposals could be inspired by ecological design, regenerative design, advanced acoustic design, light weight high strength structural and security products, and technological advances for façade materials that address these two opposing needs.

Design proposals shall not compromise the existing levels of security required at U.S. Embassies. Proposals shall assume that façade materials are backed up with poured-in-place concrete structural elements, or another material that will provide the necessary levels of physical security.

The study must embrace the notion that embassy typology requires principles of standardization such as standard bay sizes and certain building materials, however the typology does not need to result standard building design.

Format of Final Project:

These studies will be conducted as part of an architectural design studio that will address a specific embassy program on a specific site. Façade exploration will be conducted as an additional component of the studio. Studio deliverables will be in the form of 2D and 3D graphic architectural presentations and written text. Façade Exploration deliverables will be in the form of 2D and 3D graphic presentation supported by written text and data analysis.

It is anticipated that once a bid is accepted for this proposal, that Diplomacy Lab and the sponsoring School will enter into a detailed dialogue modifying and tailoring the content of the semesters work to address the goals and objectives of both the School and Diplomacy Lab within the definition of the project.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Architecture;

Comments:

Resources:
https://overseasbuildings.state.gov/
https://de.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/chancery/building/
https://biomimicry.org/
https://living-future.org/lbc/
http://www.case.rpi.edu/
https://www.regenerative.com/what-is/regenerative-design
http://www.taktl-llc.com/What-is-TAKTL
Investment Climate Trends in the Investment Climate Statements for Sub-Saharan African Economic and Regional Affairs African Affairs

Overview:

The Department of State has been qualitatively assessing country investment climates for more than 20 years in the form of the Investment Climate Statement – chapter VII of the Country Commercial Guide. Until now, data analytic technology was unavailable to quantify the trends and changes that diplomatic engagement produced. This project seeks to apply qualitative data analytics to quantify the positive or negative effect of sustained diplomatic engagement – economic statecraft – in promoting a more U.S.-friendly investment climate in target countries.

Economic Sections have for years carefully crafted the investment climate statement section – particularly the opening paragraph assessment – to signal areas of significant progress and concern in a country’s investment climate.

Apply word and phrase data analytics to track the evolution of and trends within the United States economic statecraft to promote more level playing fields and open investment climates in partner countries. Specifically studying 20 years of past investment climate statements for target countries to quantify trends, identify measurable results, and assess success of economic and commercial diplomacy to ultimately serve as a metric of diplomatic engagement efficacy going forward.

Model Methodology: https://www.npr.org/2019/05/03/720139562/episode-910-economics-sexism-data

Format of Final Project:

In addition to a report describing the trends and patterns revealed after quantifying the qualitative descriptions over time - the resulting insights might help inform a new metric to measure economic statecraft and engagement in the trade and investment policy space.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Law; International Relations;
Comments:

The inspiration for this project stems from a recent podcast by Planet Money where an economic student was able to quantify and identify animus in the field of economics by studying online conversations in a well-regarded and famous professional exchange forum. The paper is widely regarded because where it is difficult to reach into a person's heart to see what motivates them, the quantifying of certain words and patterns of communication revealed real tendencies. These tendencies could then be measured and assessed giving the researcher excellent insight into the hearts and minds of the collective. (Links to the press about the study and the actual paper are here: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/18/upshot/evidence-of-a-toxic-environment-for-women-in-economics.html and additional findings: https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/csweep/survey).

This project seeks to replicate that same technique for the purpose of assessing the Department of State's success in economic diplomacy. Unlike private economists posting their opinions on a closed forum, the State Department's economic sections are posting for the public very carefully crafted assessments of a country's investment climate encapsulated in the Investment Climate Statements. The ICS assesses the current conditions in a country, progress made on previous areas of concern, and new challenges that have evolved. These snapshots are among the very few public tools that the U.S. Department of State has to communicate the US government's position on the investment climate in a country. Most Embassies carefully craft these assessments using a narrow range of linguistic techniques to describe their concerns without offending the host country. Studying these carefully selected words may reveal a trends, successes, and ultimately help to share a future tool for measuring the efficacy of economic diplomacy. The purpose of economic diplomacy is to level the playing field for U.S. investment and companies, foster greater global economic integration, and promote more shared prosperity.
Overview:

SAIT strives to empower our workforce to navigate a rapidly developing IT environment while broadening our reach through innovative and impactful learning.

In order to achieve these goals effectively, SAIT needs to continually innovate how we develop and deliver new curriculum, explore and understand emerging technologies while maintaining expertise for legacy systems, and expand our learning ecosystem beyond formal training via microlearning, social and peer-to-peer learning, and informal learning opportunities.

This project will assist SAIT to modernize our curriculum development processes, training delivery methods, and promote procedural and programmatic innovation in the use of IT in American diplomacy.

Format of Final Project:

I. Research Presentation/Whitepaper/Analysis - Design recommendations for the IT School of the Future for the Department of State. Tabula rasa, blue sky thinking, starting from scratch! We want the ideal theoretical design of what a modern IT school supporting the foreign affairs community should be setting aside all historical contexts, political administrations, bureaucratic limitations, and budgetary constraints.

Through a holistic lens, provide data-driven recommendations on overhauling curriculum design, delivery methods, e-learning ecosystems, classroom technologies, and necessary educational skills and strategies IT instructors should have beyond their specific expertise/domain of knowledge.

II. Data Analysis/Report/Dashboard - Development of a business intelligence/data analytics dashboard for SAIT leadership and management to monitor and make decisions in real-time the school's performance in regards to enrollment rates, student data (e.g. level, job series, years at State), instructor data (e.g. podium hours, course load, and areas of expertise), classroom usage data, etc.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Cyber Security; Information & Communication Technology; Public-Private Partnerships; Training; Communications;
Comments:

As the U.S. government’s premier foreign affairs training provider, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is dedicated to ensuring career-long learning required for success in today’s global arena. FSI is proud to serve the U.S. Department of State and the entire USG foreign affairs community as a strategic enabler of diplomatic excellence by providing training for substantive, regional, and linguistic expertise, leadership finesse, and personal resilience and innovative problem-solving.

The School of Applied Information Technology (SAIT) prepares all Department employees for their Foreign Affairs mission by developing proficiency in information technology and business applications; including but not limited to the installation, configuration, administration, troubleshooting, repair, and enterprise use of technology, IT Tradecraft, and information security.
The Overstay Mentality: Understanding Unlawful Immigration of Cabo Verdeans

U.S. Embassy Praia, Consular Section
Consular Affairs to Cabo Verde

Overview:

Cabo Verdeans have strong ties to and a large diaspora in New England. In fact, by some estimates, the community of Cabo Verdean Americans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island is as large as the population of Cabo Verde itself. The consular section at the U.S. Embassy in Praia, Cabo Verde, is responsible for adjudicating tourist visa applications for the steady stream of Cabo Verdeans wishing to visit their family and friends in the United States. In FY2017, U.S. Embassy Praia’s consular officers adjudicated nearly 5,000 nonimmigrant visa applications. However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security estimates that in the same period 13.66% of Cabo Verdean travelers overstayed illegally in the United States, one of the highest overstay rates of travelers from any country.

To accurately make adjudication decisions, the Embassy’s consular officers are seeking information about the prevalent overstay mentality amongst Cabo Verdeans. Why are so many Cabo Verdeans overstaying illegally in the United States and how can this trend be discouraged? We envision a project that could be both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, students could examine publicly-available DHS overstay data to see how this trend has changed over time. Qualitatively, students could assess this overstay mentality through discussions with individual immigrants, community organizations, ICE, and CBP, among others. Linked to this would be an evaluation of the education Cabo Verdeans receive about visa regulations and the consequences of overstaying illegally in the United States. Ideally, this project could help U.S. Embassy Praia combat unlawful immigration without dissuading legitimate visitor travel to the United States.

Format of Final Project:

The ideal deliverable is a short analysis memo that includes suggestions on how to combat illegal immigration without dissuading legitimate Cabo Verdean travel to the United States.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Anthropology; International Relations; Sociology; Public Policy/Government Studies/Demography;

Comments:

https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cape-verde-towards-end-emigration
Implementing Exit Controls on the US Mexico Border

Non Immigrant Visas

U.S. Mission to Mexico

Overview:

The idea of implementing exit controls is not new, but has generally focused on air travel. Traveling by air offers a number of alternative methods to confirm travel beyond biometric or immigration checks. However, the US and Mexico share a long land border with many land border crossing points. Currently, there is no clear way to identify when someone leaves the US via land border. Part of the mandate of Consular Affairs is to promote border security while facilitating legitimate travel. Accomplishing that task would be made easier by having an ability to track when someone leaves the US.

We would be interested in working with a team to further identify the scope of this project, primarily to explore how exit controls for land borders could be implemented, and what the mechanics would be for such an implementation. We would like to be able to understand operational feasibility in terms of time, money, and structural changes required.

Format of Final Project:

Report of potential exit control implementation ideas for US-Mexico land border crossing points, and an analysis of the logistical and operational requirements for implementation of any resulting ideas.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; Cyber Security; Information & Communication Technology; International Law; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement; Science and Technology; Statistics; Trafficking in Persons; Western Hemisphere Studies;

Comments:

The expected timeframe of this project is 4 months.
Overview:

Have you ever looked at the same piece of evidence and seen it two different ways? Has a colleague or friend looked at the same fact and seen it in a different light? This project will ask, how can two different officers look at the same applicant for a non-immigrant visa (NIV) at different dates and come to the same conclusion, consistently? In other words, if a visa applicant were to apply on two separate occasions, but be interviewed by different officers, what management techniques can we learn from other research fields investigating decision making in order to arrive at the same conclusion? NIV decisions are based on the Immigration and Nationality Act as well as guidance from the Foreign Affairs Manual. Ultimately all decisions are made by people, and any decision made by humans is open to be different due to a wide range of factors. We want to know what creates consistent decisions from other related fields.

This project would take an interdisciplinary approach to answering this question, drawing on a wide base of research that already exists from behavioral economics, psychology, political science, and business (though we are open to exploring information from other fields of study as well that may have relevance to answering our question). The heart of this question is not about decision making in NIV, but rather what best practices already exist that are relevant to understanding how to ensure consistency between officers in adjudicating NIV cases. The outcome of this project should be a series of recommendations for best practices from these studies to help us manage the work flow of decision making in our NIV unit and possibly around the world. This is a great opportunity for researchers and students to help improve the implementation of the part of our immigration system that brings in the highest volume of individuals into the United States each year.

Format of Final Project:

We'd like to see a concise literature review (5 pages or less) with a complete bibliography to support your suggestions for how to make consistent decisions. Your suggestions for how to make our decisions more consistent can be displayed in whatever format you prefer as long as it is clear and concise - this will be our action item that we will use internally and could be reviewed at higher levels within the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; International Law; International Relations; Marketing; Public-Private Partnerships; Science and Technology;
**Comments:**

The U.S. Department of State processes millions of non-immigrant visas (NIVs) every year, all around the world. Officers who are charged with making these decisions face a multitude of resilience challenges, including decision fatigue and working often in difficult environments. Consular management encourages ongoing training, especially about the unique cultural factors that exist in each individual country context. This project will allow your team to take a deep dive into the management practices for managing a large volume of customers and help us improve our services to potential visitors to the United States. You will not have access to any actual adjudication information or decisions since the intent of this project is to understand what information and data already exists from similar or even different industries where multiple people may be looking at the same information and arriving at different or similar conclusions.
Impact Analysis of the 10-Year Visa for Chinese Nationals

Embassy Beijing Nonimmigrant Visa Section

Consular Affairs to China

Overview:

In November 2014, the Department of State increased visa validity for Chinese visitor visas (B1, B2, and B1/B2 visas) from 1 year to 10 years. Given that Chinese travelers represent the largest international share of the U.S. tourism market, this research project aims to answer the question: What impact, if any, has the change to 10-year validity for Chinese visitor visas had on Chinese traveler behavior and the U.S. economy?

Sub-questions may include:
Have the marketing tactics of visa and travel facilitators and the typical profile and travel style of Chinese tourists changed post-November 2014?
How do Chinese travel patterns correlate with trends in the Chinese economy (for example, province- and city-level GDP changes, or the opening of new flight routes to the U.S.)?
Has online discussion in Chinese social media reflected any notable changes in attitude toward travel to the U.S.?

The study results will be useful to Embassy Beijing as context for Chinese traveler motivations and typical travel patterns as we continue to facilitate legitimate travel while upholding border security.

Format of Final Project:

- Presentation of Research Findings
- Data Analysis and Corresponding Executive Summary and Report of Findings

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

East Asian/Pacific Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; Anthropology; Geography; International Relations; Marketing; Statistics; Tourism; Communications;

Comments:

As part of the research project, you will be liaising with the Beijing Nonimmigrant Visa Unit’s Metrics Team, who can answer questions, direct research, and serve as a resource on contextual or other information.
Potential sources regarding the economic relationship include news stories, tourism studies, and trackers on U.S.-China investment and travel, for example:

https://www.cabi.org/leisuretourism/news/25577
https://rhg.com/impact/china-investment-monitor/
http://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/
ID: DipLab1826209

Determine the Value of Kuwaiti Educational and Medical Travel (and Possibly Shrink the U.S. Trade Deficit)

Economic Affairs Section

Near Eastern Affairs to Kuwait

Overview:

Embassy Kuwait seeks Diplomacy Lab assistance to survey, measure, estimate, and report on the total economic value of Kuwaiti spending in the U.S. education and health sectors. Your efforts to track these exports of U.S. services could lead to a material adjustment in the U.S. balance of trade with Kuwait, which is typically reported to be in deficit.

Kuwait relies disproportionately on U.S. institutions to improve the health and education of its citizens, to the benefit of both countries. More than 15,000 Kuaitis currently study in the United States (one percent of all citizens!) Another 3000 Kuaitis sought U.S. visas for medical treatment in the past year.

Despite earlier estimates of spending in the billions of dollars annually, we have reason to believe the value of this partnership is materially underreported in official statistics. Embassy Kuwait needs your help to prove (or disprove) this assertion and to create reporting and statistics we can reference in our diplomatic engagement, both in Kuwait and in Washington.

Format of Final Project:

- A short paper (about five pages) summarizing your research efforts and your methodology, including a detailed analysis that explains how you arrived at the dollar values you assigned.

- An estimate of the number of U.S. jobs attributable to Kuwaiti medical and educational travelers, directly or indirectly.

- An estimate of the export value of the U.S. services (and goods) used by Kuwaiti medical and educational travelers while in the United States.

- (if appropriate) a comparison of the U.S. trade flows with Kuwait, in light of growth in trade in services like education and health care. How do your findings compare with existing government statistics?

- (If appropriate) a PowerPoint presentation highlighting your most surprising findings.
Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; Global Health; International Relations; Middle East/North African Studies; Public-Private Partnerships; Statistics; Youth Issues;

Comments:

The economic section at Embassy Kuwait has sought to quantify the value of Kuwaiti spending on medical treatment and education for some time.

Kuwaitis' unique travel patterns make it difficult to extrapolate from other cost estimates or worldwide averages.
Overview:
Marketing and message testing in Central Asia. Design and carry out a market-analytic approach to audiences in Central Asia, in the form of analyzing and interpreting results from focus groups. Extensive data have already been collected in the form of video, audio, and transcripts. On this marketing and message testing team, we will analyze our data to draw conclusions about what is most resonant and then we will propose a messaging strategy on that basis. The final output will be a series of papers with recommendations to public diplomacy professionals who work on messaging in Central Asia. A specialized component of this will be to discern a strategy for appealing to Kazakhstani audiences on energy policy issues and energy partnerships.

Format of Final Project:
The final output will be a series of papers with recommendations to public diplomacy professionals who work on messaging in Central Asia. A specialized component of this will be to discern a strategy for appealing to Kazakhstani audiences on energy policy issues and energy partnerships. Ideally there will be three papers that will emerge in the format of peer-reviewed academic journal articles for possible publication in a journal of political psychology, foreign affairs, or marketing.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
Education & Cultural Studies; Energy Security; European & Eurasian Studies; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Marketing; Psychology; Sociology; South/Central Asian Studies; Youth Issues; Communications;

Comments:
Ideally there will be three papers that will emerge in the format of peer-reviewed academic journal articles for possible publication in a journal of political psychology, foreign affairs, or marketing.
U.S.-Norwegian Arctic Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping

U.S. Embassy Oslo Public Affairs
European and Eurasian Affairs to Norway

Overview:

U.S. Embassy, Oslo is looking for a Diplomacy Lab partner to carry out research and collect data on the current entrepreneurial ecosystem in the U.S. and Norwegian Arctic regions, including actors, networks, laws, policy, and regulations. The goal of this project is to document and provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and barriers faced by Norwegian and American entrepreneurs, investors, and stakeholders, including youth, in a U.S-Norwegian Arctic Startup Ecosystem Report and slide share presentation.

This work would be done in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy Oslo’s Public Affairs Section and build on current efforts in the wider Arctic community to track these issues, including those being carried by Norwegian and American universities and organizations. A special emphasis on youth and education as they pertain to the Arctic entrepreneurial ecosystem would be welcome.

Using an acceptable and widely-recognized approach (such as the GIZ Guide for Mapping the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem) as a guideline, the DipLab partner should prepare a list of the players and stakeholders in the Arctic region’s entrepreneurial space. In mapping the “ecosystem,” the DipLab partner should use the following tools/metrics:

- Quantitative survey to gather data from Norwegian and Alaskan entrepreneurs, youth, indigenous peoples and organizations, and other critical stakeholders on the challenges in the current environment.
- Qualitative research and interviews with key stakeholders in the Arctic business ecosystem, including entrepreneurs, support organizations, investors, and government officials.
- Review any relevant secondary research on the market.
- Mapping should cover Alaska, Norway, and other geographical locations critical to the wider success of U.S. and Norwegian Arctic business endeavors.

Further information and for background on internal and external efforts currently underway in this area, please see the following links (not an exhaustive list but provided as a starting point):

- https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/blue-economy-potential-alaska-north-norway/

Format of Final Project:

Microsoft Word report and PowerPoint presentation. Both of these products should use non-technical English language and incorporate data and statistics when possible.
Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
Arctic Region Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships; Statistics; Youth Issues; Communications;

Comments:
Certain aspects of this project are flexible. U.S. Embassy Oslo is open to discussion, ideas, and suggestions from its DipLab partner.
Overview:

It is a United States Government priority to combat opioids and synthetic drugs emanating from the Indo-Pacific region. Using open source data, we are asking for a visual data set which maps the flow of narcotics throughout the region, with an emphasis on synthetic drugs and any connections to the United States whether those be direct, secondary, or tertiary. We would like the data set to be used to create a mapping tool that will allow the U.S. government to manipulate and add to the data after the project is completed.

Format of Final Project:

Research paper and mapping tool

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement;

Comments:

This project will directly help the U.S. Government better understand narcotics networks in order to better prioritize limited resources.
Overview:

ASEAN is a regional body made up of 10 individual member states all with their own national identity. ASEAN has three pillars of work: economic integration, political security, and socio-cultural sharing. However, one of the most important factors within ASEAN is that no country give up any kind of sovereignty to the regional body itself. Vietnam will chair ASEAN for 2020 and one of their priorities is building an “ASEAN Identity.”

How can ASEAN build an identity while simultaneously maintaining distinct national sovereignty? A comparison with the EU – who also has difficulty building a European identity while actually giving up some sovereignty – would be useful. If it didn’t work for the EU (or why hasn’t it?), how could it work for ASEAN? The United States government wants to see ASEAN succeed as a regional body and believe that supporting an ASEAN identity strengthens the effectiveness of the organization as a whole. The project will entail researching methods of building regional multi-national identity, doing a comparison of identity building within similar regional organization, notably the EU, and lessons learned on identity building.

Format of Final Project:

The final product should be a multiple-page, detailed, distinct recommendation memo for the public sector in the U.S. and ASEAN Member States that could build the image of an ASEAN identity, specifically that could be implemented within the next two years.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations;

Comments:

http://www.eria.org/ASEAN_at_50_4A.2_Acharya_final.pdf,
http://warwickaseanconference.com/building-asean-identity/
Overview:

Little is known about Chinese domestic drug abuse trends, its chemical and pharmaceutical industry and this industry’s role in the illegal drug trade (specifically synthetic drugs), and China’s efforts to expand their international cooperation to combat crime and narcotics. We are asking for a comprehensive report/s into these three priority areas.

Format of Final Project:

Report

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement;

Comments:

This research will better enable the United States Government engage China in counter narcotics cooperation and better address our own opioid crisis here in the United States.
Overview:

Maritime law enforcement (MLE) cooperation has become a United States Government foreign policy priority in the past several years. We are asking for a comprehensive report/s in the following areas:

1) What is the level and nature of MLE cooperation in the South China Sea via formal and informal channels, such as WhatsApp and Viber;
2) what are the MLE capabilities and orders of battle in the South China Sea claimant states, including future projections and the capacities of any maritime militias; and
3) determining a baseline for maritime related crimes (piracy, IUU fishing, etc.) in Southeast Asia to better enable the U.S. government to understand emerging trends.

We would also ask for a creation of a tool that would allow us to continue updating the data set and to use that data for visual aids.

Format of Final Project:

Report and visualization tool

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Oceans; Political/Military Affairs; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction;

Comments:

This research will have a direct impact on South China Sea policy and regional MLE cooperation priorities.
Overview:

What does the latest climate change data say about rainfall and other weather for Southern Africa? We have an understanding that the region will be drier, but to water degree, and is it possible to identify climate changes at the sub-regional level, for example, rainfall in the Lesotho highlands or Kalahari desert? If the data is available, then what are the implications for land use?

Format of Final Project:

Written report

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Climate Change;

Comments:

The data likely exists, but I'm not sure whether anyone has run the models or made public the results for Southern Africa.
Overview:

Informed decision-making is the foundation for success. The Presidential Management Agenda seeks to modernize the government with the use of data. This project supports this initiative by facilitating prioritization of facility energy conservation measures (ECMs) through data collection and analysis of simple payback to determine the most cost effective measures.

Overseas Building Operations (OBO) maintains facilities in countries all over the world, except in the United States. While many locations employ local staff for maintenance, the requirements of some of the proposed ECMs exceeds their available time or skills and it would be desirable to contract the work locally.

OBO has formed an Energy Program to reduce energy consumption and costs in our locations. This project seeks to obtain worldwide labor rates for skilled trades (mechanical, electrical, building controls, etc.) to implement energy conservation measures. In addition to collecting data, the desired outcome of this project would include a tool to calculate ROM cost estimates for each proposed project, that combined with expected cost savings (provided), will rank projects to implement based on a variety of factors such as cost or simple payback.

Format of Final Project:

The final product will be in three parts:

1) Presentation to review project and demonstration on the use of the tool
2) Tool, using software capabilities already available to Department of State (excel, Power BI, etc)
3) 20 page (max) report describing resources used to obtain data for locations, documentation of gaps in available data, limitations of the tool, how to keep the data current/relevant going forward, and instructions for use of the tool.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; Energy Security; Information & Communication Technology; Science and Technology; Statistics; Climate Change; Computer Science;

Comments:
The OBO Energy Program is eager to further students' understanding of the financial and operational challenges associated with reducing energy consumption and costs, while providing them with the unique opportunity to impact our future energy conservation efforts throughout the world.

https://www.sustainability.gov/policy.html
https://strategy.data.gov/
Overview:

The Frank E. Loy Award for Environmental Diplomacy recognizes achievement in international environmental diplomacy. This covers advancement of U.S. interests, analysis and policy development, integration of environmental topics into broader U.S. diplomacy efforts, and interaction with key public and private actors. By creating the award, Frank Loy hoped to recognize and reward outstanding work on environmental topics, to encourage employees to increase emphasis on environmental topics, and to assist these officers on their career promotion potential.

This award is one of several Department of State employee recognition awards focused on rewarding and supporting various specialized aspects of diplomacy. Receiving such an award is considered a high honor, and most come with a significant financial bonus, so they are generally highly competitive and popular. What we do not know is how effective these awards are at stimulating the behaviors they are aimed at, and what effect winning such an award has on the subsequent career of the recipient. In short, are employee recognition awards effective tools to encourage and reward specialization in targeted diplomatic fields, to recognize outstanding individuals, and to advance their careers?

This award has been granted annually for 17 years, and the creator, Frank Loy, is available for an interview. Further, many of the recipients are still working at the Department of State and could be interviewed about their work and the effect that winning the award has had on their career. This research project envisions researching and documenting the career paths of the recipients and establishing what effect, if any, receiving this award has on promoting environmental diplomacy.

Format of Final Project:

Research paper analyzing career paths of award recipients.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Science and Technology; Sociology;

Comments:

Frank Loy, creator and sponsor of the award, is available for interviews on the topic.
Utilizing Technology to Access Potential Students and Exchange Participants in Remote, Socially Conservative Regions

U.S. Consulate General Jeddah - Public Affairs Section

Near Eastern Affairs to Saudi Arabia

Overview:

U.S. Mission Saudi Arabia employs a range of social media platforms to engage in outreach, but the pool of potential students and exchange participants remains fairly limited to segments of society which the Mission is already engaged with. Interest in these programs is spread generally by word-of-mouth and accessing remote, socially conservative areas of the country remains a challenge to establish a foothold for program expansion. Post is seeking a better understanding of how technology might be employed in new and innovative ways, more than simply advertising the availability of these programs, to gain access to these audiences and establish a wider, more engaged social network to fuel future recruiting efforts.

Format of Final Project:

Written product, 20 page research people, with explanation of the data analysis. Also the raw data used to assess the target audiences.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations;

Comments:

Saudi Arabia is a country in a state of rapid social change. This change is felt most greatly in larger metropolitan areas that the Consulate is able to more easily access, but we are more particularly interested in understanding the target audiences and finding ways to recruit students remotely from areas like southern Saudi Arabia, where security restrictions and cultural conservatism limit our ability to regularly access and engage the local population.
Innovative Approaches to Documenting IUU Fishing and Marine Destruction in the Philippines

Public Affairs Section
East Asian and Pacific Affairs to Philippines

Overview:

The Philippines government struggles to effectively police marine resources in its territorial waters, specifically in the South China Sea (SCS), because of insufficient naval/coast guard capacity and the uniquely sensitive geopolitical conditions in the SCS. This leaves its rich marine resources vulnerable to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by vessels from other countries, including other SCS claimant countries. Coral reefs are also being destroyed due to dredging related to the buildup of artificial islands and illegal giant clam harvesting.

Embassy Manila Public Affairs Section (PAS) is interested in how to apply technological resources such as satellite imagery, big data analysis, and other sources to better inform the Philippine government and public about the scope, scale, and nature of the environmental damage taking place in their waters. By raising the awareness of Filipinos about the extent and rate of the marine resource loss, there can be a broader national discussion about the appropriate action to prevent it.

This project aligns well with Embassy Manila’s ongoing initiatives to highlight the importance of marine sustainability. Partners for our programs include local and international environmental NGOs, Philippine government agencies, local tech and business incubators, leaders of coastal communities, and alumni of U.S. exchange programs.

We envision the U.S. university team engaging in collaboration (which PAS will facilitate) with some of these partners to develop a platform that will be useful to promote sustainability and counter practices such as IUU fishing and destruction of marine habitats, including coral reefs.

Format of Final Project:

Interactive online map, mobile application, or other format to be built in collaboration with Filipino partners to create a platform that could continue to be used beyond the end of the project. We are flexible and open to other creative ideas as well, and look forward to refining the scope of the product through engagement with the university team.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Geography; Information & Communication Technology; Oceans; Science and Technology; Statistics; Water Security; Computer Science;
Overview:

Eswatini is an executive monarchy, governed in a combined parliamentary and traditional structure. Traditional forms of governance and elements of representative government share power and control over policy development, law making, law enforcement and dispute resolution, though the executive has outsized influence. Though the 1968 Independence Constitution provided for the possibility of multi-party parliamentary democracy, King Sobhuza II revoked the constitution in 1973, outlawed political parties, and proclaimed his authority over all branches of government. In 2006, the country enacted a new constitution that enshrined broader political freedoms and expanded the roles of the legislative and judicial branches, yet implementation of the constitution remains slow and imperfect, particularly in the area of political party participation in elections.

The 2006 constitution emphasizes individual merit as a basis for elections, which has been taken by most to mean that political parties may not contest elections. Many in the country still believe that political parties are banned, even though the 2006 constitution and a later court ruling effectively annulled the 1973 decree. Political parties exist, but conditions for their operations, particularly in elections, are undefined, legally unclear, or culturally restricted. We are seeking to help Eswatini open the space for greater participation of political parties within the “individual merit” based system by documenting examples of electoral systems that have successfully melded political party advocacy and engagement with ballot structures that list only candidate names and not party affiliations (for example, the State of Nebraska, where parties recruit and endorse candidates, but legislative election ballots do not include political affiliation with candidate names).

Format of Final Project:

We would like a series of case studies of electoral systems and experiences (including countries and, where relevant, individual states/regions within countries) where legislative candidates can campaign with the full support of political parties, yet are elected as individuals (where no indication of political party affiliation is listed on elections ballots). Each case study should describe:

1. How the electoral process works;
2. What the results have been in terms political party and citizen engagement in both elections and governance;
3. What the results have been in terms of quality and effectiveness of legislative governance;
4. How the electoral system/practice is perceived by international organizations; and,
5. An assessment of how that experience could be adapted to the context of Eswatini.

An accompanying PowerPoint presentation should introduce the current Eswatini context, summarize each case study, and provide recommendations regarding specific aspects of the different cases which could be adapted for use in Eswatini. We anticipate sharing the findings of the research with Swati civil society organizations, political parties, and government bodies.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Democracy & Human Rights; Human Rights; International Relations; Political/Military Affairs; Civil Society;

Comments:

It would be ideal (though not required) if the class and/or instructor had expertise in electoral politics and/or administration.
Overview:

Inform the future of U.S. entrepreneurial diplomacy. The U.S. Department of State’s Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs’s Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources is commissioning a report of the entrepreneurial landscape of the Western Hemisphere. This work should elucidate on regional entrepreneurship trends, significant actors in the entrepreneurial space, and challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurs in the region. The final report will inform strategic and tactical decisions by public diplomacy practitioners across the Department and around the world, providing critical information about the environments and contexts in which American diplomats conduct their work.

Format of Final Project:

1. Overview of regional trends, excluding the United States (Google Doc)
   --Executive summary (500-1,000 words)
   --Annotated bibliography

2. Review of entrepreneurial environment for each Western Hemisphere country (Google Doc)
   --Quick summary for each country (150-200 words)
   --Executive summary for each country (500-1,000 words)
   --Annotated bibliography

Note: countries should be grouped by U.S. Missions overseas.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; International Development; International Relations; Marketing; Western Hemisphere Studies; Youth Issues;

Comments:

Foreign language skills (Spanish, French, Portuguese) recommended.

The Networks Unit manages the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) Network, a vibrant community of young entrepreneurs and changemakers from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada
who are committed to fostering economic development and prosperity, security, human rights, and good governance in the hemisphere. We empower entrepreneurs, civil society, and young leaders with the training, tools, networks, and resources to transform their societies. The YLAI Network is a signature part of the U.S. government's efforts to increase partnerships with future leaders to help promote economic growth and strengthen civil society.
Utilizing Visa Restrictions to Mitigate Tension and the Risk of Political Instability

Africa Office

Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Overview:

The goal of this research is to create a tool that will assist policy makers in identifying the country conditions and the types of individuals worthy of visa restrictions and the restrictions’ likelihood to improve country dynamics. Students will conduct research on cases where the United States has utilized visa restrictions and identify examples that objectively demonstrate positive impact. The students will develop a framework for the United States to identify the conditions and individual profiles susceptible to U.S. visa restrictions that would improve host country dynamics and achieve desired outcomes. This framework, or tool, would be used to determine when each type of profile should be targeted for a specific objective, the requisite international community coordination, and the appropriate nature of the restriction announcement. Profiles should capture the individual’s characteristics related to the governing body (i.e. government position, relation to head of state, culpability of human rights violations, level of exposure to the international system, etc.).

This project will help policy makers discern which visa restrictions imposed in the past met specific objectives through objective analysis and evaluation. This work will also assist policy makers and subject matter experts of the Department of State to identify prime dynamics and individuals to impose visa restrictions to improve host country dynamics. This improvement could potentially save lives, strengthen democratic institutions, and enhance regional stability, which all would have a positive effect on U.S. national security.

Format of Final Project:

- 10 page research paper, which includes case studies and data analysis.
- presentation
- 2 page summary that highlights the conditions and individual profiles that would predict potentially effective visa restrictions

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations;

Comments:
The mission of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) is to anticipate, prevent, and respond to conflict that undermines U.S. national interests. The bureau implements this mission in two complementary ways: through data-driven analysis and forward deploying stabilization advisors to conflict zones. The objective is to inform and execute U.S. strategy, policy, and programs on conflict prevention and stabilization.

CSO’s expertise focuses on three key lines of effort: 1) political instability; 2) security sector stabilization; and 2) countering violent extremism (CVE). CSO collaborates with regional and functional bureaus, DOD, and USAID, and details stabilization advisors to posts and Geographic Combatant Commands (COCOMS) requiring specialized expertise. Deployed CSO staff sometimes broach the subject of visa restrictions when collaborating with Embassies when considering methods to mollify the risk of widespread instability or to punish bad actors for facilitating violence.

We expect this work to be completed within a semester.
Overview:

Bacha bazi is a practice, criminalized under Afghanistan’s penal code, in which men exploit boys for social and sexual entertainment. According to the Department of State’s 2018 Human Rights Report covering Afghanistan: “Police reportedly beat and sexually abused children. Children who sought police assistance for abuse also reported being further harassed and abused by law enforcement officials, particularly in bacha bazi cases…. During the first six months (of 2018), (UN authorities) documented credible reports of five cases of sexual abuse involving six boy, attributed to the Afghan National Police, and the Afghan Local Police.”

The true number of cases is believed to be much higher, but because most victims are unable to speak out against police perpetrators, media and other reports on the practice are rare. Successful prosecutions are even rarer. Prosecutors and other experts say many of the bacha bazi cases in Afghanistan involve sexual assault and that many of these crimes – perhaps a majority – occur at police checkpoints, where police commanders customarily have a private room. Physical and psychological damage from bacha bazi is extensive. Warfare, terrorism, dislocation, family separations and poverty all contribute to bacha bazi. While the Afghan peace process moves forward and there is hope that Afghans may soon be better positioned to bring about a more peaceful and prosperous nation, there is no indication that the scourge of bacha bazi will end anytime soon. Harnessing the creative power of an American university or universities could generate a creative approach that could help eradicate one of Afghanistan’s most insidious problem.

Format of Final Project:

Presentation

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Youth Issues and Human Rights;
SHIFT: Initiating Legal and Socio-Cultural Transformation of Attitudes towards Sexual Violence

Public Affairs Office
European and Eurasian Affairs to Lithuania

Overview:

While victims of domestic violence and violence against women are experiencing increased attention from lawmakers, state institutions, and NGOs in Lithuania, little was done to improve the legal protection of victims of sexual violence and modernize the legislation related to the issue. This project aims to seize the opportunity that the discussions on violence against women have created and expand the understanding of the complexity of sexual violence. It also aims to enable key stakeholders to develop legal amendments, effective referral mechanisms, create sensitive identification system, and increase awareness on sexual violence, involving different target groups: law enforcement agencies, health care professionals, NGOs, and the general public.

Complete a comprehensive desk study to present to experts and decision-makers, who will be brought together to discuss the issue and the potential changes in the regulation. Cooperating with the different state institutions as well as NGOs will present a unique opportunity to tackle the issue from various angles and strive for a change in legislation that would be both beneficial to the victims and practically applicable for law enforcement.

With the booming research and awareness-raising campaigns that Lithuania has experienced in the field of violence against women in the last years, little has been done to improve the situation of women who have experienced sexual violence. No national-level research or advocacy campaign has tackled sexual violence in independent Lithuania, which impedes the pursuit of justice; the legal definition of sexual violence in the Lithuanian Penal Code is narrow, and initiation of criminal process sometimes lies on survivor’s shoulders. The cases often do not reach courtrooms, the medical professionals do not have clear instructions or rape kits to perform abductions in such cases. Due to the lack of systematic data on sexual violence, the NGOs lack effective advocacy tools and struggle to convince lawmakers, legal practitioners, and society at large that a drastic change in the field sexual violence is necessary.

Format of Final Project:

Research paper, Literature review, data analysis of existing data to pull together a comprehensive plan.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
Comprehensive research will provide data on the obstacles that are faced by victims as well as legal and other professionals, who are involved in the supporting victims and prosecuting the crimes of sexual violence. The research will also provide data on the prevalence of victim-blaming Lithuania.

1. The research will identify the barriers that victims face in their pursuit of justice. It will consist of desk research, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 – 20 survivors who have experienced sexual violence, will help to identify the practical obstacles that victims face in access to legal procedure and support of victims, ranging from victim-blaming and practical deficiencies of the Lithuanian medical and legal systems.

2. The research will identify the barriers that professionals encounter while providing legal, psychological, medical, and other necessary support for victims of sexual violence. One focus group will be organized with the legal professionals (prosecutors, attorneys, etc.) that will identify the legal flaws that paralyze the effective prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence. The second focus group will be organized with professionals who provide support for victims (psychologists and counselors at Specialized Assistance Centers, medical professionals, etc.)

3. The research will identify the perceptions of the general public and measure the level of victim-blaming that prevents the victims from sharing their stories and seeking both legal and emotional support.
Overview:

Countries united by a border and not in conflict with one another often attempt to develop collaborative approaches to manage the border and reduce redundancies in personnel, procedures, and technology. Lack of trust, differing legal frameworks, motivations to protect sovereignty and ideological interests, resource constraints (or in some cases resource surpluses), and the elusive operations of transnational criminal organizations are some of the issues that undermine the ability of countries to develop one true border security enterprise with shared resources, policies, and procedures. Programs such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Unified Cargo Processing (UCP) are promising, as Customs organizations from both countries jointly review cargo entering the United States. A more robust United States-Mexico border management construct would embody the joint scanning, reviewing, and analyzing of all northbound and southbound traffic to disrupt the illicit trafficking of drugs and arms and expedite licit trade and travel.

The research would focus on analyzing case studies of where collaborative border constructs have been tested around the globe, and develop recommendations and policy prescriptions for replicating best practices at ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border. The project will also identify existing legislative obstacles in Mexico and the United States that are challenges for collaborative border practices.

Format of Final Project:

20 page report with executive summary and policy recommendations up front.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations;
Opportunities in Off-site Manufacturing for Diplomatic Facilities

Project Development and Coordination, Directorate of Program Development, Coordination, and Support, Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations

Overseas Buildings Operations

Overview:

In a world of rapidly evolving needs, traditional construction may not be able to deliver the facilities needed due to site constraints, scheduling challenges, or security requirements. The ability to control the construction of a facility to be deployed anywhere in the world presents a unique opportunity for diplomatic facilities. This may take a variety of forms from modular construction, to a flat-pack kit-of-parts, or even a 3D printed facility. Each project may focus on a particular goal such as rapid delivery or minimal on-site construction, while still providing the data necessary for comparison. At a minimum this should include: Schedule from concept to construction completion mapped with Level of Development (LOD) at each stage of the schedule to provide standardized language for Building Information Modeling (BIM) requirements.

Format of Final Project:

At a minimum this should include: Schedule from concept to construction completion mapped with Level of Development (LOD) at each stage of the schedule to provide standardized language for Building Information Modeling (BIM) requirements. The format should be a presentation, architectural files (raw files), and written report.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Architecture; Climate Change;

Comments:

What are the dynamics of network creation and sustainability among exchange participants?

Office of Policy and Evaluation
Educational and Cultural Affairs

Overview:

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) works to build friendly, peaceful relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships. ECA leads public diplomacy outreach efforts through our exchange programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us.

While the Bureau can integrate network-building activities into its program designs, the most meaningful and impactful connections last well beyond the end of individual cohorts of programs. It is therefore imperative that the Bureau understand the factors that lead to stronger post-program connections and a more viable and sustainable network between alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions. There are many factors to consider and much has been written on these topics, including the effect that different forms of exchanges can have on post-program network sustainability, whether online or in-person exchanges have different network outcomes, the difference in suitability and dynamics between formalized and informal networks, factors that affect the degree of alumni engagement with their networks, and the impact of programs on existing networks. This research project will provide insight into what the most effective ways to foster the creation and sustainment of networks through the exchange programming lens.

Working with the ECA Evaluation Division, the researcher(s) will gain insight into the way in which public diplomacy exchange programs are designed and measured, and assess the assumptions built into the program design against the existing literature. This project will primarily involve a review of the literature on network formation and sustainability in the context of international exchanges. Depending on timing, there may also be the possibility to also conduct stakeholder interviews and/or develop social network analysis-related surveys alongside Social Science Analysts from the ECA Evaluation Division.

Format of Final Project:

We would love to have a final report (length TBD by the research team) including a bibliography; a virtual presentation would also be useful
Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Education & Cultural Studies; International Relations; Sociology; Communications;

Comments:

This project can take more than one semester if deemed necessary by the research team. Good resources for data and information on exchanges include: AAC&U, NAFSA, Ohio Wesleyan, published works by Duke academic Darla Deardorff and Elizabeth Niehaus/Heather Rowan-Kenyon, and the Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad
Explore BIM and GIS Integration for US Embassies

Master Planning Division
Overseas Buildings Operations

Overview:

By blending together layers of geospatial context, with Building Information Models, decision makers have the information they need to make decisions about our robust portfolio.

In this projects students will have the opportunity to help develop the Department of State's Digital Campus methodology.

By integrated geographic information system (GIS), and building information modeling (BIM), students will help the department prototype a digital campus, using sample embassy data from BIM.

Format of Final Project:

By integrated geographic information system (GIS), and building information modeling (BIM), students will help the department prototype a digital campus, using sample embassy data from BIM. The product will be a GIS raw data/file/system by taking BIM data into a GIS system.

Potential Areas of Usefull Expertise or Interest:

Geography; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Architecture;

Comments:

Our Bureau:
https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/bureau-of-overseas-buildings-operations/

GIS & BIM Integration:
https://www.geospatialworld.net/blogs/gis-and-bim-integration/
Safe Transportation Options for Women in Pakistan

Afghanistan and Pakistan Programs

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

Studies show that the more integrated women are into the economy and public life, the more prosperous and politically stable societies are. In Pakistan, there are a number of cultural and other barriers to women's integration. One of them is access to safe modes of transportation. This limits women's employment options significantly, including opportunities for women to pursue careers in law enforcement.

A major goal of the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in Pakistan is increased participation of women in the police forces. More women police officers leads to increased police effectiveness, accountability, and societal trust in law enforcement writ large. INL's Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Programs would like to propose a research project on potential modes of safe transportation for women which have proven successful, particularly in societies plagued by violence against women. Ideas to explore could range from ridesharing applications for women such as Safr, and mobile police women units such as those deployed in India.

Format of Final Project:

INL's Pakistan team requests a 10-20 page research paper with executive summary, plus a presentation.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; Gender Studies; International Relations; Sociology;

Comments:

INL Pakistan is a small team of four officers residing in the larger Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Programs. We work closely with the INL team at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad. Overall, the Pakistan team manages an annual budget of approximately $20-25 million, a significant portion of which is dedicated to increasing the integration of women into Pakistan's law enforcement and criminal justice sectors.
Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) provide unique support for critical applications related to disaster management and public safety, including mapping of disaster regions, monitoring of seismic events, meteorological storm tracking and flood prediction, tsunami early warning and more. These applications offer new tools for disaster managers and stakeholders, including government agencies, non-government organizations and scientists to better understand and support decision-making across all phases of the disaster management cycle: predictions, preparedness, response, and reconstruction. Understanding how different stakeholders integrate GNSS data and tools into their infrastructure can provide valuable insight into disaster preparedness and the ability to make informed decisions that mitigate losses and add resilience during natural and technological disasters.

Format of Final Project:

Provide a written report explaining how GNSS applications support disaster management and public safety. Include three case studies where countries were able to integrate GNSS into their infrastructure as a tool to address disaster or humanitarian challenges, and assess the socioeconomic from a qualitative or quantitative perspective. A brief 10 slide- power point presentation on key findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Development; International Relations; Science and Technology; Sociology;

Comments:

Were your team to be selected, we'd work with you to identify background readings and other materials. The Office of Space and Advanced Technology (OES/SAT) formulates, develops, and implements U.S. policy and activities related to bilateral and multilateral international space programs and issues, including relevant advanced/emerging technologies. For more information, our office's website is https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-economic-growth-energy-and-the-environment/bureau-of-oceans-and-international-environmental-and-scientific-affairs/office-of-space-and-advanced-technology/
Modeling the Effect of a Nation's Fragility and Vulnerability on its Wealth

Office of Caribbean Affairs

Western Hemisphere Affairs

Overview:

Redefining What a High Income Country Is

The United States restricts the grant of foreign assistance funds to countries that the World Bank classifies as high- or middle-income. These income determinations also limit how countries can access funds from international development institutions. Income determinations are based on Gross National Income (GNI) per capita and the World Bank uses similar methodology in determining its operational lending policy. GNI per capita does not, however, completely reflect a country’s level of development or measure welfare, which does not take into account a country’s wealth inequality, geographic limitations (e.g., The Bahamas across a 700-island archipelago), or attributes such as quality of life, life expectancy at birth, mortality rates of children, and enrollment rates in school. Consequently, GNI does not reflect inequalities in income distribution, differences in domestic price levels, or risk to severe economic shock due to natural disasters.

Policy-makers and administrators prefer using objective criteria to determine eligibility for access to assistance funds. This proposal invites research to develop objective criteria, reflecting the fragility and vulnerability of states, that can complement World Bank income data to determine whether or not assistance should be made available to a country. Resistance to including these factors has often been based on the inability to objectively measure them, which opens the door to manipulation by countries. The concept originates in the Office of Caribbean Affairs, and the project should develop an objective measure that reflects conditions in the island-states of the Caribbean.

Format of Final Project:

The final product will be a ten-page paper, with an executive summary and appendices, and a slideshow presentation proposing objective criteria that accurately reflect a nation's fragility and vulnerability and can complement World Bank data to give a true reflection of how appropriate it is to be eligible for foreign assistance funding.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; International Development; International Relations; Sociology; Western Hemisphere Studies;
Comments:

The World Banks holds annual meetings in April, so the project should be finalized in time for discussion and presentation to international organization officials by February 2021.
What is the impact of exchange programs on communities around the world?

Office of Policy and Evaluation
Educational and Cultural Affairs

Overview:

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) works to build friendly, peaceful relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships. ECA leads public diplomacy outreach efforts through our exchange programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us.

ECA has created a robust monitoring and evaluation system that provides the Bureau and the public a framework for understanding exchange program outcomes as they pertain to direct participants. These systems include conducting regular surveys to assess any changes in participants’ cross-cultural competence, knowledge, and language skills, as well as longer-term outcomes such as career development and the expansion and sustainment of networks, among others. Outcomes at the community-level – defined as people and institutions, both in the US and abroad, that potentially benefit from an exchange program but are not participants themselves – are less well-documented and studied because of their diffuse nature, but are no less vital to understand. For this research project, ECA would particularly like to improve its understanding of exchange outcomes from the perspective of the economic impact that an influx of people inherently brings, as well as the improved cultural understanding and diffusion of values that have the potential to benefit the host community members and institutions in the long-term.

Working with the ECA Evaluation Division, the researcher(s) will gain insight into the way in which public diplomacy exchange programs are designed and measured, and assess the assumptions built into the program design against the existing literature. This project will primarily involve a review of the literature on the impact of exchange programs on host and home communities, though there may be the possibility to also conduct stakeholder interviews alongside Social Science Analysts from the ECA Evaluation Division (dependent on timing).

Format of Final Project:

We would love to have a final report (length TBD by the research team) including a bibliography; a virtual presentation would also be useful.
Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships; Sociology;

Comments:

This project can take more than one semester if deemed necessary by the research team. Good resources for data and information on exchanges include: AAC&U, NAFSA, Ohio Wesleyan, published works by Duke academic Darla Deardorff and Elizabeth Niehaus/Heather Rowan-Kenyon, and the Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad
ID: DipLab2027325

Designing For Diplomacy: Security Upgrades for Historically Significant Properties

Office of Cultural Heritage

Overseas Buildings Operations

Overview:

The U.S. Department of State’s (DOS) Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) oversees approximately 20,000 properties abroad of which approximately 200 have been identified on the OBO List of Significant Properties as culturally, historically, and architecturally significant properties and archaeological resources. The OBO List of Significant Properties is the official list of the Department of State’s historic properties worthy of preservation as symbols of the nation’s cultural diplomacy abroad. The OBO List of Significant Properties is part of a program administered by the Office of Cultural Heritage to coordinate and support efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s cultural heritage property overseas in accordance with Section 402 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Eligibility for inclusion on the list follows guidelines established by the National Register of Historic Places for domestic properties, as well as automatically including UNESCO World Heritage Sites and properties designated by host governments.

The Secretary of State’s Register of Culturally Significant Property was founded in 2000 as a White House Millennium Project. Inclusion on the Secretary’s Register is an honorific listing and elevates properties from the OBO List of Significant Properties to a higher level similar to the National Historic Landmark program domestically. There are currently thirty-seven properties on the Secretary of State’s Register of Culturally Significant Property. One property, the Tangier Legation, is the only US National Historic Landmark located outside of the United States.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is seeking academic proposals studying ways to improve resistance to the effects of blasts on buildings constructed of traditional methods and materials by studying one or more of the buildings included on the Secretary of State’s Register of Culturally Significant Properties. Structures range in age from the late 15th Century to the mid-20th Century and are constructed of wood, unreinforced masonry, and earthen/adobe. Windows are wood and metal, and roofs are clay tile, metal, slate and shingle.

This is an unclassified project and proposals should be based on publicly available information regarding general delivery capabilities in pounds of TNT and the amount of atmospheric overpressure at 30 feet and 100 feet for a panel van and box truck. Proposals should look at how to harden a structure and follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties without completely dismantling a building down and reconstructing it. The scope of the study may also include data collection regarding projected effects of explosive blasts and other impacts to historic structures and traditional building materials.
Format of Final Project:

These studies will be conducted as part of an engineering, architecture, materials science, or historic preservation-related course. Deliverables will be formatted into a single PDF e-book clearly documenting testing methodology, data outcomes, and recommendations for building reinforcement’s based on findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Architecture; Science and Technology; Materials Science;

Comments:

It is anticipated that once a bid is accepted for this proposal, that Diplomacy Lab and the sponsoring School will enter into a detailed dialogue modifying and tailoring the content of the semesters work to address the goals and objectives of both the School and Diplomacy Lab within the definition of the project.
Overview:

Zero-Energy design has emerged as an attainable goal for United States embassies and consulates around the world. Rapid progress in building systems design, energy capture and water conservation technologies, and passive site and building approaches can address the increasing challenges of global water scarcity and energy resource depletion. The Overseas Building Department Architectural Design Division invites graduate and undergraduate proposals from accredited schools of Architecture and Engineering for a net-zero, resilient embassy design studio.

Proposals should include:
- Studio level (i.e. 4th year, advanced graduate).
- Interdisciplinary initiatives and formal participation by other academic disciplines
- Studio course curriculum description, including studio structure and pedagogy
- Proposed design studio schedule
- Curriculum vitae of lead studio critic/professor

OBO will work with the successful proposer to select an appropriate project program and site.

Format of Final Project:

Course curriculum and final Student Project Presentation Booklet

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Architecture;
Overview:

The United States has embassies in Fiji, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, as well as a consulate general in the Solomon Islands. The geographical isolation and size of these countries makes it expensive to build and maintain diplomatic facilities and staff residences. Furthermore, while it is important for the United States to maintain a diplomatic presence in these countries, it may not be necessary for that presence to be continuous. Could these embassies and consulate be consolidated in favor of a seaborne U.S. embassy in the form of a ship with an appropriately diplomatic name (e.g., the USS Friendship)?

There are political, legal, and architectural dimensions to the response to this question.

The political: Could such a ship serve both the representational (diplomatic) mission of the Department of State and the consular mission (e.g., American Citizen Services, consular services) of the Department of State?

The legal: Where would such a ship fit/fall within the boundaries of international law (e.g., is it possible to maintain diplomatic privileges and immunities)?

The architectural: What would the U.S.S. Friendship / U.S. Embassy @ Sea look like (e.g., refer to the USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort currently deployed to support the Coronavirus response).

Projects may focus on any of these.

Format of Final Project:

Presentation and Report

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Architecture;
Overview:

The principal objective of this project is to provide in-depth research that can be used to initiate amendments to Lithuania's sexual violence legislation and legal statutes. Lithuania's current laws are outdated; present a too-narrow definition of sexual violence; and fail to adequately protect and provide assistance for survivors of sexual violence.

There is very little data on the prevalence of sexual violence in Lithuania, and no national-level research or advocacy campaign has tackled the issue. NGOs and other organizations must rely on EU-wide data when seeking funding or attempting to attract attention to this severely underfunded and under-resourced topic. Justice for survivors is often impeded because the legal definition of sexual violence in the penal code is narrow: marital rape is not criminalized, and rape must include additional violence, the threat of violence, or the helplessness of the victim. Furthermore, it is the victim who must push for criminal proceedings, which allows local law enforcement authorities not only to discourage survivors from filing a claim but also allows them to close investigations if the survivor withdraws their claim for any reason or is pressured into reconciliation by the perpetrator. Most cases do not reach courtrooms, as medical professionals do not have clear instructions to follow or rape kits to use to gather evidence. Due to the lack of comprehensive data on sexual violence, NGOs have limited advocacy tools and struggle to convince lawmakers, legal practitioners, and society at large that a drastic change in sexual violence prevention is necessary.

This project will create a broader coalition for prevention work and will provide baseline research for NGOs to initiate legal amendments that will address crimes of sexual violence. We are seeking partners to conduct comprehensive research to provide data on (1) the obstacles survivors face in reporting and prosecuting crimes; (2) the challenges for legal and civil society professionals, who are involved in providing support services to survivors; and (3) the prevalence of victim-blaming Lithuania.

Format of Final Project:

For topic 1: Barriers that survivors face in their pursuit of justice
We propose desk research and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15–20 survivors, which the embassy can help facilitate with local partners.

For topic 2: Barriers that professionals encounter while providing legal, psychological, medical, and other necessary support for survivors of sexual violence
We propose establishing one focus group with legal professionals (prosecutors, attorneys, etc.) to help identify the legal flaws that paralyze the effective prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence and a
second focus group with survivor support professionals, such as psychologists and counselors at Specialized Assistance Centers, medical professionals, etc.

For topic 3: Prevalence of victim-blaming
We propose using traditional and social media, as well as interviews with willing survey participants, to identify general public perceptions, measure the level of victim-blaming, and assess how that might prevent survivors from sharing their stories and seeking both legal and emotional support.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
International Relations;

Comments:
This research will inform future advocacy work and will allow civil society to develop comprehensive legal strategies and advocacy frameworks. These will include the preparation of draft amendments to the existing legislation that defines sexual violence and regulates the processes of investigation, prosecution and support for survivors. Embassy partners will plan to host ten roundtable meetings with professionals in the regions of Lithuania to present the results of the research and consult experts on the prepared draft amendments to the legislation. They will also host five meetings with MPs, ministers/representatives of ministries, and other stakeholders to promote and secure their support for the draft legal amendments.
Participatory Science during Crisis: COVID-19 and the Citizen Scientist

Overview:

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in modern history not only in its scope, but in the technology available to enable individuals to remotely assist and inform response efforts. As the pandemic progresses, diverse stakeholders are identifying and leveraging these developments to harness the participation of individuals in real-time research – from efforts to help map how the disease is progressing (https://covidnearyou.org/) to donating computing power to run simulations on protein folding (https://foldingathome.org/covid19/).

Participants in this Diplomacy Lab project will be asked to inventory participatory science efforts launched or leveraged during the pandemic; characterize which elements of the response effort they seek to address; assess the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges faced by the efforts; and provide analysis to better empower citizen science during future outbreaks.

Format of Final Project:

Teams will draft a report synthesizing the information outlined in the project description.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Education & Cultural Studies; Global Health; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships; Science and Technology; Sociology; Youth Issues; Civil Society; Computer Science;

Comments:

To learn more about the Office of International Health and Biodefense:
Overview:

With 2.5 billion gamers globally, there is growing appreciation that gaming, and gamification, are effective means to raise awareness and motivate action on a variety of social and security issues. For example, the developer of Plague Inc. (with 200 million+ games played, over half a million 5-star ratings, and features in newspapers such as The Economist and New York Post) was invited to speak at the CDC - a recognition of the value of gaming in advancing U.S. health security policy. Downloads of Plague Inc. increased dramatically during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak and the creator of the board game Pandemic was interviewed in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Games offer creative and interactive opportunities for people to tackle infectious disease outbreak preparedness in a way that is social and fun.

Using COVID-19 as context, participants in this Diplomacy Lab project are asked to assess and provide recommendations on how gaming can be better utilized to prepare for and respond to future outbreaks. Areas of interest include:
- Awareness. How can gaming help raise awareness of infectious disease preparedness and response in advance of or during an outbreak?
- Individual and community preparedness. How can gaming help prepare people for infectious disease outbreaks?
- Informing science/policy decision. How can gaming offer insights into human decision-making and/or advance policy during an outbreak?

Format of Final Project:

Teams will draft reports providing analysis/recommendations on how gaming can be better used to prepare for and respond to future outbreaks.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Global Health; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships; Science and Technology; Youth Issues; Civil Society; Computer Science;