

GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP AND WORKSHOP

The Tobin Project seeks applications from doctoral and professional students undertaking work on real-world problems related to its four core research areas: **Institutions of Democracy**, **Economic Inequality**, **Economic Regulation**, and **National Security**. This interdisciplinary graduate fellowship and workshop program aims to foster rigorous research that can, over the long term, deepen our understanding of—and ultimately help to solve—important problems facing our government, society, and economy. The deadline for applications is February 25, 2017.

TOBIN PROJECT GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS AND WORKSHOPS

The Tobin Project seeks to foster innovative interdisciplinary research that addresses major challenges facing society. Toward this end, the Tobin Project partners with leading scholars from diverse fields to build research inquiries around questions of lasting public and academic importance. **A more detailed description of research priorities is listed on pages two and three.** Doctoral and professional students *from all disciplines* who are considering original research related to any one of the Tobin Project's four core research areas of **Institutions of Democracy**, **Economic Inequality**, **Economic Regulation**, and **National Security** are encouraged to apply.

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP AND WORKSHOP

Fellowship recipients will be awarded grants of up to \$1000 and travel to Cambridge, Massachusetts to share and develop their research-in-progress with the Tobin Project staff and other fellowship recipients. The fellowship grants are meant to partially or fully support research expenses and provide general support to graduate students working on topics related to the Tobin Project's research priorities. Any additional research costs should be noted in the budget and will be considered for funding if it is available.

Fellows will attend a spring or fall workshop in Cambridge, MA, where they will present their research-in-progress. The workshop will provide an interdisciplinary seminar-style environment for fellows to receive feedback on their research, with a particular focus on strengthening fellows' skills in formulating and refining core research questions. The workshop represents a rare opportunity for critical analysis of new research outside of a departmental environment. Discussions will focus as much on the possible implications of identifying important questions as the methodologies for tackling them, emphasizing not only the relevance of good questions to solving real-world problems but also their potential to shape future inquiries. **The Spring workshop will meet April 5–7. The Fall workshop will meet September 13–15, 2017. The Tobin Project will cover travel and lodging expenses.**

APPLICATION

- Curriculum Vitae
- Project title and short abstract (100–150 words)
- Research proposal (600–900 words)
Please include the following in the proposal:
 - The question(s) your research aims to address
 - Research methodology and initial hypotheses
 - Connection to the Tobin Project's research initiatives
 - Expected output (e.g., journal article, dissertation chapter, etc.) and timeline
 - Potential impact of the project in the academic literature and/or policy world
 - Budget
 - Your preferred workshop (April or September)
 - A recommendation letter from your advisor or DGS

Please email application materials as a single PDF to research@tobinproject.org. In the subject line, please indicate that you are applying to the Graduate Student Workshop. Please have your advisor send his or her letter as a PDF directly or through Interfolio to the same address.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Institutions of Democracy

What practices, patterns, and institutions—of government, business, civil society, and beyond—significantly shape the functioning of American democracy?

The Tobin Project is interested in research that explains the evolving ways that American democratic society functions. Debates about the practices and values of American democracy often rely on questionable assumptions about how our democracy works, in part because we know relatively little about how the nation's democracy has functioned throughout its history. Democratic governance is shaped by a complex web of institutions, interests, and ideas, many of which are largely invisible to political analysts who focus principally on the formal structures of government. The Tobin Project is interested in catalyzing research that could yield a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how the culture, institutions, and behavior of agents across society determine public outcomes.

The Tobin Project is particularly interested in supporting work (from all social science disciplines) that helps explain when and how the media contribute to the prevention and/or mitigation of special interest capture of the policy-making process. A free and independent press is widely accepted as a crucial bulwark of liberty and a fundamental ingredient of a healthy democracy, in part because it can limit special interest influence in the policymaking process. Scholars have done careful work evaluating the partisan effects of media and the capacity of media to persuade and educate voters, set the political agenda, and foster good or bad government, but very little existing work examines the media's role in preventing special interest capture of public policy.

For additional information on our Institutions of Democracy research area and past research efforts within it, please visit: <http://tobinproject.org/research-inquiry/democracy>

Economic Inequality

What are the consequences of the dramatic rise of income inequality in the U.S.—for the economy, society, and democracy? How does inequality influence individuals' behavior and decision making, and how might this in turn shape broader social outcomes?

While the United States has seen a dramatic shift in the national distribution of income and wealth over the past three and a half decades, remarkably little is conclusively known about the economic, social, and political consequences of rising inequality. This is not for lack of effort or attention: researchers have produced a great deal of careful empirical work, yet existing research has not generated any meaningful academic consensus on the impact of inequality. This may be in part because extant scholarship has not privileged the study of mechanisms that might explain *how* inequality shapes broader outcomes. (See “[Inequality and Decision Making: Imagining a New Line of Inquiry](#)” for a deeper survey of this literature and discussion of new approaches to research on inequality's consequences.)

The Tobin Project seeks to support empirical work that attempts to identify possible effects of high and/or rising economic inequality. We particularly encourage applications from students interested in using experimental methods (e.g. lab experiments, field experiments, natural experiments, and surveys) to investigate the effects of inequality on individual behavior and decision making. While we encourage research on the potential effects of inequality in any context, we have identified a few leads that we believe are both under-studied and important to understand. (See <http://tobinproject.org/inequality2016/research-directions> for details.)

For additional information on our Inequality research area and past research efforts within it, please visit: <http://tobinproject.org/research-inquiry/inequality>

More information at: www.tobinproject.org

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Economic Regulation

What conditions distinguish success from failure in the public governance and regulation of the economy, and how can we more effectively measure their various effects?

The Tobin Project seeks work that helps to explain when and how regulation can solve public problems and can help to identify best regulatory practices for particular policy challenges. We are especially interested in work on how to mitigate or prevent undue special interest influence over regulatory policy. (See the Tobin Project-sponsored volume *Preventing Regulatory Capture: Special Interest Influence and How to Limit It* for examples of some approaches to these questions.) Any rigorous approach is of interest if it contributes to deepening our understanding of the questions raised above.

For additional information on our Economic Regulation research area and past research efforts within it, please visit: <http://tobinproject.org/research-inquiry/government-markets>

National Security

What differentiates accurate from inaccurate threat assessment in the realm of strategic national security decisions?

The Tobin Project is interested in new work that can shed light on what factors influence the accuracy of threat assessment in the national security space. Much scholarly and policy work addresses potential responses to emerging challenges to American security. Revisionist state actors and non-state actors, widening social and economic fractures, and the weaponization of new technologies, among many other topics, have received close attention. But how the United States should assess and prioritize these threats is far from clear. While discourse is full of opinions about what threats are important and how best to manage them, little work has methodically evaluated how processes of threat assessment fare in illuminating important threats. Understanding how different processes of threat assessment work may help to clarify longstanding debates. Of particular interest are histories of successful and unsuccessful threat assessment regimes as well as evaluations of contemporary threat assessment processes in the spheres of nuclear threats, the threats posed by rising geopolitical powers, and the threats emerging from new technologies, including bioweapons and cyberwarfare.

For additional information on our National Security research area and past research efforts within it, please visit: <http://tobinproject.org/research-inquiry/national-security>

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