

A Guide to Writing the CAPPP Application Essay

Use this Heading:

UCLA Center for American Politics and Public Policy
Application Essay of [your name]
[Title of Essay]

This one-page, single-spaced essay is the most important part of your application to the CAPPP program. It is NOT a personal statement. The essay should demonstrate your writing skills, your ability to formulate a *clear and specific research question*, and your knowledge of the topic. It does NOT need to be about America or about politics—it simply needs to have some sort of larger policy or political implications, either national or international (most topics do).

Here are a few examples of questions:

- Since the recognition of the AIDS epidemic ca. 1990, how have efforts by western NGOs contributed to, or inhibited, AIDS eradication in sub-Saharan Africa?
- According to the 2010 US Census, the Asian-American population has grown by 43% since 2000—the fastest growth rate of any group. As Asian-Americans begin to vote in greater numbers, what are their interests and priorities, and how are these interests changing Congressional campaigns in districts with significant Asian-American constituencies?
- Civil War historians have paid relatively little attention to the role of the American West in the conflict, yet California and Nevada's large deposits of silver and gold and other precious metals made the West a rich potential source of funds. How and in what ways did Union and Confederate competition for access to Western gold and silver affect the course of the Civil War?

Here is a simple guide that you can use to help you write your application essay:

- **Introductory Paragraph:** Two or three sentences describing your topic and the question/problem you want to pose about the topic. Be succinct and specific. Avoid generalities—get right to the point. As you formulate your question, ask yourself if the question is answerable. Try to think about whether would be some form of evidence that you could gather and analyze in order to answer your question.
- **A good two-thirds of the essay should expand upon your proposed research question and suggest how you might go about answering it:**
 - **Context & Background:** Why is your question/problem important? Provide some background about your research question. Think about the policy or political implications of your question--the larger significance.
 - **Be detailed and specific.** Show us that you are informed about the topic; don't be afraid to give factual information—you may need to do some quick preliminary research to prepare yourself. Use sources to support the facts you present, with in-text citations. For example, "According to a 2011 study co-sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control, "over the last 12 years, the prevalence of Developmental Disorders," including autism, "has increased 17.1%."
 - **Ideas for Research Design:** If you can, try to sketch out a suggestion about how you might broadly structure your research in order to answer your question. Think about what you could accomplish in 11-12 weeks. What would be the scope of the project, geographically, temporally, and demographically?
- If you think it is important, briefly mention how you became interested in this topic.
- **Concluding paragraph:** Talk about the ideal internship environment for your topic. *Don't mention any organization or agency by name.* Try to write a real concluding sentence—one that summarizes, but also points to the possible larger significance of carrying out your proposed research.