



2026-27 Society of Fellows Call for Applications

Deadline: Sunday, April 12, 2026, at 11:59pm

Program Description

The first undergraduate initiative launched at the Kinder Institute all the way back in 2014, the Society of Fellows is an interdisciplinary, extracurricular academic program designed to provide students interested in the history and fate of constitutional democracy with an opportunity to spend a year forging a spirited community of intellectual inquiry. Open to students of any major at the university, the Fellows program provides the following bespoke opportunities to participants.

Annual Fellows Summer Conference

Every year, the week before the fall semester starts, Fellows descend on the Tiger Hotel in downtown Columbia for an all-expenses-paid residential conference which features two days of seminars led by Kinder Institute faculty and friends exploring a dizzying range of topics and texts that shed light on the complicated history of democracy and its equally complicated present. For context, last year's conference included sessions on 21st century liberation movements, the politics of Jane Austen, negotiating information gaps in sociological research, and organized labor and the US Constitution.

Full attendance is required of all program participants, and this year's conference will be held August 17-21, 2026, with Fellows checking into the Tiger on the afternoon of the 17th and checking out on the morning of the 21st. Lodging, meals, and materials are covered by the Kinder Institute.

In-Semester All-Fellows Events

At least twice per semester, we host larger-scale, Fellows-exclusive events in the hopes of bringing the entire cohort back together to rekindle the conversations we started at the conference and continue to expand the range of what we think about when we think about studying constitutional democracy. These events include anything from attendance at Kinder Institute signature lectures, to cultural excursions in and around Columbia, to our annual fall faculty dinner, where Kinder Institute professors are tasked with giving celebratory toasts to moments in history that can help us understand our current times.

Dead Poets Society of Fellows and Other Pop-Up Events

The program also features smaller group events, including Program Coordinator Thomas Kane's quarterly poetry and politics book club, lunches with visiting speakers at the Kinder Institute, and

other opportunities that inevitably come out of the woodwork over the course of the fall and spring semesters.

Journal on Constitutional Democracy (CNST DEM 4975)

Though space in the courses is limited to 12, Fellows get first dibs on enrolling in Dr. Kane's yearlong (two credits hours in the fall, one credit hour in the spring) writing seminar through which they have the opportunity to patiently conceptualize, research, compose, and revise an essay project entirely of their own design.

Eligibility

Rising MU sophomores, juniors, and seniors of any major are eligible to apply for the Fellows program, provided (a) that they will be in residence at Mizzou/in Columbia for the entirety of the 2026-27 academic year; and (b) that they will be able to complete all readings for and attend the entirety of the August 17-21 Fellows conference.

Application Materials

Application materials, found on page 3 of this CFA, should be submitted in a single MS Word Doc or PDF to Dr. Kane, KaneTC@missouri.edu, by the April 12 deadline, making sure to use "Your Last Name-Fellows App" in the subject line.

An optional information session about the program will be held on Friday, March 13, at 4:00pm in Jesse 410, and any questions can be directed to Dr. Kane at the above email address.

2026-27 Society of Fellows Applications

The Society of Fellows application consists of the following two parts, which should be submitted in a single Word Document or PDF to Program Coordinator and Kinder Institute Director of Undergraduate Studies Dr. Thomas Kane, KaneTC@missouri.edu, using “Your Last Name-Fellows App” in the subject line.

Application Component 1: Academic Resume

This should contain the regular resume fodder—majors/minors, GPA, work and volunteer experience, club/org membership, leadership positions—but also include classes you’ve taken that you think uniquely prepare you for the Fellows program.

Application Component 2: Short Essays

Applicants should respond to all three of the following prompts in 350 (min.)-500 (max.) words each, making sure to address all aspects of the prompt:

1. If you could write an essay about anything related to the study of democracy, what would the subject of that essay be, why would you want to write about it, and how, specifically, do you see it relating to democracy? *Note:* Students are encouraged to think as broadly as they want to about what might relate to the study of democracy.

2. Propose a major that doesn’t exist at Mizzou. In addition to a name for the major (obviously), this proposal should, at minimum, include:

- A detailed description of what the major would explore; why you think exploring this subject matter is important in the present day; and what skills you hope students pursuing the major would develop; and
- Names and brief descriptions of what the four core courses for the major would be (i.e., those courses that everyone in the degree would be required to take)

3. I’ve always wanted to take the Society of Fellows on an out-of-town field trip, but the occasion has never been quite right. Perhaps that will change next year, and with that in mind, propose a field trip that you’d like to see us go on. It has to (a) be within 300 miles of Columbia and (b) be a two-day/overnight trip. It can include stops at multiple places (road-trip style) or focus on going to and exploring a single destination. So...do a little bit of research and once you’re done, describe where we’d go and when we’d go there, what we’d do, why you’d want us to go there, and how the trip relates to the mission/spirit of the Fellows program. If you’re doing a multi-stop road-trip, make sure to include where we’d stay overnight and why you chose that stop in particular.

*****Fellows Applications are due Sunday, April 12, 2026, by midnight*****