Current Government Department practices facilitating student research:

**Honors thesis:** This is currently the primary venue for students to engage in scholarly research under the guidance of a faculty advisor. Usually a year-long project culminating in a 60-150 page research paper, evaluated rigorously according to the academic conventions of our discipline.

**Honors thesis writing seminar:** In the past two years, two faculty members have voluntarily led a thesis writing seminar for students doing an honors thesis. The seminar focuses on developing a research question, conducting a literature review, issues of methodology, and in general serves as a support group for those engaged in the sometimes isolating task of writing an honors thesis.

**Seminars:** In seminars, faculty routinely give students the task of developing and writing a research paper. Several of our seminars guide students through the process of developing and executing a research proposal, a literature review, and the gathering and assessment of evidence. Students receive feedback and advice at every stage. One seminar involves students designing and executing a major survey of Smith College students, an enterprise that they work on collectively. This is not only research but the generation of original data. Other seminars generate projects that involve film and other media, and not just research papers.

**Special Studies:** Many students have done special studies under the guidance of Government faculty. In some cases, these special studies have involved collaboration with a faculty member on his or her own research, and in some cases these collaborations have resulted in student and faculty member co-authoring a published piece of work. In other cases, projects have involved substantial independent research, including original survey research (for example, a survey of 450 Smith students on speech rights issues), as well as public outreach in the form of informational meetings and website development (for example, informational meetings and a website about local and global impact of U.S. agricultural policy and the current Farm Bill), or the production of a video (on student activism at Smith).

**STRIDE:** Government faculty members have supervised numerous STRIDE projects over the years. These projects normally involve faculty-student collaboration on a project developed by the faculty member, but they allow students to hone research skills in tracking down materials, collecting, and analyzing data.

**Research assistantships:** Although the type of work done by student research assistants can vary, in several cases faculty members have engaged student research assistants in substantial original research projects. Students have conducted research in primary and secondary sources, assisted with surveys and data analysis. Sometimes this work leads to further research on the students’ part; for example, student research assistants working on First Amendment cases for one professor developed Special Study projects based on their work for him.
Research opportunities in non-seminar courses: Faculty innovate in a variety of ways to provide students with independent research opportunities within 200-level courses. Such innovations include assigning groups or individuals to research a country or a specific political issue, to follow the foreign media, to engage in community outreach, to simulate negotiations, to compile data sets, and to engage in survey research. In some courses, the results of these projects have been forwarded to interested community-based organizations, which have partnered with faculty members to help suggest research projects. These course-originated opportunities can lead to independent studies or honors research. Patrick Coby’s Reacting to the Past courses engage students in active research of their roles, as well as in developing further games and participating in conferences devoted to developing this innovative pedagogy.

Study abroad: Students spending their junior year or a semester abroad often collect material for a special study or honors thesis to be completed upon their return. Information about the politics of other countries, for example, or about the activities of international or non-governmental organizations, is readily available to students while they are abroad; they collect this material and then develop and synthesize it into a project upon their return.

Picker Program in Washington DC: Like the study abroad experience, the Picker Program gives students access to institutions and activities in Washington DC that culminate in original research projects, combining academic learning and hands-on internship experience.