

Faculty of Arts and Education
Summer Research Scholarships

2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART002
Project title	New Zealand Youth Safety Survey publication
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Susann Wiedlitzka
Contact details	susann.wiedlitzka@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Literature synthesis skills; good writing and referencing skills; familiarity with Microsoft Word; quantitative data analysis skills (STATA) could be beneficial but are not required. Overall, a motivated scholar with an interest in criminology and, more specifically, the topic of hate crime.
Project description	<p>By summer 2026/2027, we will have collected three waves of the New Zealand Youth Safety Survey (NZYSS), which explores young people’s experiences of diversity, identity, and conflict in Aotearoa, and is unique in also collecting the incidence of youth hate crime victimization and perpetration in Aotearoa. The NZYSS is unique in that it includes elements of a strength-based approach. It was designed to explore young people’s community resilience and effective support and coping strategies. The survey provides an opportunity for written storytelling to capture and subsequently highlight stories of coping with safety concerns, with a focus on improving wellbeing and interpreting data in positive and productive ways. We are now working on publications from this unique dataset, and a summer scholar could help with this task.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART007
Project title	Anxiety as Sociological Phenomenon: A Critical Investigation of Popular Thinking and Academic Literature
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Ciara Cremin
Contact details	c.cremin@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	It is essential that the scholar has a command of materialist theories of capitalism and ideology critique as demonstrated through their academic track record and commitments to universal fairness and justice and emancipation from exploitation and oppression. The scholar's capacity to conduct independent research across cognate disciplines of sociology, manage and present findings in an accessible and relevant (to the aims) manner is vital to the project's success. As with the ability, as applied, to think independently and critically in order to hone on the most apposite of materials. This is especially relevant in respect to research on popular texts, including social media, which the student must be savvy in to be keyed into trends of young people in respect to their engagement with social media and popular culture generally. The ability to write clearly, succinctly and on point is also important in respect to the body of literature it is anticipated that the researcher will gather.
Project description	
<p>It is said that anxiety levels among young people in Aotearoa are amongst the highest in the world. There are multiple socio-economic and political factors explanatory of this phenomenon that a scholar versed in materialism and ideology critique is invited to research. This involves a broad and detailed sweep of academic literature across multiple fields of inquiry. This may include the fields of gender studies, work and organisations, social media, popular culture, political economy and psychoanalysis. The scholar will furthermore research popular texts ranging from self-help guides, through to mass media reportage, social media sites, advertising and so forth.</p> <p>Through this work, the scholar will contribute to the preparation of a new sociology undergraduate course, Age of Anxiety, first running in semester 2, 2027.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>	

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART012
Project title	The surplus animal problem: Understanding the issues for zoos in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Ally Palmer
Contact details	ally.palmer@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<p>The scholar will be working with qualitative data in NVivo – most/all coding will already be done but the scholar will work on examining interviews and writing summaries of key themes. Familiarity with NVivo is not required but the scholar will need to bring skills in close reading and the ability to synthesise complex social/ethical/philosophical ideas.</p> <p>They will additionally conduct literature reviews – e.g., using Google Scholar – in anthropology, geography, and related fields, focusing on human-animal relationships and other relevant topics. They will need to maintain a Zotero database of relevant citations and synthesise literature in written summaries. Skills in conducting literature reviews and synthesising literature are needed, but familiarity with Zotero is not required.</p> <p>This project spans several disciplines so varied backgrounds will be considered. Ideally the scholar will have familiarity with social anthropology, human geography, sociology, or similar subjects. Philosophy and biology experience is also relevant.</p>
Project description	<p>The problem of what to do with ‘surplus’ zoo animals – deemed unnecessary for breeding or exhibition, which zoos lack space to house – has no easy solution. Culling is controversial. Moving animals to off-exhibit enclosures or to another institution risks poor housing and diminished welfare. Release to the wild is rare and brings its own challenges. Even measures to prevent surplus, such as contraception, may deprive animals of the welfare-enhancing experience of caring for offspring.</p> <p>Funded by a Marsden Fast Start, the lead supervisor Ally Palmer has been conducting in-depth qualitative research on this subject since March 2025. Interviews have been conducted with people from a range of roles within zoos in Aotearoa New Zealand, Europe, and the USA, as well as with partners of NZ zoos such as DOC and iwi representatives.</p> <p>The summer scholar will be coming on board at a time when preparations are being made for publications from the data. The scholar will be involved in conducting literature reviews and summarising both background literature and interview data to facilitate the writing of publications. The scholar may even potentially become a co-author on these publications.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART013
Project title	“A Historical and Contemporary Review of Citizens’ Assemblies Globally and in Aotearoa”
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Chris Ogden
Contact details	chris.ogden@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<p>The central task for this Summer Scholarship Project will be to carry out an extensive literature review relating to all aspects – theoretical and empirical – concerning Citizens’ Assemblies. It is expected that this will focus upon a range of academic and non-academic resources, and that it will take the form of working through suitable resources available in the University of Auckland library. The first stage will be to collate and categorise the sources. The second stage will then be to produce a written literature review. It is expected that the successful applicant will be highly diligent, well-organised and methodical in their attitude and their carrying out of this task. They will also need to spend considerable amounts of time in the UoA library, making sure that the targeted sources are collated in a consistent and very clear manner. They would also have the following required skills / pre-requisites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective project management, writing / reporting, interpersonal and communication skills • high organisational abilities and diligence, plus very good time management capabilities • commitment and enthusiasm for the job at hand and being reliable, efficient and collegiate • clear capacity to work on own initiative, coupled with a high level of team contribution
Project description	<p>This research projects explores the historical and contemporary roots and manifestations of Citizens’ Assemblies both globally and within Aotearoa. It will investigate how Citizens’ Assemblies originated, how they are set up, how they function and the impact that they have had across the world. To help achieve these aims, it will produce a definitive and exhaustive account that analyses where, how and why such Assemblies have taken place. This list will include - but is by no means limited to - examples relating to topics such as climate, constitutional reform, social issues and financial budgets & in places such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, Iceland, France, Denmark, Brazil and in Aotearoa. Overall, the aim of the project is to provide substantial material that will feature in a forthcoming book project concerning how global citizenship practice can act as an effective antidote against current rising global authoritarianism.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART014
Project title	Smith v The Polluters
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Annie Goldson
Contact details	a.goldson@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	By the summer, we should be fully in production if our fundraising has been successful. Students would be asked to assist in production management (organising shoots, flights, crew and schedules), archival research (assisting a professional archivist with a range of data entry and accessing tasks), assistant editing (file management on premiere pro, organising transcriptions and timelines) and possible outreach and designing an impact campaign for our release. Fluency in te reo would be helpful as 30% of the final film should be in Māori.
Project description	
Smith v Polluters is a feature documentary that explores the climate litigation cases kaumatua and climate activist Mike Smith has brought to address the lack of action in emissions reduction by corporations and by the NZ Government.	
This topic can take up to 2 Summer Research Scholars.	

Project code	ART016
Project title	Tiaki Taonga: Archaeology Collections Project 3.0
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Dr Callie Vandewiele with Associate Professor Rebecca Phillipps & Professor Ngarino Ellis
Contact details	callie.vandewiele@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<p>This Summer Scholarship is unique in that it will involve direct work within a materials-based research space and provide students with professional connections between the University of Auckland Waipapa Taumata Rau and the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.</p> <p>This stage will include working with the Roger Green collection, a collection of taonga donated to and collected by Anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s. The summer scholar/s will complete the in process digitisation of accession books, cross check taonga with accession books, work on developing labels, database entry, and repacking.</p> <p>Both scholars will participate in a learning seminar at the end of their scholarship where they will present their work to the wider Collections project team to enable staff involved to engage in ongoing collaborative dialogue about the scholars' contribution and other emerging issues from the project over the 2026/2027 period.</p> <p>Both scholars will get an opportunity to visit Auckland Museum and see examples of collection management and care.</p>

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Project description

The Anthropology Collection at Waipapa Taumata Rau the University of Auckland is substantial with an estimated 500,000 objects and taonga from Aotearoa, the Pacific, and other parts of the world. Since the late 20th century, archaeological practice has changed, from the legislation that protects heritage to the management of archaeological materials. This had resulted in more considered management of taonga yet little is known about the history of the Anthropology Collection and the 20th century legacy collection. In documenting and better understanding our collection, we aim to create new research pathways which allow for an intersection of deep past (taonga), near past (researchers and the communities from which objects were collected) and contemporary students and scholars. The platform created by these taonga and their history present a unique moment to intentionally reshape the ways in which we engage in research with the taonga in our care.

These summer scholarships are part of a wider project, now in its third year, to connect communities with their taonga, and building on best practice in museums, lead the way in the management of taonga in university contexts. In this phase of the project, the focus taonga collected in the 1950s and 1960s[RP3.1]. As with previous Summer Scholarships for the project, this application is built for two students.

Project code	ART022
Project title	Urban aerial pesticide spraying campaigns
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Manuel Vallee
Contact details	m.vallee@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	I am expecting my SRS to have a strong understanding of environmental issues. Having successfully completed my SOCIOL 229 (Environmental Sociology) paper would give them excellent preparation. As well, I am expecting the SRS will be able to: 1) document the media coverage associated with environmental issues; 2) capture and analyse government communications about pesticides; 3) track down key documents (government and NGO); 4) citation management; 5) synthesizing the literature on a particular topic; and 6) write clear weekly reports.

Project description

This project focuses on the use of aerial pesticide spraying over densely populated urban areas. It is geared towards uncovering where these spraying operations have occurred, the rationale for the spraying operations, how people have been impacted by the spraying, how government agencies have sought to build public support for them, and how the citizenry has responded to the spraying. The scholar will be responsible for identifying where these spraying operations have occurred, collecting documentation about the spraying operations, and helping the principal investigator answer key questions related to the project.

This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.

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Project code	ART025
Project title	Mentorship and Community Leadership in Creating Gender Equity in Fire Services
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Callie Vandewiele
Contact details	callie.vandewiele@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<p>The Scholar should have strong critical thinking, reading, and writing skills and some experience in creating a near-graduate level literature review would be helpful. The Scholar will be expected to work independently and to engage critically in the co-creation of ongoing community guided research, so it is hoped that the scholar is passionate about gender equity and interested in learning more about cooperative and community-driven anthropology.</p> <p>The scholar will be given the opportunity to engage in direct coding for a qualitative survey data set, and as such this project would be well-suited to a student interested in developing a skillset around qualitative analytical tools such as NVivo.</p>
Project description	<p>Ninety-six per cent of firefighters in the US identify as men, and 82% identify as white. This statistic is widely mirrored across the globe (including in Aotearoa) in both professionalized and volunteer fire service organizations. In an industry with a long history of "machismo," finding workable solutions to building sustainable systems around equity is a challenging process. It is particularly relevant in the face of climate change as fire suppression and fire service organizations themselves face massive new challenges in the substantial increase in wildland fires both in and outside of urban areas and in many cases, are looking to grow substantially to face climate challenges. In 2023 I worked closely with a summer scholar to lay the foundation for a process of community-leadership-driven co-research with the Portland Metro Women's Fire Camp (PMWFC), an industry leader in driving equity change, as a way to understand grassroots change around gender equity within fire services. We worked directly with community leaders seeking to create equity in the fire service by developing a survey and the foundational steps for an ethnography with Portland Metro Women's Fire Camp and began conversations with the Tualatin Valley Women's Fire Camp. The 2024 Summer Scholar on this project will help build on those two phases of research.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART026
Project title	Why Autocracies Care: Welfare States in the Non-democratic World
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Stephen Noakes
Contact details	s.noakes@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	The project's primary need at the present, formative stage is collection and coding of the raw data that will make the intended analyses possible. Accordingly, the SRS will be tasked with building a dataset of social spending in non-democratic countries. This will entail the collection of data from publicly available, online sources (such as V-Dem, OECD, and Worldbank), populating a spreadsheet, preparing a written "case studies" report identifying key trends, regularities, or outliers in the data (with bibliography), and advising the PI on case selection as part of a larger research design. The SRS must possess exceptional organizational and time-management skills and have an understanding of political science concepts and terminology. They will also need highly developed written and verbal communication abilities and demonstrate familiarity with received citation protocols.
Project description	<p>The proposed project investigates how and why authoritarian states spend on social welfare. This matters for two key reasons. First, while democratic welfare states have been a focus of scholarly inquiry for decades, non-democracies' spending on social programs has received comparatively little attention--an oddity when one considers that the first modern welfare states emerged in non-democratic settings. Second, the latest data indicates that, globally, democracy has retreated to levels not seen since the early 1970s, making authoritarianism (or hybrid democratic/non-democratic systems) the modal form of government worldwide. Observing the ways these states look after their citizens, or their different reasons for doing so, is therefore critical to understanding the prospects for prosperity for much of humanity. Envisaged as a large, cross-national empirical effort, the project will compare social spending across varieties of non-democracies to assess the importance of distributive politics to authoritarian survival, and as well as the longer-term outlook for democracy as means to effectively and sustainably meet human needs. By contrasting different types of non-democracy, the project aims to develop a typology of authoritarian welfare states according to factors such as their varied ideological proclivities, and their incentives to co-opt political opposition.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>

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Project code	ART030
Project title	Reviewing the literature on potential links between neurodivergence and complex chronic illnesses
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Natalia Boven
Contact details	natalia.boven@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	The key requirements of the summer research scholar are the ability to locate and synthesise relevant literature. Familiarity with reference management systems would be helpful but is not required. Lived experience with complex chronic illnesses and/or neurodivergence would be an advantage, but we would also welcome scholars without lived experience.
Project description	
<p>There is increasing interest in the relationship between neurodivergence and complex chronic illnesses, such as Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes (EDS), myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, and long covid. Understanding the overlap between neurodivergence and complex chronic illnesses (if any) may help i) identify people at greater risk of developing complex chronic illnesses, ii) inform service design for people living with these illnesses to better reflect the needs of these communities, iii) identify potential shared biological underpinnings, and iv) inform future research.</p> <p>This project aims to identify and summarise relevant literature on potential relationships between neurodivergence (e.g. autism, ADHD, and intellectual disability) with a set of complex chronic illnesses. The scholar will devise a search strategy, synthesise relevant literature, and produce a short report summarising key findings that will be published on the Te Huinga Hāpai Tāngata COMPASS Research Centre website.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>	

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Project code	ART037
Project title	Sport and the Climate Crisis
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Chris McMillan
Contact details	chris.mcmillan@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<p>The scholar's work will be divided into three sections, with reasonable flexibility to suit their interests and ambitions. Firstly, in conjunction with the supervisor, a short research proposal will be developed in order to focus the research. Secondly, following this proposal, the scholar will identify and annotate relevant academic and organisational research. Through this process, a literature review will be created. Thirdly, building on this literature review, the scholar will produce a report that outlines the key findings. As noted, this final stage can be altered to suit the scholar's ambitions and interests.</p> <p>The scholar should have a strong understanding of, and passion for, sport and environmental issues. An ability to create and maintain a thorough and accurate database of information is required, as well as excellent research and writing skills. A broad understanding of the politics and economics of climate change action would be beneficial.</p>
Project description	<p>Sport has a bidirectional relationship with the natural environment; just as sport is reliant upon the natural environment, sporting activities also have an impact on that environment. Because of sport's reliance on a stable natural environment, the climate crisis poses an existential threat to sport. . Likewise, sport has a significant carbon footprint, especially professional and for-profit sporting organisations and competitions. This relationship is highly unequal, with some areas and sporting activities much more vulnerable to the changing climate to others. Equally, some sporting entities have a much greater impact.</p> <p>This project gives the scholar scope to identify an area of their own interest within this relationship between sport and the climate crisis. Nonetheless, particular areas of interest for the supervision include inequality, environmental discourse, cricket, and either the Asia or Pacific regions. Projects on Aotearoa New Zealand would also be of interest. Applicants are encouraged to email chris.mcmillan@auckland.ac.nz if they would like to discuss a potential project in advance of submitting their application.</p> <p>This topic can take up to 2 Summer Research Scholars</p>

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART042
Project title	Providing evidence to inform the implementation of the Mahi Aroha Carers' Strategy Action Plan
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Lisa Underwood
Contact details	l.underwood@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	The key requirements of the summer research scholar are the ability to locate and synthesise relevant literature. Experience of using reference management systems would be helpful but is not required. The scholar should be familiar with quantitative research methods and able to produce simple graphs using Excel or similar software.
Project description	
<p>The NZ Carers' Strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families, whānau and aiga who support others who need help with their everyday living (see https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/policy-development/carers-strategy/index.html). A new Action Plan for the Strategy is scheduled to be released in 2026.</p> <p>This project will contribute to work that Te Huinga Hāpai Tāngata COMPASS Research Centre (see https://www.compass.auckland.ac.nz/projects/data-sources-carers/) is carrying out as part of the Mahi Aroha Carers' Strategy Action Plan work programme, which will inform the Monitoring and Government data and evidence strategy for carers Actions.</p> <p>The main focus will be synthesising quantitative evidence on 1) the sociodemographic characteristics of carers and 2) indicators of carers' health and wellbeing, financial security or recognition and appreciation.</p> <p>The summer scholar will carry out the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress a draft journal article on the Characteristics of young carers in Aotearoa by writing a literature review. • Assist with producing figures and tables using results from analyses of key carers data sources - the NZ Health Survey, Youth Health and Wellbeing Surveys and Census 2023. • Map the characteristics of data sources identified in the 2025 Review of data sources relating to carers in Aotearoa New Zealand to the new Mahi Aroha Carers' Strategy Action Plan. <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>	

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2026/2027 Projects (Social Sciences)

Project code	ART043
Project title	Meditations on Power: New Zealand's Biosecurity Act
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Manuel Vallee
Contact details	m.vallee@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	I am expecting my SRS to have a strong understanding of environmental issues. Having successfully completed my SOCIOL 229 (Environmental Sociology) paper would give them excellent preparation. As well, I am expecting the SRS will be able to: 1) conduct a literature search for relevant documents; 2) capture and analyse government communications about biosecurity and the biosecurity act; 3) track down key documents (government and NGO); 4) citation management; 5) synthesizing the literature on a particular topic; and 6) write clear weekly reports.
Project description	
<p>This project focuses on New Zealand's biosecurity apparatus. One aspect of the project will be to illuminate who advocated for New Zealand's 1993 Biosecurity Act, why they advocated for it, how they advocated for it, and what resistance, if any, they encountered. A second aspect of the project will be to study how government agencies have benefited from the act, including the resources and the legal powers the Act provided them. Third, the project will examine how they have marshalled those benefits, which will include what types of problems they have targeted, and what they have ignored. Finally, the project will examine who has been impacted by the government actions, which will include identifying the beneficiaries, the casualties, and how they have been affected.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>	

Project code	ART045
Project title	Intra-ethnic socio-economic stratification
Discipline	Social Sciences
Supervisor(s)	Barry Milne
Contact details	b.milne@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	The student should have skills in searching academic publications, citation management, literature review and report writing. Understanding of socio-economic measures and social stratification literature is preferable but not required.
Project description	
<p>The project involves searching for and summarising existing research studies and academic literature on intra-ethnic socio-economic diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand. The work involves undertaking a literature search, producing an annotated bibliography and a final summary report that focuses on each major ethnic group. The search will start with published work specific to Aotearoa New Zealand, then extend into government publications, grey literature and completed post-graduate research as time permits.</p> <p>This work is intended as a foundational step in developing future research on the potential future impact of demographic change on the diversity of socio-economic resources in Aotearoa New Zealand.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>	

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