Criminal Justice

Examining Extremism and Terror Using Online Data Sources
Mentor: Tom Holt, School of Criminal Justice

Students will be tasked with visiting various websites, social media accounts, forums, and other on-line spaces on the Dark Web in order to document the scope of terror and extremist activity targeting infrastructure and resources operating on- and off-line in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK. Research assistants will help to develop information on the attackers and their beliefs, as well as the targets of the attack and the scope of physical, economic, and reputational harm that resulted.

Understanding the Causes of School Violence
Mentor: Steve Chermak, School of Criminal Justice

The violent events that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Columbine High School, and Virginia Tech University have not only impacted how the public thinks about school violence, but motivated school leaders and policymakers to take steps to make schools safer. Unfortunately, there has not been much empirical research that comprehensively documents the amount and types of violence that occur at schools in the United States, and even less work on the perpetrators that commit such acts.

Political Science

Combating Hate Speech through Radio and Community Interventions
Mentor: Jeff Conroy-Krutz (conroyk6@msu.edu)

While mass media are important tools for citizens to learn about politics and for political actors to share diverse viewpoints, they often have a darker side: they can be used to disseminate hate speech and organize violence. A number of governmental and non-governmental actors in recent years have attempted to combat hate speech with alternative media programming and community-level interventions, aimed at reducing scapegoating and building inter-group trust.

The Importance of Voter Turnout in Semi-Competitive Elections
Mentor: Erica Frantz (frantzer@msu.edu)

Dictatorships across the globe increasingly hold regular semi-competitive elections in which opposition parties are able to compete and win seats amid an electoral playing field tilted in the regime's favor. Most dictatorships that hold such elections heavily encourage high voter turnout because it suggests that the outcome of the contest is a reflection of the will of the people, thereby legitimizing the electoral process and the regime's continued rule. This study will examine the impact of high voter turnout in semi-competitive elections for a variety of autocratic regime dynamics.

Women in War and Peace
Mentor: Jakana Thomas (thoma977@msu.edu)

Although women occupy a variety of roles in violent conflicts, their impact is often overlooked in mainstream conflict research. While some studies hint that women may have a positive effect on conflict resolution efforts, few studies explain the theoretical mechanisms connecting women with peaceful outcomes or test these hypothesized relationships. This research project assesses how women's participation in violence influences civil war settlement.