

CEIP-Gaither Junior Fellows Program Essay Topics

Program Topic Essay: Up to 3 pages, double-spaced, on one of the following topics (see below); your name must be included as a header on each page.

The topic essay is **the most critical component** of your application. The essay is intended to test your skills in analysis, logic, and written expression. The essay is an analytical “thought piece”, not a research paper. It is like the professional op-ed pieces you might find in the *NYT*, *Economist*, *Washington Post*, *WSJ*, or other relevant quality policy or international affairs publication.

Footnotes are not required; if you absolutely feel the need to include footnotes/references, keep them to the minimum. What is important is that the essay be clearly articulated and well argued. Try to avoid parroting what can be easily found elsewhere. They want to hear *your thoughts*, not what is commonly thought.

To get a better sense of what CEIP is looking for, you may want to “do research” on the [CEIP website](https://externalscholarships.lafayette.edu/scholarships/ceip-junior-fellow-program/) for models of short essays written by CEIP fellows. Sample essays from applicants are provided on Lafayette’s website at <https://externalscholarships.lafayette.edu/scholarships/ceip-junior-fellow-program/>

Select a topic (A-L) related to your *primary research program* interests.

Please note: CEIP may ultimately select an applicant for a program outside of the applicant’s designated primary interest or have the Jr Fellow assigned to more than one program.

The Programs/Essay Topics: Select and respond to just one. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Endowment’s website (<http://carnegieendowment.org/>) for more information on each program/project listed below.

- A. Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program.** Choose any two countries in the world, from two different regions, including at least one from the Global South. Explain how political developments in those countries in the past five to ten years embody what you believe are some of the most important elements of the global democratic recession. Be sure to give some indication why you have chosen the countries you focus on.
- B. American Statecraft Program.** America’s role in the world is changing, whether it likes it or not. What are the 3-5 most important factors that will shape the context in which America conducts its foreign policy in the next two decades?
- C. Nuclear Policy Program.** Which state without nuclear weapons do you believe is most likely to acquire them?
- D. Technology and International Affairs Program (Please respond to just ONE of the two following questions).** When you read or hear discussions about ‘risks of AI’ what questions do you have that you do not think are being answered well? **OR** What technology issue will have the greatest impact on international stability in the coming decade, and why? (*Strong writing & research skills are essential.*)
- E. Middle East Program.** The Middle East region is going through a huge, agonizing and protracted transformation characterized by dwindling oil revenues, rising populations, failing governance structures and government services, rising extremism and sectarianism, and high youth unemployment. The current situation has enabled regional powers to intervene in each other’s affairs as well as non-state actors such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State to emerge and spread new toxic ideologies. What do you see as one of the most difficult threats facing the region today and the underlying drivers of turmoil? Discuss the impact this has had on two countries in the region and strategies that will help move these countries toward a better future. (*Strong reading fluency and the ability to perform academic as well as on-line research in Arabic is essential. A strong background in Middle East politics and/or history is a huge plus.*)
- F. International Security and Political Economy [to work with the International Security and South Asia Programs] (Please respond to just ONE of the two following questions).** Many scholars argue that the world is experiencing a worrying period of democratic backsliding, while skeptical voices suggest that backsliding concerns are overblown. With reference to existing data sources and democracy ratings, which position do you find more compelling and why? **OR** Should the United States end its ambiguity over

defending Taiwan? *(Quantitative data analysis and GIS skills are required. A strong mathematical background is a plus. An academic background in international relations theory or international political economy along with an interest in military issues is essential.)*

- G. Asia Program.** To what extent are states in Asia “forced to choose” between the US and China? Consider political, economic, security, and other factors to substantiate your analysis. *(Mandarin Chinese language skills are essential. Proficiency in another Asian language is a plus.)*
- H. Russia and Eurasia Program.** The US-Russia relationship has plummeted to unprecedented post-Cold War lows amid the war in Ukraine. Can this downward trajectory be arrested? What are the key dangers in the current situation and how might the White House seek to prevent things from getting out of hand? *(Requires excellent Russian and/or Ukrainian reading skills.)*
- I. Africa Program.** Narratives about Africa’s future often oscillate between unrealistic optimism and blanket pessimism. Clearly the truth lies in a more nuanced middle. Compare and contrast the recent trajectories of two African countries—including both their economic and political dimensions—to help illuminate a nuanced picture of Africa’s current direction.
- J. Global Order and Institutions Program.** The UN Secretary-General has depicted the world as “gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction.” What accounts for the failures of many multilateral institutions, and what—if anything—can be done to improve international cooperation in addressing major global challenges?
- K. Sustainability, Climate and Geopolitics Program. (Please respond to just ONE of the two following questions).** After 30 years of UN climate conferences, the multilateral approach to climate mitigation has a poor record by the most important metric: global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise each year, even as climate impacts become more noticeable and severe. This poor record raises doubts about the “bottom-up” logic of voluntary, national climate pledges as embodied in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Has this bottom-up logic failed, and if so, what should replace it? **OR** Imagine it is the year 2040 and you are working for a major international organization. Your teenaged niece, who is about to begin studying for a bachelor’s degree in Climate & Geopolitics, asks you to summarize how the climate crisis and the responses to it have transformed international affairs since you were a student. In the interest of time, she asks you to focus on 2-3 of the most important developments. What do you tell her? *(Basic data skills, such as helping create graphs or tables for Carnegie publications, are a plus. Applicants should have completed coursework related to sustainability and climate issues.)*
- L. Europe Program (Please respond to just ONE of the two following questions).** The war in Ukraine has galvanized European defense efforts and revived a “braindead” NATO. Looking at the recent successes of transatlantic security cooperation, some have questioned the continued relevance of European “strategic autonomy”. At the same time, the war has revealed the gaps in European defense capacities and the degree to which Europe still depends on the US for its security. After decades of foot-dragging, European governments are now finally investing in their defense budgets. How should they spend the new money? And what else is needed to put the transatlantic defense relationship on a more sustainable footing? **OR** With the Trade and Technology Council (TTC), the US and Europe have established a new mechanism to coordinate policy on crucial questions related to democratic technology governance. How important is TTC for the transatlantic partnership and its effectiveness in tackling both systemic and acute challenges? And what is one initiative or project you would recommend the two sides should launch at their next TTC meeting? *(Fluency and the ability to perform research in a European language other than English are a plus. A background knowledge on European politics is essential.)*