

## **UROP DESCRIPTION**

Professor Caley Horan

**TITLE:** History of Astrology in the United States (20<sup>th</sup> Century)

**TERM:** Fall

**DEPARTMENT:** 21H: History

**FACULTY SUPERVISOR:** Caley Horan

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**APPLY BY:** September 15, 2020

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**PREREQUISITES:** None.

**NOTE:** This UROP can be conducted remotely by students with access to MIT Libraries resources.

**NOTE:** This UROP is available for Direct Funding, Credit, or Volunteer Only.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Though long considered an irrational pursuit, astrology has grown in popularity in the United States over the past century. How have astrological practices and belief structures persisted in the face of rapid scientific and technological development in the US? What historical forces have drawn Americans to look to the stars for meaning and advice? Why has astrology appealed to different groups at different times in the past?

This UROP will involve research on the history of astrology in the United States, and particularly horoscope columns published during the mid to late decades of the twentieth century. Students will use digital databases to identify, organize, and analyze horoscope columns in mainstream publications, Black newspapers and periodicals, women's magazines, and other venues. Students will receive an introduction to historical methodologies, gain experience using digital databases, and develop advanced independent research skills applicable across the humanities and social sciences.

Research for this project will involve use of scholarly databases accessible through the MIT Libraries and other historical databases available online. Students will be responsible for identifying long-running horoscope columns (with a focus on the period between 1930 and 1980), and for tracking change over time in their format, authorship, and content. Additional work may include seeking out astrological themes and content in non-print popular media (including radio and television). Students will meet weekly or biweekly with the faculty supervisor by videoconference. Prior experience with historical research and online databases is valuable, but not required. Students seeking to do UROP for pay should apply for UROP direct funding by September 15, 2020. Students may also pursue this project for credit, or as a volunteer.