**POL 3108H Honors Tutorial:**

**Thesis Preparation and Political Science Inquiry**

**Location: Carlson-L122**

Professor Dan Myers

Department of Political Science

Office hours: M/F 1:30-2:30, 3:45-4:30

Tu/Th 1-2 or by appointment.

Office hours Zoom link: z.umn.edu/MyersOfficeHours

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In this course, students will prepare to write their senior theses in political science. The senior thesis is difficult, even for the best students. In most political science classes, we focus on mastering knowledge developed by others; in the senior thesis, students must make their own original contribution to the store of human knowledge. The skills required to conduct and write about original research are different than those required to be a good student in other classes.

This course aims to help students develop these skills. Students will enter with a few ideas for topics about which they might like to write their theses. They will leave the class with a clear and tractable research question, a literature review that describes how this question fits in with the existing scholarly literature, and a research design that will enable them to answer the question. Along the way, they will advance their understanding of what constitutes political science research and how to conduct political science research.

Students will be graded on the basis of drafts of their annotated bibliography, literature review and research design, a class presentation of the “front half” of their senior thesis, and class participation including short weekly assignments. Students are expected to keep up with the reading and, most importantly, to begin to conduct their own original research.

**Course Readings**

Course readings will be drawn from two books, as well as readings cited in the syllabus below. By design, this course is shaped to the needs and interests of the students who take it. As a result, I may add or remove a reading at various points in the course. The books are:

* Baglione, Lisa. 2015. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science, 4th Edition*. Sage-CQ Press.
* **Optional:** Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2008. *The Craft of Research,4th Edition*. University of Chicago Press.

The Baglione book will be the primary text for the class and provides a perspective specific to writing research papers in political science. The *Craft of Research* is an unparalleled guide to writing research papers across disciplines – however, as its contents do not directly pertain to political science all readings from it should be considered optional, but highly recommended. Both will be useful guides for this course and for your work next year finishing your thesis.

Being able to find cited papers is an essential skill for researchers. As such, when additional readings are cited in the syllabus students are expected to find them using the university libraries and online databases. However, students should contact the instructor if they have difficulty finding a reading. Occasionally, when a reading is not easily available, I will post it to the class Canvas page.

In addition, students will spend a great deal of time reading sources related to their research topic, as well as the methodology that they will use to answer their research question.

**Graded Assignments and Important Dates**

The following will make up the course grade. Details on the assignments will be distributed as their due date approaches:

* Annotated bibliography (10%). **Due week of Feb 18.**
* Draft literature review, model and hypothesis section, and rough introduction (20%). **Due week of March 22.**
* Draft research design (15%). **Due week of April 8.**
* Class Presentation (10%). **Week of April 29.**
* Final “front end” of thesis (Intro + Lit Review + Model and Hypothesis + Research Design + Conclusion) (25%). **May 11.**
* Occasional assignments and class participation (20%)

Drafts sections of your thesis should be turned into Canvas and emailed to your writing group and me. The occasional assignments are intended to guide our work in class that day. As such, you should print them out and bring them to class unless otherwise instructed. You should also upload them to the Canvas assignment for that day. All other assignments should be posted to Canvas before class begins on the day that they are due.

**Draft Cover Letters**

For the annotated bibliography, draft literature review, draft research design, and final “front half” you will also turn in a cover letter. Each cover letter should be addressed to your readers (myself and your writing group members). Think of the letter as an opportunity to ask for the kind of feedback you think you particularly need. Your cover letter should be about a page long, single-spaced. Before each assignment due date. I will provide some suggestions for things to discuss in that assignments’ cover letter.

**Late Assignments**

Late assignments will be accepted with a reduction of 5 points on a 0-100 scale per day late. The only exception is for documented medical or family emergencies or for approved university activities. Documentation must not be hypothetical and must actually be provided in either case. Personal or medical issues that do not rise to the level of documented emergency are not an acceptable reason to turn in assignments late.

**Class Policies**

**Writing Groups**

Early in the semester I will place you in writing groups. You will work with this group at several points during the semester, both in class and outside of it, to read, comment on, and improve each other’s work. A good writing group can be very helpful to a researcher, and I hope that your work together can go beyond those in class assignments and into the next year as you finish your theses.

**Scholastic Dishonesty:**

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University.

For additional information, please see: [policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html](https://policy.umn.edu/education/instructorresp).

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <https://communitystandards.umn.edu/avoid-violations/avoiding-scholastic-dishonesty>.

If you have additional questions, please ask me. In particular, if you are at all in doubt about whether a particular action constitutes scholastic dishonesty, please contact me. I would much rather have a conversation before any potential scholastic dishonesty than after.

**Contact Policy and Office Hours**

If you have questions about the course, the thesis process, or your thesis specifically, I much prefer face-to-face discussions (over Zoom or in person) to email. Face-to-face conversation is a much more efficient way to communicate, and I appreciate knowing students as more than their email addresses. Please come talk to me before or after class, or during office hours.

You do not need an appointment or permission to stop into office hours – my (virtual) door is open. Scheduled office hour times may not be convenient for you, so I’m also happy to meet with you by appointment. Just ask before or after class or, if necessary, over email, and we can arrange a time to meet

I will open class with any announcements about course logistics. I may also use e-mail to relay most of the nuts and bolts of the course. You must check your campus e-mail every day. You are responsible for any information that I account at the start of class or via email.

I will respond to all email within 24 hours, except on weekends. Though I will respond as quickly as possible, I cannot guarantee that I will respond to any email faster than 24 hours of it being sent. Please keep this in mind as due dates approach.

**Student Conduct Code:**The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see: [regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student\_Conduct\_Code.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf).  
  
Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach and/or a student’s ability to learn.” The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.

**Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials:**

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html>

**Sexual Harassment and Misconduct:**

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: <https://policy.umn.edu/hr/sexharassassault>

Instructors are required to share information they learn about possible sexual misconduct with the campus Title IX office that addresses these concerns. This allows a Title IX staff member to reach out to those who have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about personal support resources and options for investigation. For more information about the requirement that instructors report any prohibited sexual conduct that they become aware of to the Title IX office, see: <https://policy.umn.edu/hr/sexharassassault-faq01>

**Academic Freedom and Responsibility:**Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.

Students are responsible for class attendance and all course requirements, including deadlines and examinations. The instructor will specify if class attendance is required or counted in the grade for the class.

**Disability Accommodations:**

I, and the University of Minnesota, are committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical), please contact DS at [drc@umn.edu](mailto:drc@umn.edu) or 612.626.1333 to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

If you are registered with DS and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact me as early in the semester as possible to discuss how the accommodations will be applied in the course. I will generally request that we meet briefly to discuss these accommodations.

For more information, please see the DS website, [diversity.umn.edu/disability/](https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/).

**Mental Health and Stress Management:**

As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health website: [www.mentalhealth.umn.edu](http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/).

**Support for Writing:**

This class uses writing assignments. The Student Writing Center has TA’s and ESL specialists to help with your writing skills. For more information, see [writing.umn.edu/sws/](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/).

**Course Schedule**

All readings and assignments should be completed ***before*** the course under which they are listed.

**Jan 21: Introduction.**

**Jan 28: Political Science as a Discipline and Political Science Research.**

***Readings:***

* Robert Keohane, 2009. “Political Science as a Vocation.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42(2): 359-363.
* Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, 2009. “Dividing the Domain of Political Science: On the Fetishism of Subfields.” *Polity* 38(1): 41-71 (Skim pages 50-60)
* Reiter, Dan. 2015. “Should We Leave Behind the Subfield of International Relations?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18(1): 481–99.
* Optional: *Craft*, Chapters 1 and 2
* Ansolabehere, Stephen, et al. 1994. “Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate? *American Political Science Review* 88(4):829–38.
* Baglione, Chapters One and Two
* Optional: *Craft* chapter 3 and 4

***Assignments***:

* Identify a political science journal article or book chapter (not from a textbook) that you have read in a political science (or other related) course that was important to you and/or relates to a topic you might write about for your thesis. In a double-spaced paper of around two pages, summarize the article or chapter and then explain what political science questions it addressed, how it addressed the question, what questions remain, and how and why it changed your thinking about the topic it addressed. Be prepared to summarize and discuss the article/chapter in class.
* Write responses to the Baglione Exercises 1 and 2, page 44-45.
* Pick a potential topic that you may pursue and write out three possible research questions for that topic. You may find the instructions for “Recipe 1” on Baglione, page 44, helpful.
* **DUE JAN 31**
* **DUE JAN 31.** Schedule a meeting with me to discuss possible research questions.

**Feb 4: Research as a Conversation.**

***Readings:***

* Baglione Chapter 3
* Optional: *Craft*, Skim Chapter 5, Read Chapter 6
* *Conversation Moves* handout
* Read your assigned article from the handout “Articles about Negative Advertising and Turnout”

***Assignment****:*

* Describe your central research interest and two important books/articles in political science related to your topic in an annotated bibliography (like Gabriela’s on page 78) using the APSA Style Guide.

**Feb 11: Relating Your Research to the Literature.**

***Readings:***

* Baglione, chapter 4.

***Assignments:***

* Bring in a revised list of possible research questions (from Feb 3 assignment)
* Bring in a rough draft of your annotated bibliography. It can be very rough at this point – a list of sources with a few annotations is fine.
* Bring in, electronically or printed out, one article from your Annotated Bibliography that is central to your research question.
* Identify a faculty member who you would like to advise this thesis, and write a brief paragraph describing your plan for contacting them.

**Week of Feb 18.** Meetings with instructor about your research question and annotated bibliography. **Annotated Bibliography due 3 days in advance of your scheduled meeting to instructor.**

**Feb 25: The Thesis, Model, and Hypothesis**

***Reading:***

* Baglione, Chapter Five, Chapter Seven through page 152
* Optional: *Craft*, chapter 7.

***Assignment***:

* Bring in a written response to Exercise 1, page 127.
* Create diagrams that show the model used in two of the articles in your annotated bibliography. Choose articles that are central to your project, but that do not already include diagrams in their own M&H section.

**March 18: Research Design Part 1**

***Readings:***

* Baglione, Chapters Seven (remainder)
* Optional: *Craft,* Chapter eight

***Assignments***:

* In a 2-3 page double-spaced paper, summarize the research designs in two articles from your literature review. Explain their models, cases, independent and dependent variables, data sources, and methodology. Then contrast the methods used in each article, explain why the different articles use different methods. End by briefly (1 paragraph) discussing what you can learn from these articles’ methods about you own research design.

**March 25: Research Design Part 2**

***Readings:***

* Baglione, Chapter Eight

***Assignment:***

* Find two articles (or a book chapter and an article, or two book chapters) that either use a method that you might use in your thesis or are about how to use a method that you might use (e.g. an article about how to design surveys if you plan on conducting a survey). These may be from your literature review, though this is not necessary. Write a two-page summary about how the articles use the method described to answer their question, and how this methods or methods might help you answer your research question. If you are having trouble finding an appropriate article, please get in touch with me.

**Week of April 1 - No Class:** Meetings with instructor and writing group about your lit review, model and hypothesis sections.

***Assignment:***

* Lit Review and M&H section due **3 DAYS** before your scheduled meeting. Email to instructor AND your writing group.
* Prepare some thoughts on possible research designs for your study. Plan on talking for a few minutes about what a research design for your thesis might look like.
* Read your fellow group members’ literature reviews and M&H sections. Be prepared to offer comments on them.

**April 8: Research Design Workshop**

***Assignments:***

* Draft of research design. It should be at least four pages, double-spaced.
* During class you will workshop your research design with one other student who is NOT in your writing group. Within 48 hours of class, write a critique of that classmate’s research design. Your critique should be between one and two pages, double-spaced. Email the critique to your classmate and to me.

**April 15: Structuring the whole thing.**

***Readings:***

* Baglione chapter 9.
* Optional: *Craft*, chapters 12, 13, 16.

***Assignments***:

* Revise the draft introduction for your thesis.
* Write a draft conclusion for your front end.

**Week of April 22:** No class. Meetings with instructor and writing group to discuss research designs this week.

***Assignment:***

* Draft Research Design due **3 DAYS** before your scheduled meeting. Email to instructor AND your writing group.
* Read your fellow group members’ research designs. Be prepared to offer comments on them.

**April 29: Academic Presentations and Finishing Your Thesis**

***Readings (recommended):***

* Smith, D.T. and Salmond, R. 2011. “Verbal Sticks and Rhetorical Stones: Improving Conference Presentations in Political Science.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(3), pp. 583–588.
* Salmond, R. and Smith, D.T. 2011. “Cheating Death-by-PowerPoint: Effective Use of Visual Aids at Professional Conferences.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(3), pp. 589–596.
* **AFTER CLASS** Read the research papers that were the basis for the graduate student presentations.

**Week of May 2:** 15-minute presentations (8 mins presentation, 7 mins Q&A). We will schedule these at the end of March.

**May 12: Front Half Due (Noon)**