

POL 3108H HONORS TUTORIAL

THESIS PREPARATION AND POLITICAL SCIENCE INQUIRY

Location: Blegen 115

Professor Dan Myers

1309 Social Sciences Tower

Office hours: Tuesday 11 AM - 1 PM; Wednesday 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Office hours Zoom link: z.umn.edu/MyersOfficeHours (email me in advance if you plan on attending on Zoom)

Email: cdmyers@umn.edu

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. 2019. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science, 4th Edition*. Sage-CQ Press.
- Howard, Christopher. 2017. *Thinking Like a Political Scientist: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

These two books offer different perspectives on the task of conducting research in political science -- both are valuable, and students will benefit from considering

both.

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 23.**
- Draft literature review, model and hypothesis section, and rough introduction (20%). **Due week of March 16.**
- Draft research design (15%). **Due week of April 13.**
- Class Presentation (10%). **Week of May 4.**
- Final “front end” of thesis (Intro + Lit Review + Model and Hypothesis + Research Design + Conclusion) (25%). **May 11 (5 PM).**
- Occasional assignments and class participation (20%)

Draft sections of your thesis should be submitted to 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:

As students in a university community, you are expected to do your own academic work, and to cite sources of knowledge that you draw on in completing your assignment and other academic work. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty, which includes: plagiarism; cheating on assignments or examinations, including the unauthorized use of online learning support and testing platforms; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work, including the posting of student-generated coursework on online learning support and testing platforms not approved for the specific course in question; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission, including the posting of faculty-provided course materials on online learning support and testing platforms; 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.

When it is determined that a student has cheated, the student may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. See section F of the Administrative Policy on Instructor and Unit Responsibilities.

Additional resources pertaining to academic integrity can be found through the Office for Community Standards and the Center for Educational Innovation.

Beware of websites that advertise themselves as being "tutoring websites." It is not permissible to upload any instructor materials to these sites without their permission or copy material for your own homework assignments from these various sites. When you have additional questions and concerns, please speak with or email your instructor to clarify practices expected for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class, for example, when and whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, when citing sources is required and what citation method to use, or when and which electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

As stipulated by University policy, instructors are obligated to report all incidents of scholastic dishonesty to the Office of Community Standards.

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, and I will not penalize in any way questions raised about the scholastic dishonesty policy so long as they are raised **before** the potential scholastic dishonesty occurs.

Generative AI Policy:

TBA

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 announce 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, mental health, or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University, you are expected to adhere to the Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. 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 and more importantly of personally recording, integrating, and connecting information as part of your educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the current 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 item 6 of the Administrative Policy on Student and Learning Responsibilities.

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Relationship Violence:

The University prohibits sexual misconduct, and encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to access resources for personal support and reporting. If you want to speak confidentially with someone about an experience of sexual misconduct, please contact a confidential resource on your campus. If you want to report sexual misconduct, or have questions about the University's policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct, please contact your campus Title IX office or relevant policy contacts. For additional information on reporting misconduct, please see the EOT page on Reporting Concerns.

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. You may talk to instructors about concerns related to sexual misconduct, and they will provide support and keep the information you share private to the extent possible given their University role. For additional information, please see the Administrative Policy on Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Relationship Violence.

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.

Health and Safety:

The University of Minnesota is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for students. Information about policies, procedures, and emergency plans can be found at University Health and Safety or the Department of Emergency Management.

Disability Accommodations:

The University of Minnesota is committed to creating learning environments that are inclusive and accessible to all students. If you are experiencing disability-related barriers to learning in your courses, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the office that collaborates with students to explore reasonable accommodations, tools, and resources.

- If you are registered with the DRC and have a current accommodation letter please share your letter with your instructor as soon as possible to start a discussion about how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. The sooner your instructor knows about your disability access-needs, the more equipped they can be to facilitate accommodations. You may reach out to the instructor or your access consultant/disability specialist if you have any questions or concerns about your accommodations.
- If you are not registered with the DRC and are experiencing or think you may be experiencing disability related to a mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical condition, and would like to discuss accommodations and/or resources, please contact the DRC on our campus (e.g., Twin Cities campus - 612.626.1333).
- If you have a short-term medical condition, such as a broken arm, your instructor may be able to assist in minimizing classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, you should contact the DRC as noted above.

For additional information, please see the DRC website.

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 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.

As an instructor/University community member, we care about the wellbeing of students. If health, safety, or mental health concerns are conveyed, we may consult with campus support offices to provide support and resources to a student.

Course Schedule

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

Jan 26: Introduction.

Feb 2: 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.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, et al. 1994. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American Political Science Review* 88(4):829-38.
- Baglione, Chapters One and Two
- Howard, Preface and Introduction

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 FEB 8** Turn in an updated version of the topic and possible research questions.

- **DUE FEB 8.** Schedule a meeting with me to discuss possible research questions.

Feb 9: Research as a Conversation.

Readings:

- Baglione, Chapter Three
- Howard, Chapter One
- *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 16: Relating Your Research to the Literature.

Readings:

- Baglione, chapter four.

Assignments:

- Bring in your revised list of possible research questions.
- 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 23. Meetings with instructor about your research question and annotated bibliography. **Annotated Bibliography due 3 days in advance of your scheduled meeting to Professor Myers.**

March 2: The Thesis, Model, and Hypothesis

Reading:

- Baglione, Chapter Five, Chapter Seven through page 152
- Howard, Chapters Two and Three

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.

Week of March 9 - No Class, Spring Break. Work on your draft literature review and model and hypothesis sections.

Week of March 16 - 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 Professor Myers 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.

March 23: Research Design Part 1

Readings:

- Baglione, Chapters Seven (remainder)
- Howard, Chapters Four and Five.

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 your own research design.

March 30: Research Design Part 2

- Baglione, Chapter Eight

Assignment:

- Describe two or three different research designs that you could employ in your thesis. These should describe which examples of the political phenomena of interest you will study (case selection), what you will study or measure about them (operationalization), how you will collect this data or information (data collection), and what you will do with this data to draw inferences about politics (data analysis).

Each description should be at least two paragraphs. You can think of this as the first very rough draft of your research design section.

April 6: Research Design Workshop

Readings:

- Howard, Chapter Six OR Seven, whichever is most relevant to your project.

Assignments:

- Revise one of the ideas for your project's research design your project's research design (if you are not going to pursue either of these research designs, you can write up a new one). The revised research design should describe your thesis's case selection, operationalization, data collection, and data analysis plans. There is no set length for this assignment, but you should treat it as an opportunity to put together a very early draft of the research design that you will turn in the week of April 26.
- During class you will workshop your research design with one other student who is NOT in your writing group.

Week of April 13: No class. Meetings with Professor Myers 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 20: Structuring the whole thing.

Readings:

- Baglione chapter nine.

Assignments:

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

April 27: 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.

- In class, we will see graduate students present some of their research. After class, read the research papers that were the basis for the graduate student presentations.

Week of May 4: 15-minute presentations (8 mins presentation, 7 mins Q&A). We will schedule these at the end of March.

May 11: Front Half Due (5 PM)