OVERVIEW

This course provides selected seniors an opportunity to design, research, and write an honors thesis for the Government major. It provides a forum where students will receive regular, constructive feedback on their work from peers and faculty. A purpose of the course is to create a community of people going through the writing process together who will be a source of mutual support, help and feedback.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will…

1. complete a full prospectus for your honors thesis project
2. complete a draft of one chapter of your thesis, with significant progress towards a second
3. establish independent research skills in your field
4. improve analytical skills, conceptual clarity, critical reasoning, and constructive synthesis

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING PLAN

Fall Semester Assignments

The purpose of course assignments are to help keep you on schedule for the successful completion of your thesis. All written assignments should be shared with and commented on by your advisor.

Classroom Engagement: Participation, Attendance, Weekly Blog, Peer Review (25%)

This course requires not only attendance but also active participation. This entails doing the readings before class, thinking critically about them and the topics we are discussing. Active participation can significantly help your grade in the course, non-participation can significantly lower your grade, and non-attendance WILL significantly lower your grade.

Weekly course blog posts reacting to readings, when readings are assigned.

Peer Review of Draft Chapters

Mini-Paper Reviewing Published Literature (10%)

Literature Review (15%)

Chapter + Annotated Outline (50%)

Note on Late Papers: Late papers will be graded down 5 points for each day late, to a maximum of 50% credit for the assignment. No matter how late a paper is, it will always be worth submitting (you will always get at least 50% credit).
Coursework is thus weighted as follows:
3. Literature Review: 15 pts.

\[ 25 + 25 + 50 = 100 \]

Rules of the Game

Class Protocol
1. Class will start on time. If you are more than 10 minutes late you will be marked as absent.
2. No talking during class, no reading material during class, and no inappropriate use of electronic equipment (cell phones, laptops, etc.) during class.
3. I reserve the right to make new rules and changes to the course.
4. Diversity in discussion. Throughout the course of the semester, we will be addressing a variety of issues on which people will have strong and diverse opinions. It is critical that we respect one another’s thoughts, and address our comments at the ideas, not the person. Our class is not a forum for demeaning or threatening language.
5. Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and Cheating. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. I feel especially strong about this when it comes to student writing. Please remember that the consequences for any kind of cheating or plagiarism can result in an “F” for the class and possibly other actions by the university.

Wesleyan’s policies can be found online at: http://www.wesleyan.edu/studenthandbook/3_honorsystem.html

If you have any questions about the appropriate way to use or cite a source, please do not hesitate to ask me before you hand in your paper.

Disability-Related Accommodations

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html

AGENDA

Week 1

The Research Question

Reading:

Read the following examples of research questions:

Week 2

Political Science and Theory; The Literature Review

Reading:
• Aristotle. Excerpt from *The Nichomachean Ethics*.
• Selections from White, Stephen K. and J. Donald Moon. *What is Political Theory*. (especially: Moon, Brown, Grant, and Shapiro).
• Excerpts from Past Student Honors Theses

**Week 3**

**Concepts and Measurement**

**Reading:**

**Week 4**

**Knowledge and the social sciences**

**Reading:**

**Week 5**

**Experimental and Quasi-experimental Design**

**Reading:**

**Week 6**

**Due: Mini-Paper**

**Causality**

**Reading:**

**Week 7**

**Sampling and Case Selection**

**Reading:**

**Week 8**
**Due: Literature Review**

**Case Method**

**Reading:**
- Excerpts from King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry.*

**Week 9**

**Using Data**

**Readings:**
- Excerpts from Jacob, Herbert. *Using Published Data.*
- Excerpts from Wolcott. *Transforming Qualitative Data.*
- Ian Lustick. “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias.” American Political Science Review (September 1996)

**Week 10**

**Due: Draft of First Chapter**

**Presentation of Research and Drafts**

**Week 11**

**Presentation of Research and Drafts**

**Week 12**

**Writing and Rhetoric**

**Readings:**
- George Orwell. “Politics and the English Language.”
- Visit website: [http://mblenson.faculty.wesleyan.edu/for-students/](http://mblenson.faculty.wesleyan.edu/for-students/)

**Week 13**

**Frontiers in Political Science**
- Fowler, James H., Laura A. Baker, Christopher T. Dawes. “Genetic Variation in Political Participation.” *APSR.*
- Brown, Wendy. “At the Edge.”

**FINALS WEEK**

**One Chapter + Annotated Outline Due**

**Research Design and Methods Literature**

*Compendium of useful resources (note that there may be some overlap with the readings in our agenda above.*
Political theory and political science

- Aristotle… passage from The Nichomachean Ethics.
- Selections from White, Stephen K. and J. Donald Moon. What is Political Theory. (especially: Moon, Brown, Grant, and Shapiro).

Concepts and Measurement

- King, Keohane and Verba. Designing Social Inquiry. Section 5.1

Establishing causality; experimental and quasi-experimental design


Sampling and Case Selection and Case Studies

- King, Keohane, and Verba. Designing Social Inquiry. Ch. 2-4, 5.1, 6


Quantitative data


• Jacob, Herbert. Using Published Data. 9-33.

Qualitative data

• Ian Lustick. “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias.” American Political Science Review (September 1996)

Counterfactual analysis


The Literature Review

Writing and Rhetoric
• George Orwell. “Politics and the English Language.”

• Visit website: http://mbnelson.faculty.wesleyan.edu/for-students/

Survey Research


In-Depth Interviewing


Fieldwork


Path dependence


Scenarios


More