

Senior Research Seminar – International Relations

POLS BC 3761-3762

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Office Hours: Thursday, 1-3 p.m.

Seminar, Fall and Spring 2008
Thursdays, 4:10-6 p.m.
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Substance of the Course

This seminar will coach and support students throughout the design, research, and writing for the senior thesis, the capstone of academic work at Barnard. Students will learn how to design a creative, theoretically-informed, and doable research project; how to find and use primary sources; how to critically assess primary material and scholarly sources; how to craft a clear and persuasive argument; and how to write and structure a long research paper.

Writing a senior thesis is a long-term endeavor (it cannot be completed in one semester). It is often challenging. It can become frustrating, and it can also be rewarding and exhilarating: it is your best opportunity to devote significant time to a research topic of your own choosing, useful for your intellectual development and (to the extent possible) for your future career, and to become expert in a political science question you find critical.

The key to success – and to an enjoyable research and writing experience – is to pace your work, devote significant effort to the thesis throughout the year, identify and address problems as they arise, and be aware that such a research endeavor requires a lot of flexibility. To help you in this process, you will be asked to submit regular assignments, such as writing a research proposal, writing and revising your draft chapters, etc. This will ensure that your work proceeds in a structured and timely manner and that you get feedback whenever you have completed an important part of your thesis.

The class is structured around regular meetings, either as a class or individually with the professor. During these meetings, students will learn critical skills for their research project, get constructive feedback on their on-going work, discuss the challenges encountered and find strategies to overcome these problems. The seminar aims to create a research community for advanced undergraduate, where students can find the support needed to successfully complete their thesis.

Requirements

1) Thesis

The main requirement for the class is to submit a 50 to 100 pages long thesis on a topic related to international politics. The thesis must include a literature review as well as the use of primary sources, and it must develop a clear, coherent, convincing, and original argument.

All theses should include the following elements:

1. A presentation of the puzzle (= a question to which the answer is not obvious, so you need a year of work and a 70 pages paper to address it)
2. A review of the existing scholarly explanations (= literature review) and 3. a presentation of the arguments to be tested (= the hypotheses). The literature review usually both sets up the argument to be tested and presents what other scholars have written on the topic.
4. A presentation of the research methodology;

5. A detailed presentation of the student's research findings (mostly, but not exclusively, based on primary sources)
6. A section that links all the previous elements together to show how the student has contributed to our understanding of the puzzle at stake.
7. A conclusion

Most theses will include three chapters – but it all depends on the students' topics and material. Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 are usually included in the first chapter; item 5 takes up the entire second chapter, and items 6 and 7 make the third and last chapter.

All theses must be turned in at the same time, at the political science department's thesis pizza party on April 23 (Sulzberger Parlor). The thesis should be bound in one of the standard fashions available at copy shops. It must be double-spaced, with consecutively numbered pages from start to finish. The thesis must include a title page, a table of contents, a bibliography. It must use a standard footnote citation system (MLA, APA, Chicago) consistently throughout the thesis. For specific editing and formatting requirements, please refer to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Barnard Honor Code: Students affirm that all work turned in is their own, and that they have fully and accurately cited every written source, including web-based sources, used in their writing. Students that do not comply with the Honor Code will face appropriate sanctions.

2) *Ancillary material*

Ancillary material (topic statement, research proposal, bibliography, draft chapters, etc) is due throughout the fall and spring semesters. Please see below for details on each specific due dates. To sum up, by the end of the fall semester, you should have a good draft of your puzzle, literature review, hypotheses, research methodology, and you should have made very significant progress on your research findings. The spring semester will be devoted to the finalization of the research findings, the section on the paper's contribution to the existing literature, the conclusion, and the revision of the entire paper.

Please submit both hard and electronic copies of the various parts of the thesis, except when otherwise indicated. All material must be typewritten.

Late turn-ins will be significantly penalized unless you contact me beforehand to request an extension. Extensions will be given only in the case of documented illness, family emergency, or other crisis situation (please bring any form of documentation available).

3) *Readings, Class participation, and Peer Review*

Students must complete all the required readings. They must attend all the required class meetings (meaning all meetings except those labeled as "optional"). During the meetings, students are expected to actively participate to the class discussion and provide advice and constructive criticism to their colleagues, and especially to their peer partner.

Please inform me beforehand if you expect to miss particular class meetings because of religious holiday that forbids work, illness, or family emergency. Please plan to submit the work due *before* the class takes place. If you miss a peer-review session, please inform your peer partner in advance and re-schedule the meeting within a week of the missed class meeting.

Grading

All theses will receive a "Y" grade at the end of fall semester, assuming satisfactory progress. The final grade for all 8 credits (fall and spring) is the final grade given in the spring.

The final grade will reflect not only the final thesis product but also 1- the performance on each intermediate assignment; 2- the participation to class discussions, and especially the feedback given to the peer partner's; 3- the demonstrated effort that the student put into the research and writing process.

Throughout the fall and spring semester, I will furnish grades for written work so that you have a sense of where you stand as we proceed.

Readings

The required texts are available at the Columbia University bookstore, along with the Lipson and Van Evera books. They are also on reserve at the Barnard library.

Other reading assignments are either available on the internet or they will be posted on the class website.

Required:

Wayne C. Booth et al. *The Craft of Research*.

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th rev. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2007

Recommended:

Charles Lipson. *How to write a B.A. thesis*.

Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Clockwork Muse: A practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1999.

Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/handbook/DocMLA.html>.

See Also: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

Various sources on citations, bibliographies, and footnotes available at:
http://sipa.columbia.edu/resources_services/student_affairs/academic_policies/code_of_conduct.html

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Disabled students who need test or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt.

Misc

We will use a lot the class website at courseworks.columbia.edu.

Week 1 – Introduction

Preparation for the class: Think about what you would like to write your senior thesis on. Come in class prepared to talk about your research interest (i.e. what kind of topic you would like to work on).

Class meeting (Sept. 6):

- Presentation of the class: structure, requirements, grading, etc
- Introduction of class participants & first discussion of research topics

Week 2 - Finding a good research research question

Preparation for the class (Sept 6-13):

- Read Barnard “General Requirements for the Senior Research Seminar,” available at: <http://www.econ.barnard.columbia.edu/~polisci/program/sem-req.pdf>
- Read Booth Prologue to part one, Prologue to part two, chapter 3 & 4
- Read the syllabus carefully (especially the first four pages)
- Do background reading on your topic
- Based on that, refine your research topic and e-mail me a one or two paragraphs presentation by Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2 p.m. Cc Jenna Freedman (jfreedma@barnard.edu) on your message.

Class meetings (Sept. 13):

- Discussion of each student’s research topic and question
- Discussion of research proposals: what is it? What is a literature reviews? What are primary and secondary sources? Etc.

On Thursday evening, I will send an e-mail to the class to assign peer partners. I will try to pair students with research interests as similar to one another as possible.

Week 3- Start your research proposal

A research proposal should include: 1- a research question, or a puzzle; 2- a short literature review; 3- questions or hypotheses to be tested; 4- your claim, 5- a discussion of the methods you will use (please detail what kind of primary and secondary sources you will use).

Preparation for the class (Sept 13 - 20):

- Read Booth chapters 5-7;
- Read Teresa Pelton Johnson, “Writing for International Security: a Contributor’s Guide.” International Security, 16-2, Fall 1991. (http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/publication.cfm?program=CORE&ctype=article&item_id=380)
- Do additional background reading on your topic;
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class
- Start drafting your research proposal (based on the readings for this week & on the comments you got on week 2). Focus on finding a good research question, which enables you to make a clear, original, and persuasive argument in your paper.

Class meeting (Sept. 20): Meeting with Jenna Freedman, Coordinator of Reference Services and Zine Librarian at Barnard College Library, to talk about how to find good bibliographic resources for your research paper.

Week 4 – Work on your bibliography and literature review

Preparation for the class (Sept 20 - 27):

- Look at the three best BA theses written on IR topics last year (on reserve at Barnard library), especially at the first chapter and how the author sets up the question being asked
- Read handout posted on class website (example of research proposal)
- Revise your research proposal, focusing especially on your bibliography and on your literature review
- Give me an annotated bibliography, of 10 – 15 sources (primary and secondary), by Thursday, Sept 27, 4 p.m. Each item in the bibliography should contain a brief description of how the source is useful for your research.

Class meeting (Sept. 27):

- Discussion of research strategies, primary and secondary sources, methods of research, how to write a good research proposal.

Week 5 – Revise your research proposal

Preparation for the class (Sept. 27 – Oct. 4) :

- Read Booth chapter 8
- Revise your research proposal, e-mail it to your peer partner and give me a hard copy by Thursday, Oct. 4, 4 p.m.
- E-mail me by Wednesday noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Oct. 4

Optional individual meetings (Oct. 4): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 6 – Prepare your outline

Preparation for the class (Oct 4-11):

- Read Booth 9-11 + prologue to part 2
- Start working on the outline of your entire thesis
- Prepare a very short presentation of your research proposal (3-5 mn)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's research proposal (5-10 mn). Pay particular attention to the following points: Does she have a well defined research question? Is her project doable? Does she need to consider additional hypotheses? Prepare a list of 5 concrete suggestions on how to improve your peer partner's research proposal (= "to do" list for the coming weeks)
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Oct. 11):

- Each student will present his/her research proposal and get feedback from his/her peer partner and from the rest of the class.

Week 7 – Revise your work

Preparation for the class (Oct.11 – 18):

- read primary and secondary material on your topic, in order to revise your puzzle, hypotheses, literature review, research methodology, and to start collecting data for your research findings
- Prepare a one-page outline of your entire thesis, due on October 18 by 4 p.m.
- E-mail me by Wednesday noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Oct. 18

Optional individual meetings (Oct. 18): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 8 – Work on your first chapter

Preparation for the class (Oct 18 – 25):

- Booth 12-16
- Start drafting your first chapter (puzzle, hypothesis, long literature review, research methodology, and a brief presentation of the rest of the paper)
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Oct. 25): Feedback on the outlines; discussion about the drafting and writing process, follow-up on research methods.

Week 9 – 12: Work on your first chapter

Preparation for the class (Oct 25 – Nov. 21):

- read primary and secondary material on your topic to collect data for your research findings (second chapter)
- E-mail me by Wednesday (Oct 31 / Nov. 7 / Nov. 14) noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Nov. 1, 8, or 15
- Finalize your draft first chapter; e-mail it to your peer partner and give me a hard copy by Wednesday, Nov. 21, noon.

Optional individual meetings (Nov. 1, 8, 15): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 13 – Start working on your second chapter

Preparation for the class (Nov. 21 – 29):

- Prepare a very short presentation of your first chapter (3-5 mn)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's first chapter (5-10 mn)
- Browse through the substantive chapters of the theses on reserve. Pay special attention to how the authors use and analyze sources.
- Read primary and secondary material on your topic to collect data for your research findings (second chapter)
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Nov. 29):

- Each student will present his/her first chapter and get feedback from his/her peer partner and from the rest of the class.
- Time permitting, discussion about the drafting and writing process

Week 14 – Work on your second chapter

Preparation for the class (Nov. 29 – Dec. 6): Continue working on your second chapter

Individual meetings (Dec. 6): Individual meetings for evaluation, detailed feedback on first chapter, and work planning for the spring semester.

SPRING SEMESTER

Week 1: Revise your first chapter & work on your second chapter

Preparation for the class (Winter break...):

- revise your first chapter based on comments you received from your peer partner and from me, keeping in mind that you will have to revise it again once you have completed the whole thesis
- Work on your second chapter
- Write a detailed outline of your second chapter; give me a hard copy by Thursday, Jan. 24, 4 p.m.
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Jan. 24): welcome back! We will talk about the organization of the class for the Spring semester, about your research progress and problems, and discuss any question of interest to you.

Week 2 – work on your second chapter

Preparation for the class (Jan 24 - 31): Work on your second chapter

Individual meetings (Jan 31): Individual meetings to discuss outline of second chapter.

Week 3 and 4 – work on your second chapter

Preparation for the class (Feb. 7 - 14):

- Finalize your draft second chapter; e-mail it to your peer partner and give me a hard copy by Thursday, Feb. 14, 4 p.m..
- E-mail me by Wednesday (Feb. 6 / 13) noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Feb. 14

Optional Individual meeting (Feb 7 or 14): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 5 – work on your second and third chapter

Preparation for the class (Feb. 14 - 21):

- Prepare a very short presentation of your second chapter (3-5 mn)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's second chapter (5-10 mn)
- Start working on your third chapter (how your finding contribute to the existing knowledge / literature)
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Feb. 21):

- Each student will present his/her second chapter and get feedback from his/her peer partner and from the rest of the class.
- Time permitting, discussion about the drafting and writing process

Week 6 – Revise your second chapter; work on your third chapter

Preparation for the class (Feb. 21 – 28):

- revise your second chapter based the advice you received in class
- Write a detailed outline of your third chapter; give me a hard copy by Thursday, Feb 28, 4 p.m.
- E-mail me by Wednesday noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Feb. 28

Optional Individual meeting (Feb 28): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 7 – work on your third chapter

Preparation for the class (Feb. 28 – March 20):

- draft your third chapter

Individual meetings (March 6): Individual meetings to discuss outline of third chapter.

Note: no class March 13 (spring break)

Week 8 – work on your third chapter

Preparation for the class (March 20 – 27):

- Finalize your draft third chapter; e-mail it to your peer partner and give me a hard copy by Thursday, March 27, 4 p.m..
- E-mail me by Wednesday noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on March 27

No class March 27 (instructor at International Studies Association Conference).

Week 9 – Revise your entire draft

Preparation for the class (March 27 – April 3):

- Prepare a very short presentation of your third chapter (3-5 mn)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's third chapter (5-10 mn)
- Revise your entire draft (pay particular attention to your first chapter, chances are that your presentation of the puzzle and your literature review need to be revised and updated!)
- E-mail me by Tuesday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (April 3):

- Each student will present his/her third chapter and get feedback from his/her peer partner and from the rest of the class.
- Time permitting, discussion about the drafting and writing process

Week 10-11 – Revise and finalize your thesis

Preparation for the class (April 3-23):

- revise your third chapter based the advice you received in class
- revise and finalize your entire thesis
- E-mail me by Wednesday (April 9 / 16) noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on April 10 or 17

Optional Individual meeting (April 10 - 17): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Two bounded copies of the thesis due on April 23.

- The due date is mandated by the Political Science Department and is completely inflexible. You will be penalized one third of a grade for every additional late day. Remember, if you do not turn in a thesis, you cannot graduate this semester!!!
- Students who are double majors are responsible for seeing that the advisor in the second major also receives a copy and that they comply with the deadline of the second department of their second major.

Remember to bring your essay to the copy shop a number of days early, because every Political Science senior will be aiming to get her paper copied and bound by April 23...

Remember to do an extra copy of the thesis, so that you can keep it for yourself!

Final group meeting (April 24): Date and place TBA.