

Political Science C3998  
Senior Honors Seminar  
2007-2008 Academic Year

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Tuesday, 4:10 – 6:00 pm  
711 IAB

*Preceptors:*

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Office Hours: Monday, 4-6

The Senior Honors Seminar is a year-long course designed to assist seniors in the Political Science department to write a scholarly paper that is of publishable quality. These papers, or theses, may also qualify the author for an Honors degree. The length of the thesis is typically about 75 pages although there is no set minimum or maximum.

At the start of the academic year, we meet as a group to discuss the principles of research and thesis design and, as a group, we read and comment on research proposals. Beginning in mid-October, however, much of your work will be conducted independently. To make sure that you make steady progress, it is crucial that you keep in touch with your faculty advisor as well as the seminar Professor and your assigned Preceptor. Meetings will resume in late January. Spring semester meetings will be conducted as writing workshops and you should be prepared to circulate and present your work and to respond to questions on it.

The bar for attaining Honors is very high, but everyone in the seminar is capable of producing a thesis that meets that standard. Recent honors theses are available at Nathalie Neptune's desk and you are encouraged to read a selection of them. Doing so will help you to gauge the quality of work that is expected and the range of questions that students have tackled in the past. Writing a superb honors thesis can be an arduous experience, but it is also very satisfying to invest deep intellectual effort in a consistent and focused way.

I. REQUIRED BOOKS (on reserve at Butler and available for purchase at Labyrinth Books)

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Lipson, Charles, *How to Write a B.A. Thesis: A Practical Guide from your First Ideas to your Finished Paper*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005.

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

## II. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND SOFTWARE

Endnote (A bibliographic software package) free through Columbia's IT page at:  
<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/software/endnote/>

Strunk, William and E.B.White, *The Elements of Style*, Dover: 2006.

## III. COURSE SCHEDULE

**September 4<sup>th</sup>**: Introductory Meeting

**September 11<sup>th</sup>**: What is Political Science Question? Honing your Topic

- Van Evera, Chapters One, Four-Six.
- King, Keohane and Verba, Chapter One.
- Lipson, Chapters One to Four.

Come prepared to speak for five minutes on the following:

What (in one sentence) is my research question?

Why is it important or relevant?

What is the previous work written on this topic?

Why is the existing scholarship unable to fully answer my question?

**September 18<sup>th</sup>**: Individual Meetings with Professor Goodhart

**September 25<sup>th</sup>**: Research Design

- Van Evera, Chapter Two
- Lipson, Chapters Five to Seven.
- King, Keohane and Verba, Chapters Two to Four.
- Bennett and George, pp. 19-34, Chapters Three to Six.

Recommended: Fearon, James, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics*, 43:2, 169-195, January 1991. Available on JSTOR.

**October 2<sup>nd</sup>**: Small Group Meetings -- Proposal Workshops

We will divide into workshops to discuss draft proposals, which will have been circulated by email by 5 p.m. on Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. Your proposal should be about three pages and should include the following:

- A statement of your research question
- The motivation and justification for this research question
- A consideration of possible answers to your question
- A discussion of the methodology by which you will determine which answer is most plausible

You should attach a working bibliography (no page limit) to your proposal.

**October 9<sup>th</sup>:** Revise proposals. No class.

**October 16<sup>th</sup>:** Small Group Meetings -- Second Proposal Workshop.

Proposals should be emailed to your group by 5 p.m. on Friday, October, 12<sup>th</sup>.

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>** and following: No formal class meetings until the Spring semester.

See writing schedule on the next page for important submission deadlines during this time.

**January 29<sup>th</sup>:** Small Group Meetings – Writing Workshop.

You will receive feedback, comments and questions on a substantive chapter of your thesis. The chapter that you think needs most work should be emailed to your group by 5 p.m. on Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. We will discuss chapters from half the group at this meeting.

**February 5<sup>th</sup>:** Small Group Meetings – Writing Workshop continued.

Chapters from the second half of the group will be discussed.

**February 12<sup>th</sup>:** Oral Presentation of Thesis Overview

Each presenter will have 15 minutes, plus 15 minutes of questions and comments. We will divide into two groups, half presenting each week.

**February 19<sup>th</sup>:** Oral Presentations continued.

**March 28<sup>th</sup>:** Thesis due by 5 p.m. at IAB 734 (submit four copies).

#### IV: WRITING SCHEDULE

- Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>:** Draft proposals due.
- Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>:** Submit memo to your group leader discussing how you will revise and improve your proposal based on discussions in the last meeting.
- Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>:** Submit your revised proposal including a chapter outline.
- Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>:** Turn in a draft of your first chapter to Professor Goodhart, your preceptor and your faculty advisor. Include a chapter outline explaining how this chapter fits into your thesis. Get feedback by appointment.
- Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>:** Turn in a draft of your second chapter to Professor Goodhart, your preceptor and your faculty advisor. Include a chapter outline explaining how the chapter fits into your thesis. Get feedback by appointment.
- Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup>:** Turn in a draft of your third chapter to Professor Goodhart, your preceptor and your faculty advisor. Include a chapter outline as previously. Get feedback by appointment.
- Friday, February 29<sup>th</sup>:** Turn in the first draft of your thesis to Professor Goodhart, your preceptor and your faculty advisor. Get feedback by appointment.
- Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>:** Final version of thesis due at IAB 734.

#### V: NOTES

- It is your responsibility to complete tasks on time. Failure to submit chapters or drafts of your thesis in a timely manner may preclude you from being granted honors. All assignments are due by 5 p.m. on the stated date.
- Please find out from your faculty advisor and preceptor whether they would prefer hard copies or electronic distribution. If you submit assignments electronically, please do so as pdf files.
- Please cc Professor Goodhart, your faculty advisor and your preceptor on all emails relating to your thesis.
- Continue to study for your other courses! Columbia College requires that you maintain at least a 3.6 GPA in your major to qualify for honors.