Research and Writing Seminar
POS 695, Fall 2012
Tuesday, 3:30 – 5:30
HS 013

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Office Hours

Humanities 016, Thursday 12:30-2:30
Milne 218, by appointment

Research and Writing Seminar
Course Objectives

This year-long course is required for second year Ph.D. students in Political Science. The primary goal of this course is to actively guide students toward the completion of a major research paper fit for submission to an academic conference or journal. The process of taking a research question from the brainstorming stage through formal presentation of findings is also designed to prepare students for developing a dissertation prospectus during their third year in the program. Each student will select a faculty advisor from their subfield to guide the formulation of their research question and the execution of the project.

This seminar is sequenced over two semesters with students receiving two credits in each term (RPOS 695 in the fall and RPOS 696 in the spring). By the end of the fall semester, each student will have selected a topic, produced a literature review, constructed a research design, and begun writing the paper. During the spring semester, students will complete their research, finalize their papers, and present their findings to an end of semester conference composed of student peers and faculty. The spring semester will emphasize the development and revision of the manuscript. The course will guide students through the ups and downs of the research process. Upon completion of this two-part course, students should be able to accomplish the following activities:

First, propose and develop a research problem on the basis of your past work in and familiarity with the work of others in your subfield;

Second, develop a systematic literature review to determine what research has already been done on your proposed problem and whether your work will make an original contribution to the existing body of published knowledge on your topic;

Third, evaluate the methodological and theoretical strengths and weakness of the published literature on your topic:

Fourth, complete a draft of an article length argument on your research project;

Fifth, submit your draft for review by peers and experts in your field and revise in light of their critical comments;

Sixth, provide constructive methodological and theoretical feedback to peers on their work with regard to the quality of their writing and methodological and theoretical arguments;

Seventh, present your paper in a conference setting as a first step toward submitting your paper for journal review.
Course Requirements, Grading, and Organization

General Class Participation (20% of final grade; all class meetings are graded)

The course will be taught in a seminar fashion built around the class working jointly on research and exercises. This means that we will all be dependent on the efforts of each other and our collective participation will determine the success of the learning experience for each member of our class. Participation is more than attendance. It includes active and thoughtful contributions by students to all aspects of the class. Active and thoughtful participation is dependent on a thorough reading of the material as well as thorough preparation for exercises to be conducted in class. Students are encouraged to seek clarifications of arguments made by peers or by the course instructor, to challenge arguments made by peers and the course instructor, and in every way to welcome the classroom experience as a forum for free and open intellectual inquiry conducted in a respectful manner.

Weekly Assignments

Weekly seminar meetings are divided between targeted seminars devoted to the development of students’ research papers and to general seminars devoted to discussion of readings, learning technological research and writing tools, and very brief up-dating discussions by students on their projects, their projects’ problems, challenges, and so on. Including the class devoted to the course introduction there are eight seminars in all.

Targeted Research Paper Seminars (80% of final grade; all assignments are graded)

Especially important, each student will be required to make a presentation in four seminars over the duration of the semester describing the development of his or her research and writing. Such presentations should include, in addition to a statement of the research itself according to the stipulations below for September 11, October 2 and 30, and December 11, a frank description of challenges and difficulties encountered at every stage of research and composition. Each student will find these sessions to be very useful not only to themselves but for other students in the class who may encounter similar problems along the way of developing their own projects.

Due Sept. 11. A one page proposal, accompanied by a preliminary working bibliography of – all told – ten books, articles, and book chapters dealing directly or indirectly with your proposed topic. In addition to your own investigations, students are encouraged to consult with their faculty mentors as well as other faculty members in their own or other sub-fields for recommended reading. At this stage bibliographical sources need not be studied in their entirety or even closely, but should be considered seriously to the extent required to determine if they potentially bear directly or indirectly on your proposed topic. Students will present (not read) their one-page topic to the class and be prepared to say generally why each of their bibliographical sources has been included in their preliminary bibliographies. In addition, on the day of presentation students are to add their one page proposals and preliminary bibliographies to the class Dropbox Shared Folder to begin a shared history of our seminar’s work. (Dropbox Shared Folder Hyperlink: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/lcos68k7viyq1th/zy3xK2xuit?m)

Time allotted for presentations is 20 minutes. (10% of final grade)

Readings for Class Meeting:

Jeffrey W. Knopf, “Doing a Literature Review”
Sara Benesh, “The Key to a Successful Prospectus: Consult an Advisor, Early and Often”
Andrew Enterline, “A Guide to Writing Research Projects in Graduate Political Science Courses”
Due October 2. A five to seven page elaboration of the original one page topic proposal, accompanied by a preliminary working bibliography that has now grown to a combined number of twenty books, articles, and book chapters focusing directly or indirectly on your proposed topic. Papers at this stage should devote roughly equal space to the following four things: first, a clear formulation of your proposed research problem or issue; second, an attempt to outline how you will go about developing your argument; third, a general discussion of the secondary literature on your topic; finally, an attempt to say what sort of original contribution to the literature on the topic your research will make. All this, of course, will change as you continue to get more deeply into your work, because research and writing takes on a life of its own in the course of its development. Nevertheless, it is crucial to have a plan as you go along that incorporates these four principle objectives. Students will present (not read) their papers to the class, concluding with a general discussion of what the bibliographical sources as a whole contribute to their projects thus far. On the day of presentation students are to add their five to seven page proposals and preliminary bibliographies to the class Dropbox Shared Folder. Time allotted for presentations is 20 minutes. (20% of final grade)

Readings for Class Meeting:
Todd Landman, “Comparative Politics and Human Rights”

Due October 30. By this stage your proposal should have grown to fifteen to seventeen pages. Similar to the guidelines of your project’s five to seven page elaboration above, papers at this stage should, first, more clearly formulate your proposed research problem or issue in light of your own thinking and your study of bibliographical sources (roughly 3 pages); second, a revised description of how you will go about developing your argument (roughly 3 pages); third, a more specific discussion of the secondary literature on your topic, identifying individual works that bear directly on your topic and in what ways, and those that deal with your topic more generally or indirectly (roughly 10 pages); finally, an attempt to say what sort of original contribution to the literature on the topic your research will make (roughly 1 or 2 pages). All this, of course, will continue to change as you get more deeply into your work, because research and writing takes on a life of its own in the course of its development. Nevertheless, it is crucial to have a plan as you go along that incorporates these four principle objectives. On the day of presentation students are to add their fifteen to seventeen page proposals and preliminary bibliographies to the class Dropbox Shared Folder. Time allotted for presentations is 20 minutes. (20% of final grade)

Due December 11. By this stage your proposal should have grown to twenty-five plus pages. Similar to the guidelines of its fifteen to seventeen page elaboration above, papers at this stage should, first, more clearly formulate your proposed research problem or issue in light of your own thinking and your study of bibliographical sources (roughly 5 pages); second, revise your description of how you will go about developing your argument (roughly 5 pages); third, offer a more specific discussion of the secondary literature on your topic, identifying individual works that bear directly on your topic and in what ways, and those that deal with your topic more generally or indirectly (roughly 15 pages); finally, argue what sort of original contribution to the literature on the topic your research will make (roughly 3 pages). All this, it should again be emphasized, will continue to change as you develop your argument and literature review into a full fledged paper because research and writing takes on a life of its own in the course of its development. Nevertheless, it is crucial to follow this plan as you go along by incorporating these four principle objectives. On the day of presentation students are to add this final draft of their proposals and preliminary bibliographies to the class Dropbox Shared Folder. Time allotted for presentations is 30 minutes. (30 % of final grade)
Applications, Programs, Technologies and “My Latest Frustrations” Seminars
These seminars are largely devoted to explorations of the usefulness and mechanics of computer applications, programs, and technologies able to assist students in various aspects of their research and writing. However, students will also be asked during these seminars to take five minutes to briefly update the class on the development of their research projects.

*Set aside 90 minutes for scholarly book and article technologies such as:*
- Project Muse
- Google Books;
- Amazon Books;
- Aviary
- Journals’ Article Summary Websites
- Book reviews *Perspectives on Politics*

*Set aside 30 minutes for student updates on research projects.*

November 13. Text Management
*Set aside 90 minutes for text management technologies such as:*
- Endnote
- Word
- Headlining
- XMarks

November 27. Collaborative Projects
Set aside 90 minutes for collaborative project technologies such as:
- Dropbox

*Set aside 30 minutes for student updates on research projects.*

Faculty Mentors
Students should ask a faculty member or members in their subfield to mentor their work for the two-semester duration of POS 695-696. Mentors offer invaluable assistance in all aspects and stages of student research and writing – theoretical conceptualization, methodological design and execution, general knowledge of a subfield and its published work on a wide range of topics, advice on intellectual strategies used to tackle research problems, feedback on writing, and so on. When approaching faculty members to serve as mentors students should have a clear idea of what research problem they want to work on, and faculty should be advised that they will be responsible for meeting with their 695-696 students on a to-be-arranged regular basis and for reading all written work students produce. Along with faculty mentors, Professor Schoolman will read and comment on all written work students produce and will meet with students during office hours as well as during regular scheduled class times to meet all the objectives of the course.

Office Hours
Professor Schoolman’s office hours are Thursdays, HUM 016, 12:30-2:30; Tuesdays, Milne 218, 3:30-5:30, when our regular scheduled class at that day and time is not meeting; and by appointment set up through email.
**Attendance Policy**

Students are very strongly encouraged not to miss any of the eight scheduled seminars unless absolutely necessary. Students must contact Professor Schoolman in advance of missing a seminar to alert him to an absence and provide explanation.

**University Regulations Applying to POS 695-696**

**Accommodations:** “Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations ([http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html](http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html)).” If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course please also inform the instructor as soon as possible. In addition, the instructor will make every effort to accommodate difficulties arising from religious observance. You are asked to bring any possible conflicts to the instructor’s attention as soon as possible. Students should not expect that, if they do poorly on an exam or other assignment, to claim, at that time, the need of an accommodation. This statement is to preclude that problem, and allow people with a need for accommodations to be treated fairly and appropriately.

**Plagiarism** Please familiarize yourself with the description in the undergraduate bulletin [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html) if you are involved in plagiarism the penalty will be failure in the course and you will be reported to judicial affairs. **In this one regard there are no second chances.** If you are not sure if something violates standards – ask. If you are not sure whether to cite or not to cite – cite. Every Student is expected to go through the following tutorial [http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html](http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html)