Research and Writing Seminar
POS 695, Fall 2013
Thursday, 5:45 – 7:35, HS 013

Office Hours
Milne 218, 11 am – 5:30 pm
(Scheduling an appointment by email in advance is recommended. Walk-in visits are always welcome, however, though students with unscheduled appointments must wait in turn.)

Research and Writing Seminar
Course Objectives

This year-long course – POS 695 & POS 696 – 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 qualified for presentation at an academic conference and for submission to an academic journal. The process of taking a research question from the brainstorming stage through formal presentation of findings is also designed to prepare students for beginning to develop a dissertation prospectus during their third year in the doctoral program. During the first week of the fall course students must speak to a faculty member from their major subfield to request that the faculty member serve as their POS 695 faculty mentor to help guide the formulation of their research question and the execution of their project. The contribution of faculty mentors to graduate students’ POS 695 research projects is an indispensable part of this course and indispensable to the success of each graduate student. No graduate student can take this course without arranging with a faculty member to serve as a mentor for the research and writing on which coursework and grades are based. At the completion of this course faculty mentors will also be asked to recommend a grade for their student’s research and writing, and faculty grade recommendations will be factored in with other grades for the course and along with these grades will be used to determine a student’s final course grade. (See Faculty Mentors below.)

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 produced a first draft of a research paper. During the spring semester, students will complete their research, complete final revisions on 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 completed at the end of the fall semester. 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 other scholars 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 weaknesses 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

Readings

All readings will be available to students without charge in the class Dropbox Folder.

General Class Participation

This 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.

General Research & Writing Seminars (20% of final grade; all class meetings are graded)

Weekly seminar meetings are divided between targeted research & writing seminars (9/12, 10/3, 10/31, 12/5) devoted to the development of students’ research papers and to general research & writing seminars (9/19, 10/17, 11/14) devoted to discussion of readings, learning technological research and writing tools, and very brief updating discussions by students on their projects, their projects’ problems, challenges, and so on. Including the class devoted to the course introduction (rescheduled because of the APSA meeting and Jewish Holidays) there are eight seminar meetings in all.

Targeted Research & Writing 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 12, October 3 and 31, and December 5, your frank description of challenges and difficulties encountered at every stage of your research and its composition. Each student will find these sessions to be very useful not only for themselves but for other students in the class who may encounter similar problems along the way of developing their own projects.

**Schedule of Targeted and General Research & Writing Seminar Meetings**

**Targeted Research & Writing Seminar 1, September 12. Due** - A one-page proposal, accompanied by a preliminary working bibliography of no less than ten books, articles, and book chapters (all together) 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 subfields for recommended reading. At this stage bibliographical sources need not be studied in their entirety, 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. **No later than noon, September 11**, by email all students must submit their one-page proposals and preliminary bibliographies to Professor Schoolman, who will deposit their work in our class Dropbox Folder to which all students will have access for reading and study purposes. **NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED.** Our Dropbox Folder Hyperlink is:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/lcos68k7viyq1th/zy3xK2xuit?

**Time allotted for each presentation is 10 minutes, and for class discussion of each is 5 minutes.**

**General Research & Writing Seminar 2, September 19.**

**Reading Assignment Due for Class Meeting and Discussion (readings included in Dropbox Folder)**

- 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”

**Targeted Research & Writing Seminar 3, October 3. Due** - 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; **fourth**, 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 as the semester progresses, 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. **By noon, October 2**, the day before their presentations, students are to send their five to seven page proposals and preliminary bibliographies to Professor Schoolman by email for inclusion in the class Dropbox Folder. **NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED.** **Time allotted for student presentations, 15 minutes; for class discussion of each presentation, 5 minutes.**
General Research & Writing Seminar 4, October 17.

Applications, Programs, Technologies Seminar
This seminar is 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. Among those to be considered are:
Project Muse;
Google Books;
Amazon Books;
Aviary;
Journals’ Article Summary Websites;
Book reviews Perspectives on Politics;
Endnote;
Word;
Headlining;
XMarks;

Each student will be asked to take responsibility for making a brief five minute presentation on one of the above. In addition, a guest speaker will review many of the above to supplement student presentations.

Targeted Research & Writing Seminar 5, October 31. Due - By this stage your proposal must grow 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, include a revised description of how you will go about developing your argument (roughly 5 pages); third, develop 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 8 pages); finally, include 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 October 30, by noon, students are to send their fifteen to seventeen page papers and preliminary bibliographies to Professor Schoolman for addition to the class Dropbox Folder. NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED. Time allotted for each student presentation 15 minutes; for class discussion of each presentation, 10 minutes (20% of final grade)

General Research & Writing Seminar 6, November 14.
Class discussion about challenges and obstacles to students’ research and writing. This class will also be devoted to a general discussion by the class as a whole to tasks remaining for the completion of individual student research projects. Students may benefit from these discussions in anticipation of completing the final work on their projects due 12/5.

Targeted Research & Writing Seminar 7, December 5. Due - 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 10 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 10 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. By noon on December 4 students are to send their papers by email to Professor Schoolman for inclusion in the class Dropbox Folder. NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED. Time allotted for student presentations is 20 minutes; for class discussion of each presentation, 10 minutes. (30% of final grade)

**Faculty Mentors**

Students must 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 *first* approaching faculty members to serve as mentors students should *already have a clear idea* of what research problem they want to work on. Faculty mentors understand 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. Faculty mentors will be asked to recommend a grade for their student's research and writing, and faculty grade recommendations will be factored in with other grades for the course and along with these grades will be used to determine a student's final course grade.

**Office Hours**

Professor Schoolman's office hours are Thursdays, 11 am – 5 pm, in Milne 218. It is advisable that students schedule their appointments in advance by email. Students may visit my office at any time on Thursday without a scheduled appointment, though in such cases will have to wait for any appointment in progress to be completed.

**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.

**IMPORTANTLY – Targeted Research & Writing Seminars** scheduled for October 31 and December 5 may run over the scheduled allotted course time. Students are expected to remain for the entirety of the class and should make arrangements in advance of these seminars to do so. However, in no event will either seminar be kept more than sixty minutes beyond the scheduled time.

**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).” 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 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