

# UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLICY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

## Semester in Washington

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### RPOS 495z (Sec. 4008) RESEARCH AND WRITING IN WASHINGTON

SYLLABUS -- Spring 2019

Michael J. Malbin, Professor

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Office hours: After class and by appointment.

#### Class times

Meetings for RPOS 341 and 495z will be back-to-back on Fridays, starting at 9:30am (unless otherwise notified), in the 1st floor classroom at the Woodley Park residence hall. Some classes will involve (or be supplanted by) field trips. Ending times will vary; students are expected to be available all day each Friday for required activities. There may also be a few evening activities during the week.

#### Course description

This is the research and writing component of the Political Science department's spring Semester in Washington program. Admission by application. Enrollment limited. It is cross-listed as RPOS 490z. Only one version may be taken for credit. Co-requisite(s): R POS/R PAD 341 and R POS/R PAD 342. General Education Designation: Writing Intensive.

Students completing their Political Science **honors thesis** in conjunction with RPOS 495z will also register for RPOS 400 (1 credit), meet with the professor as needed, then write a more substantial final paper (20-25 pages instead of 12-15 pages).

This course will focus on writing a research paper on the process and structure of politics or policymaking in Washington DC. Research topics typically will fall under one of the following broad headings: (1) the process (including the participants and debates) surrounding a particular policy decision (or set of decisions), (2) theoretically guided case study on the strategic issues and choices of one or more governmental or non-governmental organization(s); (3) electoral politics. Students often will choose a topic relating to some previous course work or to their Washington internships. However, there will also be some common reading in POS 341 and 495z to help guide the selection of topics. Students will then hone their ability to do case study research using a range of primary and secondary sources, draft a research paper that marshals appropriate evidence to support a thesis, learn how to refine the essence of a paper into a brief and understandable oral presentation, and practice the all-important skills of revision and rewriting.

### **Course objectives**

Students will:

- Define a research question for a case study paper.
- Devise a strategy for finding appropriate primary and scholarly secondary source material to answer the question.
- Practice the ability to make sound arguments, supported by evidence.
- Display an understanding of the policy process in their written work.
- Learn how to boil down the essence of their research into a brief oral presentation.
- Learn the art of revising and rewriting, which includes but goes well beyond copy-editing for grammar and style.

### **COURSE POLICIES FOR RPOS 341, 342, & 495z**

#### **Attendance:**

Attendance and active participation in class is expected every week, barring legitimate medical excuses (following UAlbany guidelines). Any unexcused absence or lateness may result in a reduction in the student's final grade. Family visits are not acceptable reasons for missing class.

Absence due to religious observance. New York State Education Law ([Section 224-a](#)) - Campuses are required to excuse, without penalty, individual students absent because of religious beliefs, and to provide equivalent opportunities for make-up examinations, study, or work requirements missed because of such absences. Faculty should work directly with students to accommodate religious observances. Students should notify the instructor of record in a timely manner.

#### **Internet and laptops:**

Students will need to conduct online research to complete the assignments in this course. Use of laptops for note-taking is permitted and laptops may be used for some in-class work. However, use of any electronic device during class (including laptops) for non-class-related purposes is prohibited, and may result in loss of classroom laptop privileges and/or temporary confiscation of the device.

**Eating in class** is not permitted unless we are having a meal together.

#### **Accommodating disabilities:**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, medical, cognitive, learning and mental health (psychiatric) disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Disability Resource Center (518-442-5490; [drc@albany.edu](mailto:drc@albany.edu)). Upon verification and after the registration process is complete, the DRC will provide you with a letter that informs me that you are a student with a disability registered with the DRC and list the recommended reasonable accommodations. Please submit these letters within the first two weeks of the semester (in person, so we can discuss appropriate arrangements).

#### **Papers & assignments:**

There will be a series of interim papers and assignments, all of which are intended to serve a building block for the final multi-draft paper. The interim steps will be graded, with the largest portion of the course grade based on the final draft. The final paper should be **12-15 pages**. *Instructions for all papers will be posted on Blackboard.* For "reading notes" assignments, see the syllabus for POS 341.

**Academic Honesty:**

Students are expected to adhere to the University at Albany's regulations concerning academic honesty: [http://www.albany.edu/elt/academic\\_integrity.php](http://www.albany.edu/elt/academic_integrity.php). *Read these guidelines carefully, make sure you understand all provisions, and follow them in all your courses.* Pay particular attention to the need for citations even when paraphrasing or summarizing material. Violation of these rules will result in severe penalty (usually failing the assignment and/or the course, depending on the violation) as well as referral to the appropriate academic authorities.

***So far this is standard formula, so pay special attention to what is coming next:*** Penalties will be imposed for *inadvertent* as well as deliberate plagiarism. Since inadvertent plagiarism is not fully intentional, you need to be aware of what it is. It is easy to cut-and-paste material from the Internet, summarizing a source's logic, evidence, reasoning or language. When you do this, you are obliged to acknowledge in the main body of the paper that you are doing so, and not merely with a within-text citation. You need to say something like "Smith says that..." even when you paraphrase. Putting in a citation at the end of a series of directly paraphrased sentences is NOT adequate. The same thing goes for following the order of another person's argument and evidence. Summarizing another person must be acknowledged, and close paraphrasing should be rare. When you paraphrase closely, you probably should be quoting. Using only the within-text citation is adequate only if you are taking a fact or referring to another's conclusion. Much more is needed once the phrasing or the other's argument begins to look similar. And copying the other person's footnotes is NEVER appropriate because it suggests that you did not look up the original source on your own. When you do want to do a second-degree citation like this, it should contain something like this: Jones, p. 133 as cited by Smith, p. 221.

If your paper turns out to be a series of quotes and paraphrases, and if you give all of the proper references using words of acknowledgment as well as within-text citations, then it will not be plagiarized. It will not be considered dishonest. So far, so good – but that is still not enough to make a paper satisfactory. Compiling a series of quotes and paraphrases – even if properly acknowledged – will not be enough to do a passable job. A paper must be made up of and organized around *your* thoughts – your thesis, reasoning and evidence, phrased in your words and serving your paper's end.

If you have any questions about this while writing, it is your responsibility to ask questions in advance. The university's policy is available at [https://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/regulations.html](https://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)

**Grading:**

Explanation appears after the schedule of assignments.

**Required book for POS 495:**

Wayne Booth, et al. *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed. (Chicago, 2016) ISBN-13: 978-0-226-23973-6

All other readings will be available on Blackboard, in compliance with applicable copyright laws.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

DATE	ASSIGNMENT	Same week in 341/342
Jan 24	All-Day Orientation	
Jan 25	Tour of DC	
Feb 01	Library of Congress (Date TBD)	Layers of DC
Feb 08	<u>The Policy Making Process</u> Read: Kraft and Furlong, <i>Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives</i> , ch. 3, "Understanding Public Policymaking", pp. 75-111. [37]	DC - 1 <sup>st</sup> Century
Feb 15	<u>From Subject to Topic to Research Question</u> Reading: [69] Booth et al., <i>Craft of Research</i> , pp. 27-32 + ch. 3, 4, 5 [58] Powner, <i>Empirical Research &amp; Writing</i> : p. 209-10 [2] Yin, <i>Case Studies</i> , pp. 1-9 [9]	Congress
Feb 22	1. <u>Research as a Profession in Washington</u> Reading: [39] Andrew Rich, <i>Think Tanks ....</i> ch. 6 [17] Wikipedia entries on relevant governmental agencies: [22] Congressional Research Service [7] Congressional Budget Office [4] Governmental Accountability Office [6] Offices of Inspectors General [5] 2. <u>Using Research Tools for your papers</u> Finding primary and secondary sources, Taking notes; bibliography. Using Government Documents; other primary sources Finding scholarly articles Evaluating research institute reports and advocacy research How to use (and not use) news articles, blogs, Wikipedia. Link to the standard citation manuals online, <a href="https://libguides.library.albany.edu/citationhelp">https://libguides.library.albany.edu/citationhelp</a> Government document style guides and other tools are on Blackboard.	20 <sup>th</sup> C – Neighborhoods + Info interview
Mar 01	Using secondary source material, select one or two broad <u>subject areas</u> for research, with two potential research <u>topics</u> . <b>Submit</b> these two topics, with the bibliography consulted so far. All topics/thesis questions must be approved by professor	Team presentations - monuments. Log #2
Mar 08	Submit: Two potential <u>thesis or research questions</u> , each with a bibliography. Having a good question presumes having read secondary sources on your specific subject area (policy, organization, decision, etc.) as well as parallel reading (see separate sheet).	City/Suburbs; Budget
Mar 15	After feedback, refine and <b>submit</b> 1 question with <u>research plan design</u> .	Int. Grps.
Mar 22	<u>The Writing Process</u> Reading: [67] Booth et al., <i>Craft of Research</i> , pp. 173-76 + ch. 12-14 & 16 [58] U. of Washington, "Tips and Techniques" (In Writing resources folder) [9] Submit: Notes + weekly progress paragraph. Each week should show sources consulted that week, what learned to help answer question.	Museum presentations
Mar 29	Submit: weekly progress paragraph. Each week should show sources consulted that week, what learned to help answer question.	Politics + 20 <sup>th</sup> century DC
Apr 05	Submit: weekly progress paragraph. Each week should show sources consulted that week, what learned to help answer question.	Immigration

Apr 12	Draft thesis paragraph and outline, with bibliography	Presidency + Teams
Apr 19	NO CLASS Submit: weekly progress paragraph. Each week should show sources consulted that week, what learned to help answer question.	
Apr 25 (Th)	Last day of internship	
Apr 26	Bring what you have written so far (laptop is OK) for one-on-one check-in.	TBD + DC region
May 01 (W)	Submit draft electronically	
May 02 (Th)	Present summaries + peer reviews to class. Followed by picnic.	
May 03 (F)	Individual consultations on papers. Required for each student.	
May 11	Submit Final 495 papers	Log #4
May 12	Check out of apartment	
May 17	Commencement weekend on campus	

### GRADING FOR POS 495z

Note that to do well in this course, you will have to complete *every one* of the following steps. Receiving an A+ on the final paper will not be enough by itself for a passing grade. Missing a single week's assignment can cost you a full plus or minus on the final grade. A bad grade on an interim assignment will be a *lot* better for the final grade than a zero. Interim assignments will be graded on the weekly progress and effort shown. Persistence counts. We fully understand that longer papers could well involve setbacks and restarts. The point behind this rubric is that you have to keep plugging every week.

Date	To be graded (each item graded A-E)	% of grade	Cumulative %
Feb 08	Policy process – reading notes on supplied template.	3	3
Feb 15	Craft of Research–ch.3-5. reading notes, comments, and questions.	3	6
Feb 22	Research profession – reading notes, comments, and questions,	3	9
Mar 01	Two subject areas, with secondary source biblio in proper form.	3	12
Mar 08	Two potential thesis or research questions, each with a bibliography.	3	15
Mar 15	Submit one refined question with a research plan or design.	3	18
Mar 22	Craft – ch. 12-14 & 16 -- reading notes, comments, and questions.	3	21
	Weekly progress report on research paper.	3	24
Mar 29	Weekly progress report on research paper.	3	27
Apr 05	Weekly progress report on research paper.	3	30
Apr 12	Draft thesis paragraph with outline for rest of paper + bibliography.	3	33
Apr 19	No class, but submit weekly progress report on research paper.	3	36
Apr 26	Partial draft on laptop for check-in.	2	38
May 01	(Wed.) Draft paper	10	48
May 02	(Thurs). Present oral summary to the class +	3	51
	Peer critique of paper draft written by assigned partner	4	55
May 03	Consultations	0	55
May 11	Final paper.	45	100

#### *Grading scale*

A: 93-100, A-: 90-92, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 63-66, D-: 60-62, E: 0-59.

Grades of Incomplete will only be awarded for reasons explained in the university's guidelines. See <https://www.albany.edu/undergraduateeducation/grading.php>