RPOS696: Research and Writing Seminar

Meets: most Mondays 11:00-1.00 beginning 1/30/2016 (Husted 015)

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Office Hours:
1. TTh 11.45-1.00, Political Science Contact Office, Humanities #016(uptown campus)
2. Wednesdays 2:30-3:30, except first 3 Wednesdays, Milne #221
3. By appointment

Many thanks to my predecessors who have taught this course--Professors Victor Asal, Anne Hildreth, David Rousseau and Mort Schoolman—not only for sharing their syllabi but for taking time to brainstorm and provide input. Also thanks to Professors Julie Novkov and Peter Breinner for helpful suggestions.

This is the second of the two courses in the year-long research and writing seminar required for third year graduate students in political science. Last semester we worked on the design stage; each of you conceptualized a question and produced a research design set to answer the question. You have accomplished a lot; you have developed a clear question; a sense of the literature already out there/the potential of your contribution to that literature; and a research design/plan ready to be implemented.

You are ready to move to pos696, the execution/implementation stage. The expectation is that by the end of the year you will be well on your way towards a conference-ready paper, with a strong potential for journal publication, and the semester will culminate in an end-of-the-year presentation of your work to faculty and graduate students in the dept.

Throughout, we will be emphasizing the process of conducting research. You (usually) don’t write a conference paper in a day. Rather your academic thinking/work evolves over time. Your thinking and your emphasis changes and re-solidifies as you go. Interpretations of theoretical readings change as you refocus on them, and you never quite know how the data collection and analysis stages will proceed. Sometimes your findings will tweak or even contradict expectations. In addition, there’s the human side; as you work on your projects, you will be balancing other professional responsibilities, not to mention issues surrounding your work/life balance. This course serves as a trial run for learning about how to put together a project cutting across a longer frame of time than a usual semester-length paper, and it thus stands as a model for your work in future settings.

In short, you will be experiencing the ups and downs of the research and writing process, and the course asks you to become more reflective about that process.
**Course Objectives**

-- In stages to implement the research plan you have already designed. You have developed a research question, you have a good understanding why that question is important/what it adds to the literature and a plan to execute the research design.

-- To end up with a ready or close-to-ready conference or potentially publishable paper

-- To end the semester with an official presentation to faculty and graduate students within the political science department

-- To work in conjunction with your mentor/adviser, your classmates and your instructor for the purposes of receiving feedback and support

-- To reflect on your experiences and the ups and downs of your thinking as you work throughout the semester

**Notes:**

*As was the case for pos695, the expectation is that you will be working closely with the advisor you selected as the mentor for your project.*

*Work on the assignments of this class will provide a structure for the process, help you review fundamentals and give you a network of support.*

*Remember: Research and writing are a process. Your ideas will evolve/solidify over time, even small changes in your thinking can make a big difference, and we don’t expect you to get it all right in a week!*

*Remember there’s a human factor too. Research doesn’t occur in a vacuum. You’re balancing work on this project with other professional responsibilities not to mention your personal life. Even if you don’t plan on an academic career, if you view this work on this project as a harbinger of things to come, using this time as a chance to think through the work strategies that work best for you should serve you in the present and also down the road.*

**Requirements**

1. Draft and subsequent revisions culminating in Final paper. **30%**
2. Presentation to members (faculty and graduate students) of the political science department **15%**
3. Preliminary work on your paper, including either progress reports or the writing of specific parts of your paper. **20%**
4. Journal/blog to keep track of successes/issues as they come up, including things that went right, things you have questions about and reflections on how you are integrating work for this course into your other professional and personal responsibilities. **20%**

5. Attendance, participation, and in-class presentations to your colleagues and your instructor. **15%**

**Course Policies**

*Attendance*: It goes without saying that, as in any other graduate seminar, you are expected to come to all classes and to engage as an active participant. This is particularly the case in pos696 as one of your roles will be to provide feedback and serve as a support system for your peers.

Of course we all know that emergencies and unforeseen circumstances arise; please let me know if at all possible prior to a class if you will be unable to attend, and please do everything you can to keep these unforeseen circumstances to a minimum.

*Students with Disabilities*: If you need any class accommodations due to a disability, please utilize University resources as needed, and please let the professor know well in advance of any assignments requiring accommodation(s). It is a function of the University to provide such accommodations.

*Plagiarism and Academic Honesty*: The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own without giving the original author credit by citing him or her. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please contact me before submitting assignments for grading. Plagiarism violations will result in disciplinary action; minimally you will fail the relevant assignment.

Additionally, it goes without saying that students are expected to meet the broader standards of academic honesty expected of students at a major university.

See link on University policy: [http://www.albany.edu/eas/104/penalty.htm](http://www.albany.edu/eas/104/penalty.htm)

See also the UAlbany Library “Plagiarism 101” Tutorial: [http://library/albany.edu/usered/tut.html](http://library/albany.edu/usered/tut.html)

**Course Schedule** (subject to revision as the process unfolds; a few specific and short readings to come; in each class, you will be expected to share a progress report or short presentation on how things are going.)

1/30. Introduction.

2/6. Jody Laporte, “Confronting a Crisis of Research Design;” *PS* 2014. your work plan (initial blog entry; time lines; when you will write; your plan for how the work will proceed)
2/13. We will read drafts of a paper--convention and published version—of work produced by a faculty member or graduate student

2/20. Bring in a short article to share dealing with issues of doing research, issues of the profession or issues of work/life balance

2/27. No Class


3/13. No class; spring break

3/20. Check in

3/27. No Class

4/3. Writing workshop on initial draft

4/10. cont.

4/17. No class; Easter Monday

4/24. TBD

5/1. Practice presentation

5/8. Final draft, practice presentations cont; wrap up

Date of official presentations to dept. to be determined but will be during week of finals