

PSCI 4718: HONORS THESIS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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University of Colorado at Boulder
Fall 2009-2010

Ketchum 234
M 3:30PM – 6:00PM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to assist students in writing a senior honors thesis in Political Science. During the early stages of the course, we will explore the epistemological foundations of social science research, common forms of such research, and its applicability to wide-ranging topics. The key task of the course is to create an opportunity in which students can develop ideas into a well-articulated, defensible thesis. The format of the course will be akin to a graduate seminar. That is, there will be some lecture, especially in the first few weeks of the course, but mostly there will be guided classroom discussions (involving ample peer feedback) of components of students' Honors theses.

Students should read and understand the requirements for graduating with Latin Honors by visiting the CU Honors website at www.colorado.edu/honors. The requirements and deadlines listed on this website are absolute. Failure to abide by these requirements and deadlines will preclude graduating with Honors, regardless of the amount of effort put into the thesis.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

In order to keep students on schedule for successful completion of their thesis, students must complete a few critical writing and presentation assignments. These assignments, along with in-class participation, will serve as the grade for the Fall semester. A copy of all of these written assignments should be shared with and commented on by the advisor. **DO NOT TURN IN MATERIALS AFTER DEADLINES.** Should a student miss more than one deadline, s/he will be required to drop the Honors thesis course altogether.

- 1) **Participation**: participation in class discussions of the readings as well as peers' research topics is very much expected. (10%)
- 2) **Presentation**: students will make a 25-minute presentation toward the end of the semester. The quality of this presentation will be graded. (10%)
- 3) **Research Statement**: students will submit on October 9 a 2-3 page statement of the topic and proposed research plan. This should offer a fairly detailed hypothesis that will be tested and some indication of the evidence that will be gathered. (10%)
- 4) **Literature Review**: students will submit on October 30 a 5-7 page review and critique of the relevant literature with a clear understanding of where their research question fits into previous work on the subject. (20%)
- 5) **Draft**: students will submit on December 7 a 15-20 page draft of the honors thesis. This should contain all the elements of the eventual finished study, including a rudimentary version of the main argument/insight and a presentation of some of the evidence. (50%)

Final grades for this Fall course will be determined using the following percentage scale: A=94-100, A-=90-94, B+=87-90, B=84-87, B-=80-84, C+=77-80, C=74-77, C-=70-74, D+=67-70, D=64-67, D-=60-64, F=<60.

READING REQUIREMENTS

There are some required readings we will be doing in the first few weeks of class. These are available at CU bookstore and are as follows:

- Shively, W. Phillips (2009). *The Craft of Political Research, Seventh Edition*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Burnham, Peter, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant, and Zig Layton-Henry (2004). *Research Methods in Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bartels, Larry M. (2008). *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Marx, Anthony W. (1998). *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

THESIS REQUIREMENTS

A. Original Data Analysis and/or Collection

Because students are seeking to graduate with an honors degree in political science, their thesis must go beyond "library research" of published material—that is, beyond a mere repackaging of secondary sources. At least one of the following examples of original data collection and/or analysis would fulfill this requirement:

1. Secondary analysis of existing quantitative datasets
2. Collection and analysis of unpublished documents gathered from archives, organizations, or individuals.
3. Systematic collection of data from the internet or other electronic sources.
4. Interviews with masses or elites.
5. Participant observation.
6. Other unforeseen possibilities that you should run by the professor.

B. Thesis advisor

Students are required to pick an advisor early in the fall semester. It is important that this individual be deeply involved in the project every step of the way. Advisors should be part of the process of formulating (1) the research question, (2) decisions about evidence, (3) the review and understanding of the literature, and (3) the choice of an oral defense committee. The advisor will read and comment on the various thesis components and drafts. The advisor will also eventually chair the oral defense committee. Student should choose an individual who is willing and able to do all of these things throughout the year (i.e., avoid people who are going on leave). Students must arrange a schedule of regular (about once a month) meetings with their advisor.

GRADUATING WITH HONORS

The spring semester grade is determined by the overall quality of the final thesis and oral defense. The level of Latin Honors (if any) is recommended to the Honors Council by the oral defense committee. The Political Science Department's standards for Latin Honors will be distributed in class.

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 7	No class
September 14	Selection of faculty advisor and informal presentation
October 9	Submit <i>Research Statement</i>
October 30	Submit <i>Literature Review</i>
November 9, 16, or 30	In-class presentations of <i>Draft Draft</i>
November 23	No class
December 7	Submit <i>Draft</i>
December 3	Application due from students planning to graduate with Departmental and/or General Honors in Spring 2010. The thesis application must have <i>all the required signatures</i> and be submitted to Honors Program Office in Norlin Library, Room M400M.

SCHEDULE

August 24	<u>Course Introduction</u>
August 31	<u>Understanding Social Science</u> Required reading: Shively [Chapters 1-7] and Burnham et al [Chapter 2]
September 7	<u>No class</u> Labor Day
September 14	<u>Understanding Social Science, continued</u> Deadline: Selection of faculty advisor and informal presentation of research question and evidence to be collected
September 21	<u>Quantitative Data and Statistics</u> Required reading: Shively [Chapters 8-10] Recommended reading: Burnham et al. [Chapters 4-6]
September 28	<u>Quantitative Data and Statistics, continued</u> Required reading: Bartels [entire]
October 5	<u>Qualitative Data</u> Required Reading: Marx [entire] Recommended Reading: Burnham et al. [Chapters 7, 9 and 10] Deadline on October 9, 1PM: Submit <i>Research Statement</i> to CUlearn and advisor.
October 12	<u>Discussion of Research Statements</u> Required Reading: All of your colleagues' <i>Research Statements</i>
October 19	<u>Discussion of Research Statements, continued</u>
October 26	<u>Question and Answer Session</u> Professor Baker will take whatever questions students have Deadline on October 30, 1PM: Submit <i>Literature Reviews</i> to CUlearn and advisor
November 2	<u>Discussion of Literature Reviews and Question and Answer session</u>
November 9	<u>Presentation of Draft Drafts</u> 1/3 of students will make 15-minute (plus 10-minute Q&A) PowerPoint presentations
November 16	<u>Presentation of Draft Drafts</u> 1/3 of students will make 15-minute (plus 10-minute Q&A) PowerPoint presentations
November 23	<u>No class</u> Thanksgiving
November 30	<u>Presentation of Draft Drafts</u> 1/3 of students will make 15-minute (plus 10-minute Q&A) PowerPoint presentations Deadline on December 3: Application due to Honors Program Office
December 7	<u>No class</u> Deadline on December 7, 5PM: Submit <i>Drafts</i> to CUlearn, turnitin.com , and advisor.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>

Disability Services' letters for students with disabilities indicate legally mandated reasonable accommodations. The syllabus statements and answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, {{insert your procedures here}} See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

CLASS BEHAVIOR

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution.

Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>