

Political Science Distinction Seminar

PSC 496—Spring 2016

Department of Political Science
Syracuse University

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Office Hours

By appointment

Spring Semester in Myslice: Wed 3:45–6:30 pm in Eggers 100

Modified Spring Semester: Wed 5:15-6:45 pm in Eggers 100

Seminar Overview

This seminar continues the year-long Political Science Distinction seminar and is only for students who successfully defended a proposal last November. The primary goal of this year-long seminar is to help all students produce a quality political distinction thesis. As the Program Guidelines state:

The program requires the student to produce a senior thesis that reflects an understanding of the contemporary literature relevant to the thesis topic, advances an original argument, and presents evidence appropriate to the underlying inquiry. The thesis should generally be modeled after a typical academic journal article in the field of Political Science. The thesis will be read and evaluated by a committee of three, consisting of the main advisor and two additional readers. Two of the readers must be members of the Political Science department. One of the readers may be a graduate student in Political Science. An oral defense will determine if the thesis meets the departmental requirements for Distinction.

While the majority of the work will be completed by you, with supervision by your adviser, the seminar is designed to assist you in this process in the following ways:

1. Provide some basic guidance on common thesis issues, including research design, preparing a proposal, research strategies, etc. The guidelines for the program state that “the thesis should generally be modeled after a typical academic journal article in the field of Political Science.” Thus, we will discuss how scholars get from a basic idea for a topic to a research question to a thesis/hypothesis and eventually to a completed article.
2. Monitor progress toward meeting the deadlines outlined in the guidelines (and below). There are a series of benchmarks throughout the fall and spring semesters. We will use the seminar to help you make progress towards these benchmarks by preparing drafts, reading sample proposals, talking through common problems you might encounter, etc.
3. Develop a sense of a research community going through the thesis process together. This will help you in multiple ways. For example, you will present and critique each other’s draft proposals and theses in the seminar. Also, the seminar will serve as a forum for discussing common challenges and solutions.

Distinction Program Deadlines

- **First week of fall semester:** A two page research statement discussing your overall research interest, the specific question you want to ask, and how you plan to go about answering that question (research strategy) should be submitted during the first week of senior year.
- **October 15:** A draft thesis proposal (5–10 pages) is due to your adviser and second reader (a faculty member who will also be part of the oral defense committee) by October 15.
- **November 2:** A thesis proposal (5–10 pages) is due by November 2. The proposal must be approved by at least two faculty members who will also be part of the oral defense committee. A copy of the proposal, with faculty signatures, should be submitted to the Department. After the first semester, the student or advisor have the right to terminate the thesis process.
- **End of spring break, Monday March 21:** A full draft of the thesis is due by the first business day following spring break.
- **Third week in April, April 18–22:** The thesis must be completed, defended, and approved no later than the third week in April. The committee will determine at the completion of the defense if the thesis is “satisfactory” or “not satisfactory” in meeting the Department’s standards for Distinction.
- **Poster Session, Wednesday, May 4th 3:00–5:00 pm** for Political Science Distinction students as part of the Maxwell School Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship.

Course evaluation

Your grade for the seminar is assigned by your thesis supervisor. Note that attendance and participation in the seminar is a requirement for the distinction program, and I will consult with each adviser about seminar performance. Your grade for the fall term will be based on your assignments and work in the fall term, especially your final research proposal.

Readings

Readings will be made available via blackboard.syr.edu.

Seminar Schedule

This seminar is designed to be a flexible and useful forum to help you in the thesis process. While I have a tentative schedule of topics and meeting dates, the schedule is flexible. Feel free to offer ideas for other topics, and we can either add seminar dates or revise the current schedule. This seminar is one of your primary outlets to ask questions, get feedback and advice, and get help from other people in the same process.

Spring Term

1. Writing, Critique, Rewriting: Moving Toward a Defensible Thesis (Wednesday, 20 January)

Required reading

- Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th edition. Revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams and the University of Chicago Press Editorial Staff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - Ch. 7 “Drafting Your Report” (pp. 71–81)
 - Ch. 9 “Revising Your Draft” (pp. 98–101)
 - Ch. 10 “Writing Your Final Introduction and Conclusion” (pp. 102–108)
 - Ch. 11 “Revising Sentences” (pp. 109–119)
 - Ch. 12 “Learning From Your Returned Paper” (pp. 120–121)
- Jolly, Seth K. “Xenophobia and immigrant contact: French public attitudes toward immigration.” Submitted to *Social Science Journal* for review in 2012.
- Reviews from *SSJ*
- Jolly, Seth K. 2015. “Xenophobia and immigrant contact: French public attitudes toward immigration.” *Social Science Journal*.

Agenda

- The stages of article preparation: proposal, writing, critique, rewriting.
- We talk through how a paper draft eventually became a published article. How did I do the research? Where did I go wrong? What kind of feedback did I get? How did I have to revise for publication?
- Lessons in seeing a project through to completion.
- Set schedule for next two sessions.

Assignment

- Where did I go wrong initially? How did I respond to comments from reviewers? Did the paper get better (more persuasive, clearer, etc.)?
- Which parts of your project are causing you the most trouble? Consider whether you can omit or reformulate this part of project.

2. Feedback on Drafts in Progress, Round One (Wednesday, 10 February)

Required reading

- Working drafts of your colleagues’ theses will be emailed to everyone on February 8.

Agenda and Assignment

- Come prepared to offer critiques and advice to your colleagues.

3. Feedback on Drafts in Progress, Round Two (Wednesday, 17 February)

Required reading

- Working drafts of your colleagues’ theses will be emailed to everyone on 15 February.

Agenda and Assignment

- Come prepared to offer critiques and advice to your colleagues.

*First full draft of thesis due to your adviser and both readers.
(Monday, 21 March)*

4. Preparing for a Defense and for Maxwell School Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship (Wednesday, 23 March)

Required reading

- Turabian, Ch. 13 “Presenting Research in Alternative Forums” (pp. 122–128)
- International Studies Association, “Successful Poster Sessions: Some Guidelines.” <http://isanet.ccit.arizona.edu/portland/posterguide.html>
- Midwest Political Science Association. “Poster Session Presentation Instructions.” <http://www.mpsanet.org/Conference/PresenterInformation/PosterSessionInstructions/tabid/195/Default.aspx>
- Dina Mandoli, “How to Make a Great Poster.” <http://www.aspb.org/education/poster.cfm>

Agenda

- What is expected of you in the defense?
- Preparing a presentation.
- Preparing a conference poster.
- What is expected of you at the poster presentations?
- Mock defenses
- Practice elevator pitch of thesis.

Assignment

- Plan a draft poster for your defense and poster presentation. If you and your advisers prefer, you can also prepare a PowerPoint for your defense.

5. Optional individual meetings to discuss drafts (Wednesday, 30 March)

Last week for defense, final submission of thesis. (April 18–22)

6. 4th Annual Maxwell School Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship (Wednesday, May 4th 3:00–5:00 pm in the Strasser Commons)

- Information about the event can be found at <http://maxwell.syr.edu/UndergradScholarship/>.
- Prior to the poster session, you must deposit your thesis at SURface: (<http://surface.syr.edu>).

University Policies

Academic Integrity

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If I suspect academic dishonesty or plagiarism, I will submit formal reports to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Also, <http://www.plagiarism.org> is a useful website for tips on citations and other writing resources.

Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities “Accommodation Authorization Letters,” as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Religious Observances Policy

SU’s religious observances policy, found at supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

Last updated: December 21, 2015.