

Senior Research Seminar – International Relations
POLS BC 3761-3762

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 5-7 p.m.

Seminar, Fall 2009 and Spring 2010
Tuesdays, 4:10-6 p.m.
Milbank 237
Barnard College

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Substance of the Course

This seminar will coach and support students throughout the design, research, and writing for the senior thesis, the capstone of academic work at Barnard. Students will learn how to design a creative, theoretically-informed, and doable research project; how to find and use primary sources; how to critically assess primary material and scholarly sources; how to craft a clear and persuasive argument; and how to write and structure a long research paper.

Writing a senior thesis is a long-term endeavor (it cannot be completed in one semester). It is often challenging. It can become frustrating, and it can also be rewarding and exhilarating: it is your best opportunity to devote significant time to a research topic of your own choosing, useful for your intellectual development and (to the extent possible) for your future career, and to become expert in a political science question you find critical.

The key to success – and to an enjoyable research and writing experience – is to pace your work, devote significant effort to the thesis throughout the year, identify and address problems as they arise, and be aware that such a research endeavor requires a lot of flexibility. To help you in this process, you will be asked to submit regular assignments, such as writing a research proposal, writing and revising your draft chapters, etc. This will ensure that your work proceeds in a structured and timely manner and that you get feedback whenever you have completed an important part of your thesis.

The class is structured around regular meetings, either as a class or individually with the professor. During these meetings, students will learn critical skills for their research project, get constructive feedback on their on-going work, discuss the challenges encountered and find strategies to overcome these problems. The seminar aims to create a research community for advanced undergraduate, where students can find the support needed to successfully complete their thesis.

Requirements

1) *Thesis*

The main requirement for the class is to submit a 50 to 75 pages long thesis on a topic related to international politics. Aim for quality, not quantity; strong, well-polished 50-page papers are much more valuable than weak, windy 75-page papers.

The thesis must include a literature review as well as the use of primary sources, and it must develop a clear, coherent, convincing, and original argument.

All theses should include the following elements:

1. A presentation of the puzzle (= a question to which the answer is not obvious, so you need a year of work and a 50 pages paper to address it)
2. A review of the existing scholarly explanations (= literature review) and 3. A presentation of the arguments to be considered (= the potential answers to your research questions). The literature

review usually both sets up the possible answers to your research questions and presents what other scholars have written on the topic.

4. A presentation of the research methodology;
5. A detailed presentation of the student's research findings (mostly, but not exclusively, based on primary sources)
6. A section that links all the previous elements together to show how the student has contributed to our understanding of the puzzle at stake.
7. A conclusion

All theses must be turned in at the same time, at the political science department's thesis pizza party on April 15 (Sulzberger Parlor). The thesis should be bound in one of the standard fashions available at copy shops. It must be double-spaced, with consecutively numbered pages from start to finish. The thesis must include a title page, a table of contents, a bibliography. It must use a standard footnote citation system (MLA, APA, Chicago) consistently throughout the thesis. For specific editing and formatting requirements, please refer to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Barnard Honor Code: Students affirm that all work turned in is their own, and that they have fully and accurately cited every written source, including web-based sources, used in their writing. Students that do not comply with the Honor Code will face appropriate sanctions.

2) *Ancillary material*

Ancillary material (topic statement, research proposal, draft chapters, etc) is due throughout the fall and spring semesters. Please see below for details on each specific due dates. To sum up, by the end of the fall semester, you should have a good draft of your puzzle, literature review, potential answers to your research question, research methodology, and your research findings. The spring semester will be devoted to the finalization of the research findings, the section on the paper's contribution to the existing literature, the conclusion, and the revision of the entire paper.

Please submit both hard and electronic copies of the various parts of the thesis, except when otherwise indicated. All material must be typewritten. When you give me a draft paper on which you got feedback from a writing fellow (= research proposal, draft introductory chapters, draft research chapters, draft concluding chapters), please submit both your intermediary draft (with the writing fellow's comments) and your final draft.

Late turn-ins will be significantly penalized unless you contact me beforehand to request an extension. Extensions will be given only in the case of documented illness, family emergency, or other crisis situation (please bring any form of documentation available).

3) *Readings, Class participation, and Peer Review*

Students must complete all the required readings. They must attend all the required class meetings (meaning all meetings except those labeled as "optional"). During the meetings, students are expected to actively participate to the class discussion and provide advice and constructive criticism to their colleagues, and especially to their peer partner.

Please inform me beforehand if you expect to miss particular class meetings because of religious holiday that forbids work, illness, or family emergency. Please plan to submit the work due *before* the class takes place. If you miss a peer-review session, please inform your peer partner in advance and re-schedule the meeting within a week of the missed class meeting.

Grading

All theses will receive a "Y" grade at the end of fall semester, assuming satisfactory progress. The final grade for all 8 credits (fall and spring) is the final grade given in the spring.

The final grade will reflect not only the final thesis product but also 1- the performance on each intermediate assignment; 2- the participation to class discussions, and especially the feedback given to the peer partner's; 3- the demonstrated effort that the student put into the research and writing process.

Throughout the fall and spring semester, I will furnish grades for written work so that you have a sense of where you stand as we proceed.

Readings

The required texts are available at the Columbia University bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Barnard library.

Other reading assignments are either available on the internet or they will be posted on the class website.

Required:

Wayne C. Booth et al. *The Craft of Research*.

Roselle, Laura and Spray, Sharon. *Research and Writing in International Relations*. Pearson. 2008.

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th rev. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2007

Recommended:

Charles Lipson. *How to write a B.A. thesis*.

Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Clockwork Muse: A practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1999.

Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/handbook/DocMLA.html>.

See Also: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

Various sources on citations, bibliographies, and footnotes available at:
http://sipa.columbia.edu/resources_services/student_affairs/academic_policies/code_of_conduct.html

Writing fellows

Two writing fellows are attached to this class, to help you tackle argument, organization, the use of evidence, and syntax before you hand your work to me. This course is writing-intensive and working with writing fellows on a draft of each paper is mandatory. Conferences with writing fellows are required. The due date for first drafts, as well as final draft, is immutable. All drafts should be handed to me.

Note that the more serious the draft you hand in to your writing fellow, the more you will learn and the better the second draft will be. Similarly, the more serious the draft you hand in to me, the more useful my comments, and the better your final thesis. Please keep in mind that the writing fellows and I will read only one draft of each assignment / chapter. It is therefore in your best interest to make sure that your proposal or chapter is as strong as possible when you submit it, so as to maximize the usefulness of the feedback you will get. It also means that, if the draft you hand to the writing fellow – or to me – is incomplete, you forgo your chance of getting feedback on the missing part of your thesis.

In other words, submit only complete, polished drafts to the writing fellows -- and, of course, to me. Submissions of an incomplete or sloppy draft to the writing fellows will result in a lower grade for the overall assignment.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Disabled students who need test or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt.

Misc resources

We will use a lot the class website at courseworks.columbia.edu.

Here are a couple of websites, full of very useful advice for research and writing:

- <http://www.nd.edu/~dliindley/handouts/handoutlinks.html> (plenty of handouts on everything you need: how to make a theoretically informed argument, core theories and concepts used in IR, etc)
- <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism/handouts/index.cfm> (you can find hundreds of useful tips on research and writing)
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl> (the sections on "The Writing Process", "General Academic Writing", "Research and Citations", and "Grammar and Mechanics" are especially helpful).

Here are some very helpful websites for all your questions on intellectual property, citing and documenting sources, avoiding disasters, etc (and of course do not hesitate to ask me if you have any doubt or question):

- <http://www.library.ucla.edu/b Bruinsuccess> (the tutorial is fun and very useful)
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01> (another very helpful site on avoiding plagiarism)
- <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources> (very detailed information about how and why to cite sources)
- <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/> (rules and examples on how to reference your sources)

Learning Objectives

Students who complete this course will learn how to:

1. Perform advanced independent research on political science, human rights, and/or African studies topics
2. Develop rigorous and convincing political science arguments
3. Express themselves effectively orally and in writing
4. Integrate and apply political science concepts and theories in order to analyze questions about power

Week 1 – Introduction

Preparation for the class:

- Read Barnard “General Requirements for the Senior Research Seminar,” available at: <http://www.barnard.edu/polisci/program/sem-req.pdf>
- Read Booth Prologue to part one and skim the whole book to have a sense of what is in it.
- Think about what you would like to write your senior thesis on and formulate a tentative research question.
- Come in class prepared to talk about your research interest (i.e. what kind of topic you would like to work on) and what tentative research question you have in mind (i.e. which angle you will use to approach your topic)

Class meeting (Sept. 8):

- Presentation of the class: structure, requirements, grading, etc
- How to find a good research question
- Introduction of class participants & first discussion of research questions
- Sign up for individual meetings next week

Week 2 – Refine your research question

Preparation for the class (Sept 8-15):

- Read the syllabus carefully (especially the first four pages)
- Read Roselle Chapter 1
- Read Booth Prologue to part two. Read chapter 3 carefully, and apply Booth’s advice step by step in order to develop your research question. Skim chapter 4.
- Do background reading on your topic (this week and throughout the semester, you may want to use the handout on “tips for active critical reading” distributed in class and posted on the class files section)
- Based on your readings, refine your research question (find a puzzle) and put a one paragraph presentation of your research question in the folder on my office door by Monday, Sept. 14, 11 a.m. Also e-mail your research question to Jenna Freedman, the Barnard librarian attached to the class (jfreedma@barnard.edu).

Individual meetings (Sept. 15):

- Discussion of each student’s research question
- Assignment of peer partners (I will try to pair students with research interests as similar to one another as possible).

Week 3- Draft your research proposal

A research proposal should include: 1- a research question, or a puzzle; 2- a short literature review; 3- the possible answers to your research question; 4- a discussion of the methods you will use (please detail what kind of primary and secondary sources you will use) and, when relevant, of your criteria for case selection 5- a one page outline of your thesis.

Preparation for the class (Sept 15 - 22):

- Read Roselle chapter 2 and 3
- Read Booth chapters 5-8;
- Read the handout posted on class website (example of research proposal, entitled Severine’s research proposal)
- Do additional background reading on your topic;
- E-mail me by Monday evening any question or topic you would like to discuss in class
- Start writing your research proposal (based on the readings for this week & on the comments you got on week 2). Focus on 1- finding a good research question, which is as puzzling as possible

and which enables you to make a clear, original, and persuasive argument in your paper; and 2-developing your literature review.

Class meeting (Sept. 22):

- Discussion of research strategies, primary and secondary sources, methods of research, how to write a good research proposal.
- Meeting with writing fellows

Week 4 – Finish drafting your research proposal

Preparation for the class (Sept 22 - 29):

- Look at the three best BA theses from my seminar last year (on reserve at Barnard library). Look especially at the introductory chapters and how the author sets up the question being asked
- Revise your research proposal, focusing especially on your bibliography and on your literature review.
- Give me your draft research proposal for the writing fellow by Tuesday, Sept. 29, 4 p.m.,

Class meeting (Sept. 29): Meeting with Jenna Freedman, Coordinator of Reference Services and Zine Librarian at Barnard College Library, to talk about how to find good research resources for your research paper.

Note that we will not meet in the usual classroom. We will meet in the Barnard library's teaching alcove (Lehman Hall, second floor, on your right when you enter the library).

Week 5 – Continue working on your research proposal

Preparation for the class (Sept. 29 – Oct. 6):

- Read Booth 9-11 + prologue to part 2
- Continue working on your research proposal
- E-mail me by Monday noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Oct. 6

Optional individual meetings (Oct. 6): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

This week, meet with the writing fellow to get comments on your research proposal.

Week 6 – Finalize your research proposal

Preparation for the class (Oct. 6 - Oct 13):

- Revise your research proposal according to the comments of the writing fellow, give me a hard copy by Tuesday, Oct. 13, 4 p.m., and send it to your peer partner. Please remember to give me both your final draft and your intermediary draft (with the writing fellow's comments).
- Read Roselle chapter 4 and browse the rest of the book.
- E-mail me by Monday noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Oct. 20

Optional individual meeting (Oct. 13): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 7 – Start drafting the first third of your thesis (= the introductory chapters)

Your introductory chapters should include

- A presentation of your research question or puzzle
- A review of the existing scholarly explanations – also called literature review --, which should be the longest part of your draft.
- a presentation of the potential answers to your research questions
- your claim
- A presentation of your research methodology;

- A roadmap to the rest of your thesis

Preparation for the class (Oct.13 – 20):

- Take an academic book or article whose introduction you like, and think about why the introduction is effective.
- Read primary and secondary material on your topic, in order to revise your puzzle, hypotheses, literature review, research methodology, and to start collecting data for your research findings
- Start drafting your introductory chapters (puzzle, long literature review, hypotheses, research methodology, and a brief presentation of the rest of the paper)
- Prepare a very short presentation of your research proposal (3-5 mn)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's research proposal (5-10 mn). Pay particular attention to the following points: Does she have a well-defined research question? Is her project doable? Does she need to consider additional answers to her research question? Prepare a list of five concrete suggestions on how to improve your peer partner's research project. I strongly encourage you to type up your comments to give to your colleague.

Class meetings (Oct. 20): Each student will present her research proposal and get feedback from her peer partner and from the rest of the class.

Week 8 – Work on your introductory chapters

Preparation for the class (Oct 20 – 27):

- Read Booth 12-16
- Work on your introductory chapters
- E-mail me by Monday noon any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Oct. 27): Advice on the introductory chapters.

Week 9: Work on your introductory chapters

Preparation for the class (Oct 27 – Nov. 10):

- Finalize the draft of your introductory chapters
- Give me your draft introductory chapters for the writing fellow by **Wednesday, Nov. 4, noon**
- E-mail me by Monday, Nov. 9, noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting

Optional individual meeting (Nov.10): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

This week, meet with the writing fellow to get comments on your research proposal.

Week 10: Revise and finalize your introductory chapters

Preparation for the class (Nov. 10– Nov. 17):

- Revise your introductory chapters according to the comments of your writing fellow
- Think hard about your research question and about the “so what?” question. Re-read Booth bottom of p. 51-52
- Finalize your introductory chapters; e-mail them to your peer partner and give me a hard copy by Tuesday, Nov. 17, noon. Please remember to give me both your final draft and your intermediary draft (with the writing fellow's comments).
- Read primary and secondary material on your topic to collect data for your research findings (research chapters)

Class meeting (Nov. 17): Discussion about the drafting and writing process, follow-up on research methods.

Week 11 – Start working on the second third of your thesis (= the chapters presenting your research findings, called in this syllabus the “research chapters”)

Preparation for the class (Nov. 17 – Nov. 24):

- Prepare a short presentation of your introductory chapters (5 minutes)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner’s introductory chapters (5-10 minutes). List the five most important concrete suggestions on how to improve your peer partner’s chapters. I strongly encourage you to type up your comments to give to your colleague.
- Browse through the research chapters of the theses on reserve. Pay special attention to how the authors use and analyze sources.
- Take an academic book or article that you like, and think about why the argumentation is effective.
- Read primary and secondary material on your topic to collect data for your research findings (research chapters)

Class meeting (Nov. 24): You will present your introductory chapters and get constructive criticisms from your peer partner and from the class.

Week 12 – Work on your research chapters

Preparation for the class (Nov. 24 – Dec. 1):

- Work on your research chapters
- Write a one-page detailed outline of your research chapters; give me a hard copy by Tuesday, Dec. 1, 4 p.m.
- E-mail me by Monday, Nov. 30, noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Dec. 1

Optional individual meetings (Dec. 1): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 13: Revise your introductory chapters & work on your research chapters

Preparation for the class (Dec. 1 - Dec. 8):

- revise your introductory chapters based on comments you received from your peer partner and from me, keeping in mind that you will have to revise it again once you have completed the whole thesis
- continue working on your research chapters

Individual meetings (Dec. 8): Individual meetings for feedback on research chapters outline, evaluation, and work planning for the spring semester.

SPRING SEMESTER

Week 1 – Finish drafting your research chapters

Preparation for the class (Winter break...):

- Finish your draft research chapters for the writing fellow and give it to me by Tuesday, January 19, 2 p.m.
- E-mail me by Monday, Jan. 18, noon any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (Jan. 19): welcome back! We will talk about the organization of the class for the Spring semester, about your research progress and problems, and discuss any question of interest to you.

This week, meet with the writing fellow to get comments on your research chapters.

Week 2 – Revise your research chapters and work on your concluding chapters

Preparation for the class (Jan. 19 – Jan. 26):

- Revise your research chapters
- E-mail me by Monday, Jan. 25 noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Feb. 3

Optional Individual meeting (Jan. 26): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 3 – Finalize your research chapters

Preparation for the class (Jan. 26 - Feb. 2):

- Revise your research chapters based on the writing fellows' suggestions and give me a hard copy by Tuesday, Feb 2, 2 p.m. Don't forget to think hard about your research question and about the "so what?" question. Please remember to give me both your final draft and your intermediary draft (with the writing fellow's comments).
- E-mail me by Monday, Feb. 1, noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Feb. 2

Optional Individual meeting (Feb 2): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like

Week 4 – Start working on the last third of your thesis (= your concluding chapters)

The concluding chapters should include:

- A synthesis of your argument, showing how you have contributed to our understanding of the puzzle at stake
- A section showing how your answer fits within (or contributes to) the literature on your topic
- A section assessing the limitations of your argument
- Optionally, sections suggesting areas for further research and/or detailing policy recommendations
- A conclusion

Preparation for the class (Feb. 2 - 9):

- Start working on your concluding chapters
- Prepare a 5-minutes presentation of your research chapters
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's research chapters (5-10 mn). List the five most important concrete suggestions on how to improve your peer partner's chapters. I strongly encourage you to type up your comments to give to your colleague.
- Write a one-page outline of your concluding chapters; give me a hard copy by Tuesday, Feb 9, 4 p.m.

Class meeting (Feb. 9): You will present your research chapters and get constructive criticisms from your peer partner and from the class.

Week 5 – Work on your concluding chapters

Preparation for the class (Feb. 9 – February 16): work on your concluding chapters

Individual meetings (Feb. 16): Optional individual meetings to discuss outline of concluding chapters.

Week 6 – work on your concluding chapters

Preparation for the class (February 16- Feb. 23):

- Work on your concluding chapters
- Give me a draft of your concluding chapters for the writing fellow by Tuesday, Feb. 23, 4 p.m.
- E-mail me by Tuesday, Feb. 22, noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on Feb. 23

Optional individual meetings (Feb. 23): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like

This week, meet with the writing fellow to get comments on your concluding chapters.

Week 7 and 8 – Finalize your concluding chapters

Preparation for the class (Feb 23 – March 9):

- Finalize your draft concluding chapters; e-mail them to your peer partner and give me a hard copy by Tuesday, March 9, 4 p.m. Please remember to give me both your final draft and your intermediary draft (with the writing fellow's comments).
- E-mail me by Monday, March 1 or 8, noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on March 2 or 9

Optional individual meetings (March 2 and March 9): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Week 9 – Revise your entire draft

Preparation for the class (March 9 – March 23):

- Prepare a very short presentation of your entire thesis (3-5 mn)
- Prepare a constructive criticism of your peer partner's concluding chapters (5-10 mn). List the five most important concrete suggestions on how to improve your peer partner's chapters. I strongly encourage you to type up your comments to give to your colleague.
- Think hard about your research question and about the "so what?" question.
- Revise your entire draft (pay particular attention to your introductory chapters, chances are that your presentation of the puzzle and your literature review need to be revised and updated!)
- E-mail me by Monday noon any question or topic you would like to discuss in class

Class meeting (March 23):

- Discussion about the drafting and writing process
- Each student will present her entire thesis and get feedback from her peer partner and from the rest of the class.

Week 10-11 – Revise and finalize your thesis

Preparation for the class (March 31 - April 13):

- revise your concluding chapters based the advice you received in class
- revise and finalize your entire thesis
- E-mail me by Monday (April 5 or 12) noon if you want to sign up for an optional meeting on April 6 or 13

Optional Individual meeting (April 6 and April 13): optional meeting to discuss any research topic you would like.

Two bounded copies of the thesis due on April 15.

- The due date is mandated by the Political Science Department and is completely inflexible. You will be penalized one third of a grade for every additional late day. Remember, if you do not turn in a thesis, you cannot graduate this semester!!!
- Students who are double majors are responsible for seeing that the advisor in the second major also receives a copy and that they comply with the deadline of the second department of their second major.

Remember to bring your essay to the copy shop a number of days early, because every Political Science senior will be aiming to get her paper copied and bound by April 15...

Remember to do an extra copy of the thesis, so that you can keep it for yourself!