

POL 2812 – PhD Dissertation Seminar

**Professor Seva Gunitsky
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Trinity College, Room 24

Mondays 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aim of the course is practical; it is to help people produce a dissertation proposal by the end of the course. A dissertation proposal, which is a departmental/graduate school requirement, identifies what research question you want to tackle in your dissertation; it lays out the reason/justification for taking on that topic, and a statement about what steps you plan to take to execute the research. The development of the proposal is usually undertaken with close consultation with your supervisor.

EXPECTATIONS

This course is graded on a pass/fail basis. Students are expected to:

1. Identify a dissertation supervisor and/or identify a professor in the department who is willing to read and discuss your pre-proposal.
2. Produce a one page statement of your research interests for circulation with other students in the class (September 21st).
3. Attend seminar sessions to discuss your proposal development, and to read and offer thoughtful commentary on the proposals circulated by others in the class.
4. To develop and circulate a pre-proposal (no more than 5 pages) that identifies as specifically as possible the (a) line of research that you want to investigate, and (b) a statement of how you plan to go about doing it (due November 27th).
5. To circulate and formally present (a 20-minute presentation) your proposal, and to engage in 30 minutes of Q and A. Supervisors, political professionals, and interested faculty are invited to participate in these sessions scheduled for the last meetings of the course (March 12 – April 2).

Topics for discussions will include: different approaches to research design; proposal writing; supervision and committee formation; research resources and funding; research ethics; and the framing and presenting of research findings at professional meetings.

Note: This is a research seminar. We will not meet every week. The schedule will be circulated and discussed at the first meeting.

FALL

- Week 1 September 11 Introductions: goals of the course and expectations, assign one paper outline interests (due for circulation, September 21)
- Week 2 September 18 Finding a supervisor and constructing a committee
(Guest: Professor Steven Bernstein, Director, Graduate Studies)
- Week 3 September 25 Roundtable: Discuss research interests
- Week 4 October 2 Roundtable: Discuss research interests
- Week 5 October 9 Thanksgiving, no class**
- Week 6 October 16 Research ethics (Nevitte)
- Week 7 October 23 The Mechanics of Proposal Writing
Readings: posted on Blackboard.
- Week 8 October 30 no class
- Week 9 November 6 Fall reading week, no class**
- Week 10 November 13 no class
- Week 11 November 20 Guests: obstacles and discoveries on the dissertation path.
Lama Mourad, PhD Candidate
Noel Anderson, Assistant Professor
Stefan Renckens, Assistant Professor
- Week 12 November 27 (5 page pre-proposal due)
- Week 13 December 4 no class

(Winter break, no class)

WINTER

- Week 14 January 8 Pre-proposals feedback
- Week 15 January 15 Pre-proposals feedback
- Week 16 January 22 no class
- Week 17 January 29 no class

Week 18	February 5	no class
Week 19	February 12	no class
Week 20	February 19	Reading week, no class
Week 21	February 26	no class
Week 22	March 5	no class
Week 23	March 12	Proposal Presentations + feedback
Week 24	March 19	Proposal presentations + feedback
Week 25	March 26	Proposal presentations + feedback
Week 26	April 2	Proposal presentations + feedback

HELPFUL READINGS

The assumption is that students will have had some formal exposure to qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and to the elements of research design.

There are a number of general sources, some classics, and sources that are more prominent in different subfields. Some of these include:

Przeworski, A., & Teune, H. (1970). *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley.

Campbell, D.T. & Stanley, J. C. (1966) *Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Brady, H., & Collier, D. (2004). *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield

Eckstein, H. (1975) Case Study and Theory in Political Science in F. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby, eds, *Handbooks of Political Science*. Vol 17: Strategies of Inquiry.

Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *The American Political Science Review*, 65(3), 682-693. doi:10.2307/1955513

Geddes, B. (1990). How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics. *Political Analysis*, 2, 131-150. doi:10.1093/pan/2.1.131

Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341-354.

Slater, D., & Ziblatt, D. (2013) The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison *Comparative Political Studies*, 46 (10),1301-1327.

Mahoney, J. (2007) Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(2), 122-44.

Sekhon, J.S. (2004) Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(2), 281-293. doi:10.1017/S153759270404015

Tetlock, P.E. & Belkin, A. (1996) Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives in P.E. Tetlock and A. Belkins, eds, *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politic*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Other sources provide helpful advice about writing proposals, doing research, and professional norms/ advice about presenting research and the peer review process. As follows: