POL 499Y1Y – SENIOR THESIS AND THESIS SEMINAR
Course Syllabus

SEMINAR INSTRUCTOR:
Karlo Basta
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Office hours: by appointment (flexible)

THESIS SUPERVISOR:
Per application and per approval by the department

UNDERGRADUATE ADVISOR:
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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION
This seminar is open only to students whose applications for the Senior Thesis Program have been approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. It is intended to serve as a forum in which students who are writing a senior thesis can present and discuss their work and consider various approaches to research in political science. The readings for the seminar are required of all students, and have been chosen to facilitate the thesis work and to provide insights into the process of researching a specialized topic in the field, writing the thesis, and presenting results of the inquiry. While the student’s primary responsibility is to his/her thesis supervisor, all students in the Senior Thesis Program are expected to participate fully in the work of the seminar. The final grade for the course will reflect both the thesis itself and participation in the seminar.

The thesis is a 15,000 word (approx. 40 page) research paper on any topic chosen by the student in consultation with a thesis supervisor. The thesis should contain appropriate footnotes and bibliography, and in general conform to the specifications of the APSA (American Political Science Association) style manual. Once chosen, the thesis topic may be further developed and refined over the course of the seminar in consultation with the supervisor. Students are expected to hold regular meetings with their supervisor in addition to their seminar attendance.

The seminar will guide students through key issues in research design, from choosing a topic, through selecting approaches to researching it, to conducting research, drawing conclusions and summarizing the results in written form. While the students will be able to draw on a textbook to aid them in understanding the research process in political science, emphasis will be placed on how such research is actually conducted. To this end, the students will review and discuss empirical articles published in a variety of social science journals. In the second semester, students will focus mostly on completing their research and writing of the thesis. Each student will be required to present the results of their research to their colleagues at the end of the course.
CONTACT WITH THE INSTRUCTOR:
Students should feel free to keep in touch with me and to ask for guidance throughout their research. There are no formal office hours, but I will be available on request, either immediately after the class, or by appointment via the email. There will be several weeks in the second semester during which we will have no classes. Students should spend this time working towards the completion of their research. I will be available for consultation during these times, unless otherwise specified.

READINGS
The following textbook has been ordered at the University of Toronto Bookstore:


The rest of the readings are available on-line, with the exception of those marked by a double asterisk. These readings will be made available on course reserve. *Students are required to read all the materials listed for each particular week.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Thesis: 75% (grade assigned by the supervisor)
Participation and presentations: 25% (grade assigned by seminar instructor)

*Purpose statement*
Each student will be responsible for submitting a short “purpose statement” (see Creswell, Ch. 6) to the thesis supervisor and the seminar instructor no later than November 22nd. The purpose statement should be approximately 2-4 pages in length, and should contain a working title for the thesis, a discussion of the research question, the beginning stages of a literature review, and a short working bibliography. The purpose statement will not be graded or circulated, but will be used by the supervisor and the seminar instructor to provide feedback on the thesis research plans.

*Abstract*
Students will submit a working abstract of the thesis to the seminar instructor and supervisor no later than January 10th. The abstract should be approximately 200 words in length, and will be circulated to the class at the January 17th session. Students will have the opportunity to revise and update the abstract up until the final class session before the mini-conference of March 28th. Final versions of the abstracts will be available for public circulation as part of the preparation for the mini-conference.

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:
Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information, please see the University of Toronto’s policy on Plagiarism at [http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsept.html](http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsept.html).
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS:
The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.
COURSE OUTLINE

September 13th – Introduction

Creswell, Research Design, Ch. 3 (Students will not be expected to do the reading for this week, but should consult the Creswell chapter subsequently)

September 20th – Selecting a Topic and an Approach

Creswell, Research Design, pp. 23-25; Ch. 1


September 27th – Formulating a Research Question and Hypothesis

Creswell, Research Design, Ch. 7


October 4th – Using and Building Concepts in Research Projects


October 11th – No Class (Thanksgiving)

October 18th – Literature Review

Creswell, Research Design, Chapter 2


**October 25th** – Writing a Proposal/Purpose Statement/Abstract

Creswell, Research Design, Chs. 5, 6

**November 1st** – First round of research design presentations

**November 8th** – same as above

**November 15th** – same as above

**November 22nd** – Understanding Comparisons 1


**November 29th** – Understanding Comparisons 2


Re-read Henry Hale article from the Sept. 27th session.

**December 6th** – no class (unless additional session proves necessary for presentations)

**January 10th** – Case studies and theory testing


**January 17th** – Case studies and causal mechanisms


**January 24th – Quantitative Approaches

Creswell, Designing Research, Ch. 8


**January 31st - Interpretivist Political Science


**February 7th – Towards Completing a Research Project

Readings TBA

February 14th – no class (instructor available for consultations)

February 21st – reading week (instructor available for consultations)

February 28th – no class (instructor available for consultations)

March 7th – Second round of research design presentations

March 14th – same as above

March 21st – same as above
March 28th – Mini-conference - Short presentations of thesis research

April 26th – *** thesis submitted to supervisor***