

POL 499Y1Y – SENIOR THESIS AND THESIS SEMINAR

Course Syllabus

SEMINAR INSTRUCTOR:

Karlo Basta

Contact: karlo.basta@gmail.com (**Use this email address only!**)

Office hours: by appointment (flexible)

THESIS SUPERVISOR:

Per application and per approval by the department

UNDERGRADUATE ADVISOR:

Anna Shamaeva

Email: polsci.advisor@utoronto.ca

Office: Sidney Smith Hall, Room 3031; tel. 416-978-3343

Office hours: Wed, 4-6pm

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:

John W. Creswell. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches, 3rd Ed.* Los Angeles: Sage.

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>.

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

Kellee Tsai. 2005. "Capitalists Without a Class: Political Diversity Among Private Entrepreneurs in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 38(9): 1130-58.

Stephen B. Dyson. 2009. "Cognitive Style and Foreign Policy: Margaret Thatcher's Black and White Political Thinking." *International Political Science Review* 30(1): 33-48

September 27th – Formulating a Research Question and Hypothesis

Creswell, *Research Design*, Ch. 7

Henry Hale. 2004. "Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse." *World Politics* 56 (2): 165-93.

John Markoff. 1999. "When and Where Was Democracy Invented?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(4): 660-90.

October 4th – Using and Building Concepts in Research Projects

**Bradley A. Thayer. 2007. "The Case for the American Empire" in Christopher Layne and Bradley A. Thayer. *American Empire: A Debate*. New York: Routledge; pp. 1-41.

Daniel H. Nexon. 2008. "What's This, Then? "Romanes Eunt Domus"?" *International Studies Perspectives*, 9(3): 300-308.

David A. Lake. 2008. "The New American Empire?" *International Studies Perspectives*, 9(3): 281-89

October 11th – No Class (Thanksgiving)

October 18th – Literature Review

Creswell, *Research Design*, Chapter 2

Mitchell A. Orenstein and Hans P. Schmitz. 2006. "The New Transnationalism and Comparative Politics." *Comparative Politics* 38(4): 475-500.

Tong Vu. 2010. "Studying the State Through State Formation." *World Politics* 62(1): 148-75.

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

**David Collier. 1993. "Comparative Method." In Ada Finifter, ed. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. Washington D. C.: American Political Science Association.

Rebecca Bill Chavez. 2003. "The Construction of the Rule of Law in Argentina: A Tale of Two Provinces." *Comparative Politics* 35(4): 417-38.

November 29th – Understanding Comparisons 2

Matthew R. Cleary. 2006. "A "Left Turn" in Latin America? Explaining the Left's Resurgence." *Journal of Democracy* 17(4): 35-49.

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

**Harry Eckstein. 1973. "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." In Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds. *Handbook of Political Science, Vol. 7*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Press. (RECOMMENDED READING ONLY)

Robert Putnam. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65-78

Sheri Berman. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49(3): 401-29

January 17th – Case studies and causal mechanisms

**Alexander L. George & Andrew Bennett. "Ch. 10: Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation." In George & Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

John M. Owen. 1994. "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace." *International Security* 19(2): 87-125

January 24th – Quantitative Approaches

Creswell, *Designing Research*, Ch. 8

Simon Bromley. 2005. "The United States and the Control of World Oil." *Government and Opposition* 40(2): 225-55.

Michael Minkenberg & Pascal Perrineau. 2007. "The Radical Right in the European Elections 2004." *International Political Science Review* 28(1): 29-55.

January 31st - Interpretivist Political Science

**Lisa Wedeen. 2009. "Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise." In Edward Schatz, ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Joel D. Schwartz. 1984. "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation." *The Journal of Politics* 46(4): 1117-47.

**James C. Scott. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press. Pp. xv-xvii; 265-272.

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*****