University of Toronto  
Department of Political Science

POL 499Y: SENIOR THESIS AND THESIS SEMINAR

Seminar Instructor: Professor Lawrence LeDuc  
office: 109 Carr Hall (SMC), tel. 416-926-1300 (ext. 3232)  
email: leduc@chass.utoronto.ca

Thesis Supervisor: per application and approval by the Department

Undergraduate Advisor: Jamie Levin  
office: 3049 Sidney Smith Hall  
email: polsci.advisor@utoronto.ca

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 with the specifications of the APSA style manual (available on Blackboard). 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 those of the seminar.

The seminar begins with a consideration of the issues involved in choosing a thesis topic and an approach to researching it. The seminar will then proceed to examine a number of specific methodological considerations such as formulating research questions and hypotheses, conducting a literature review, and the role of theory in Political Science research. Throughout the course, consideration will be given to a wide variety of methods and approaches, including those involving theoretical debates, empirical inquiries, historical topics, or the analysis of documents and texts. Examples for class discussion will be drawn from a selection of short articles published in recent issues of journals such as the Canadian Journal of Political Science, the International Political Science Review, World Politics, Government and Opposition, and Perspectives on Politics. In the second semester, students will concentrate primarily on the completion of their research and the actual writing of the thesis. A summary version of the thesis research will be presented at a “mini conference” which will take place in the final week of classes.
REQUIRED SEMINAR MATERIALS


APSA, *Style Manual for Political Science* (available on Blackboard)

Other Readings. A selection of articles will be posted on Blackboard. Short excerpts from Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* and Louise G. White, *Political Analysis: Technique and Practice* will be used in the discussion of some topics in the seminar and will be made available by the instructor. The Creswell book is available for purchase at the U-T Bookstore (214 College St.) or as an e-book at [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com). Some copies of the 2nd or 3rd editions of the Creswell book, which are acceptable for use in this course, may also be available.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation and presentations</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A single grade will be submitted for the course. The thesis portion (75%) of the mark is assigned by the thesis supervisor and the remainder (25%) by the 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 October 29th. 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 7th. The abstract should be approximately 200 words in length, and will be circulated to the class at the January 14th session. Students will have the opportunity to revise and update the abstract up until the final class session before the mini-conference of April 1st. Final versions of the abstracts will be available for public circulation as part of the preparation for the mini-conference.
SYLLABUS

September 10th. Introduction and Orientation

September 17th. Choosing a Topic

Creswell, Research Design, pp. 25-27

Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, “Improving Research Questions”


September 24th. Choosing an Approach

Creswell, Research Design, ch. 1

Louise G. White, “Three Strategies for Answering Research Questions”


October 1st. Formulating Questions and Hypotheses

Creswell, Research Design, ch. 7


October 8th. Conducting a Literature Review

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 2


October 15th. Writing a Proposal / Abstract / Purpose Statement

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 5, 6


October 22nd. Quantitative Methods

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 8

Louise G. White, “Explanatory and Causal Relationships”


October 29th. Qualitative Methods [ Purpose statements due ]

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 9

Louise G. White, “Meaning and Context”

*Perspectives on Politics* 6 (2008), pp. 37-50

**November 5th.** First round of research design presentations
*Extra class or class hour will be added if necessary*

**November 12th.** “ ” “ ” “ ” “ ”

**November 19th.** Fall break — no class

**November 26th.** Research design presentations (cont.)

**January 7th.** No class  *Abstracts due – submit by email*

**January 14th.** Analysis and Interpretation  *Circulation and discussion of abstracts*

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 10

Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, “Interpretation and Inference”


**January 21st.** Using Theory

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 3

Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, “Constructing Causal Theories”

Kayhan Delibas, “Conceptualizing Islamic Movements: the Case of Turkey.” *International Political Science Review* 30 (2009), pp. 89-103

January 28th. Drawing Conclusions

Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, “Maximizing Leverage”


February 4th. Writing Strategies

Creswell, *Research Design*, ch. 4

Louise G. White, “Designing and Writing a Research Paper”

*APSA Style Manual*


February 11th. No class

February 18th. Reading week — no class

February 25th. No class

March 4th. Second round of research design presentations

[Extra classes will be added if necessary]

March 11th. “ ” “ ” “ ”

March 18th. “ ” “ ” “ ”
March 25th.  Conference preparation — optional class
       [ Publication of abstracts ]

April 1st.      Mini conference — short presentations of thesis research

April 22nd.     *** Thesis submitted to supervisor ***