University of Toronto St. George

POL499Y1 Y

2018-2019

Senior Thesis and Thesis Seminar

Seminar Instructor: Dr. Pauline Beange
Email: pauline.beange@utoronto.ca
Email response time: Same day within office hours (9am-5pm) or by special arrangement.

Thesis Supervisor: per application and approval by the Department
Seminar hours and location: UC257 Thursdays 4-6 p.m.
Office hours and location: ** TBA Thursday before class (I am at the St. George campus Thursday afternoon ONLY)

Brief Course Description

“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”
–Albert Einstein.

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. As well, regular attendance and meetings with the seminar instructor help you stay on track to finish on time. While your primary responsibility is to your 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 online). Once chosen, the thesis topic may be further developed and refined over the course of the seminar in consultation with the supervisor. Students will periodically submit short documents in the first and second semester in order to assess their progress and receive feedback and guidance.

Students are expected to hold regular meetings with their thesis supervisor in addition to attending the seminar. These meetings are crucial to staying on-focus and on-track!
Our goal will be to help you write a thesis of which you can be truly proud! Additionally, our seminars will help you through the highs and lows of researching and writing major pieces of work. We will consider: choosing a research topic; formulating research questions and hypotheses; conducting a literature review; integrating theory in Political Science research. As well, we will consider research design and methods; theoretical debates; empirical inquiries; historical topics, quantitative, interpretative and so on. In the second semester, students will focus primarily on completion of their research and the actual writing of the thesis. Students will present a summary version of their research at a “mini-conference” which will take place in the final week of classes.

Readings for class discussion will be drawn from a selection of articles from different sub-disciplines of political science. The purpose of these readings is not for mastering content but instead to learn how to identify the research question, hypotheses, research design and so on. Overall, these readings will facilitate your thesis work and to provide you with examples and insights into the process of researching, writing and presenting results of the inquiry.

Undergraduate students planning to conduct research (such as interviews) with people (human subjects) are required to submit a proposal and receive ethics approval. See Undergraduate Ethics Review Application Form at http://www.research.utoronto.ca/forms/

**Required seminar materials:**


APSA Style Manual for Political Science

**Other readings:** Coursepack. Available at U of T bookstore.

**Short term loan:**

King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*

White, Louise G. *Political Analysis: Technique and Practice*. Selected pages.


**Course requirements:**

Thesis ................................................................. 75%
Class participation, presentations and peer reviews .................. 25%

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 25th. 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 plan.

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 should be posted on the POL499 forum. Abstracts will be discussed in 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 April 4th. Final versions of the abstracts will be available for public circulation as part of the preparation for the mini-conference.

Participation Grade:

- Your participation grade will be based on:
  - your attendance and regular, informed contributions to discussions. It is essential for you to do readings BEFORE class. A high quality contribution is one that demonstrates that you have read and made an effort to understand and evaluate the research question/puzzle; research design and method; interpretation and conclusions.
  - Your willingness to engage in thoughtful critique with peers of their work and yours.

SYLLABUS

1 September 6 Introduction and Orientation

2 September 13 Choosing a Topic

Creswell. Research Design, pp. 23-25


3 September 20 Choosing an Approach

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 1


4 September 27 Formulating Questions and Hypotheses

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 7


5 October 4 Conducting a Literature Review

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 2


6 October 11 Writing a Proposal /Abstract [Purpose Statement due]

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 5, 6


7 October 18 Research Design: Quantitative Methods

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 8


8 October 25 Research Design: Qualitative Methods [Purpose statement due]

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 9

White, Louise G. “Meaning and Context”. Select pages.


9 November 1 Research Design: Mixed Methods, Case Study and Interviewing

Creswell. Research Design, ch. 10


OR First round of research design presentations [depending on size of class]

[additional class or class hour will be added if necessary]
***November 8 Fall Reading Week – no class***

10 November 15 Initial Research Design Presentations continued

11 November 22 Initial Research Design Presentations continued

12 November 29 Initial Research Design Presentations OR Feedback/ Individual meetings with instructor during class time or before

Winter 2019

1 January 10 No class [Abstracts due- submit by email and on forum]

2 January 17 Analysis and Interpretation [Circulation and discussion of abstracts]

King, Keohane and Verba, “Interpretation and Inference” Pp. 36-43.


3 January 24 Using Theory

Creswell, Research Design, ch. 3


4 January 31 Drawing Conclusions


5 February 7 Writing Strategies

Creswell, Research Design, ch. 4

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

APSA Style Manual. Online.


6 February 14 No class]

***February 21 READING WEEK***

7 February 28 No class

8 March 7 Second round of research design presentations [Extra classes will be added if necessary]

9 March 14 Second round as necessary

10 March 21 Second round as necessary

11 March 28 Conference preparation—optional class

 [Distribution/ Publication of abstracts; discussion of formatting]
12 April 4 Mini-conference – short presentations of thesis research

April 26 ***Thesis submitted to supervisor***

**Essay Writing Support and Research Support at St. George**

All students are advised to keep copies of assignments and rough notes until they receive their final mark for the course. [http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/](http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/)

**Online Communications**

Students are responsible for checking the course website on Quercus regularly. I will respond to emails Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, within 24 hours, and usually within 5-6 hours. Please put POL499 in subject line. Check the syllabus and assignments before requesting clarification. There is a discussion group on the course website for POL499. You can pose questions to the instructor, to others in the class and, equally, respond.

**General University and Course Policies**

It is the University’s goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons.

**Accessibility Services** accessibility.services@utoronto.ca

**Appropriate Use of Information and Communication Technology**

For reasons of privacy as well as protection of copyright, unauthorized video or audio recording in classrooms is prohibited.

**Academic Integrity**

University of Toronto Office of Academic Integrity [http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai)

**NOTE: USE OF PRIOR SUBMITTED MATERIAL IS CONSIDERED PLAGIARISM.**

Student work with any instances of plagiarism—intended or unintended—are automatically referred to the Dean’s office who then determines the severity of the punishment (with penalties including a grade of zero or suspension from the University).

The University treats academic integrity very seriously. Please see the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, Section VI in the Academic Handbook.
IN PAPERS AND ASSIGNMENTS: using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement; copying verbatim from an internet source; submitting a paper written, in whole or in part, by someone else; submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor; making up sources or facts; and obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

To avoid plagiarism, that is, "copying or imitating the language, ideas, or thoughts of another author and/or passing off the same as one's original work" (American College Dictionary):

1) place all exact quotations (word for word quotations, or quotations that are word for word except for your use of ellipses) in quotation marks and give the full citation (author, publication title, publisher, date, page);

2) give the appropriate citation for all paraphrases of another's thoughts. You are paraphrasing when you put in your own words someone else's ideas. When you borrow extensively someone else's ideas and string them together in a slightly different way -- for example, substituting a word here and there of your own-- you are plagiarizing unless you acknowledge the source. Do try always to express ideas in your own words.

Submitting a paper written, in whole or in part, by someone else is also plagiarising. So is copying verbatim from an internet source. Students should be aware that there are now highly sophisticated software programs that instructors use when they suspect essays are plagiarized.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ON TESTS AND EXAMS: Potential offences include, but are not limited to: using or possessing unauthorized aids; looking at someone else’s answers during an exam or test; and misrepresenting your identity.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN ACADEMIC WORK: Potential offences include, but are not limited to: falsifying institutional documents or grades; falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.