University of Toronto St. George

POL499Y1 Y

2020-2021

Senior Thesis and Thesis Seminar

Seminar Instructor: Dr. Pauline Beange
Email: pauline.beange@utoronto.ca
Thesis Supervisor: per application and approval by the Department
Seminar hours and location: Wednesday 4-6 p.m. Building: LA 602 [Gerald Larkin Building 15 Devonshire Place]

Course has two sections: One is offered in-person and the second section is offered online synchronously.

Office hours: electronically (Zoom or other); Thursday 1-3 p.m. or by appointment.

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 (determined by your thesis supervisor and participation in the seminar (as determined by the seminar instructor).

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 conducting 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 are 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 conclusions. 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 https://research.utoronto.ca/ethics-human-research/ethics-review-course-based-research

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. The seminar instructor and thesis supervisor will be in regular communication throughout the course.

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 3-4 hours. Please put POL499 in subject line. Check the syllabus and assignments before requesting clarification. We may use Quercus groups at times during the year.

Required seminar materials:


First half of book is similar to Cresswell and second part of book is exceptionally helpful for learning how to correct grammar and style mistakes.

APSA Style Manual for Political Science
(REQUIRED STYLE for submissions and final thesis)


### Progress Submissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Submission</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 7</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>Purpose statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 18</td>
<td>Draft Research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 25/December 2</td>
<td>Draft Abstract and presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 11</td>
<td>Draft Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>Draft Literature review</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 8</td>
<td>Draft Theory section</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 24</td>
<td>Draft Findings section</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 10/17</td>
<td>Research Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Mini-conference: Abstract presentation</td>
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Detailed instructions for each submission will be discussed in class and posted on course website.

### 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.
1 September 16 Introduction and Orientation


2 September 23 Choosing a Topic and an Approach


* The purpose of the journal articles/chapters is to learn how to identify the research question, hypotheses, research design and conclusions. Read the abstract, introduction, research design and conclusions only. This instruction is for all journal articles and chapters in following weeks.

3 September 30 Formulating Questions and Hypotheses


4 October 7 Writing a Purpose Statement/Abstract

**Submit research questions(s). Submit to thesis supervisor, instructor and peers.**


5 October 14 Research Design: Quantitative Methods SPEAKER Heather?

**Discussion and peer critique of research questions**
Conducting a Literature Review

**Discussion and peer critique of purpose statements**


Using Theory


***November 11 Fall Reading Week – no class***

Writing Strategies

**Submit 500-word research design. Submit to thesis supervisor and to seminar instructor.**
Creswell, *Research Design*, Chapter 4, pp. 75-98.


10 November 25 Presentations: 200-word abstract and 500-word research design (revised if necessary) and working title of thesis

Doing peer reviews: pp.34-36

11 December 2 Presentations: continued

12 December 9 Continuation of workshop OR feedback/individual meetings with instructor during class time

Winter 2020

1 January 6 No class

**January 11: Submit to 500-750-word introduction to thesis supervisor, instructor and to peers.**

2 January 13 Discussion and peer critique of introduction.


3 January 20 No class.

**January 25: Submit 1000-1500-word literature review. Submit to thesis supervisor, instructor and peers.**

4 January 27 Writing draft theory section + [Possible library visit]
5 February 3 Analysis and Interpretation

**February 8: Submit draft theory section. Submit to thesis supervisor, instructor and peers.**

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

Cresswell, pages 158-160.


6 February 10 Drawing Conclusions

** Peer reviews/critiques of literature review and theory sections.**


***February 17 READING WEEK***

7 February 24 ** Submit 1000-1500-word draft data findings. Submit to thesis supervisor and instructor.**

**Seminar instructor reserves the right to change content of classes in March**

8 March 3 No class

9 March 10 Final round of research presentations

10 March 17 Final round of research presentations

11 March 24 Conference preparation: class may run to 2 ½ hours to accommodate all students

[Oral presentation of abstract (8-minute maximum); formatting of thesis]
12 March 31 Mini-conference – short presentations of thesis research

April 2020  ***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/)

**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 or of online classes 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.

**Turnitin**

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.