

GOVT 495/496
Seminar for Honors Students in Government, IR, and Public Policy
College of William & Mary

Fall 2011

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Office hours: Monday and Friday 10:00 – 11:30 am and by appointment
Class Meetings: Thursday nights at 8pm

Course Description: The purpose of this seminar to help students writing honors theses in Government, Public Policy, or International Relations to develop, execute, and defend an outstanding project. Writing your thesis in conjunction with this seminar will help you keep your research on track (and provide you with peers with whom you can commiserate and celebrate). While this course does not replace your thesis advisor, it will be a useful supplement, enabling you to make the most of your primary advisor's expertise.

This course is also designed to introduce you to the norms of the academy. How do scholars interact with each other? How do you write a report on other scholars' research? How do you serve as a discussant? What are the nuts and bolts of the thesis defense? Before you defend your thesis you will have witnessed and experienced numerous interactions that prepare you for that day. You will do so in this class, in the Charles Center sponsored Honors Colloquium (Feb), and as a participant in the Government Department's research colloquium.

Readings: There will be few required readings for this course. Most of the reading related to your honors thesis over the next year will be drawn from the bibliography generated by you, your advisor, and your peers in the colloquium. However, you may find the following books on general issues related to conducting original research and research design to be useful; I suggest you consult one or more of them as you work on your project.

* Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Landham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

* Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

* Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

* John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

* Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

** Charles Lipson, *How to Write a B.A. Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2005).

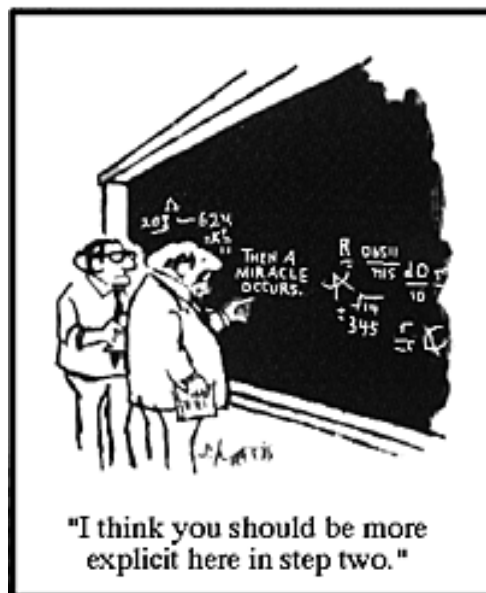
** Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Course Assignments: This course does not replace your primary advisor, who ultimately is responsible for grading your work and setting a schedule for your thesis. However, deadlines—accompanied by the fear of public shaming—are useful motivators. Therefore, the expectation is that you will:

- * Write a thesis prospectus (4-6 pages) outlining the general structure and contribution of your project (details to follow);
- * Write and present two chapters from your thesis to the colloquium by the end of semester, namely a preliminary introduction and a draft of your literature review/theory chapter;
- * Write two short (i.e., two pages) peer reviews, which will constructively critique one of your colleague's work, and discuss your comments and suggestions with the class; and
- * Prepare progress reports for each class meeting. A description of what should be included in the progress report is appended to the syllabus.
- * Attend at least three of the speakers invited by the Government Department. The Department colloquium meets on Fridays at 12 noon. Food is provided.

Grading: At the end of the semester, I will give your advisor a written assessment of your performance in the class, which he or she will consider when assigning your thesis grade. I will comment on the quality of your written work, whether you met course deadlines, and whether you regularly and eagerly participated in class discussions.

Academic Honesty: Since you are all excellent students, this admonition is unnecessary. But, as a matter of policy, you are expected to adhere to the tenets of the Honor Code when completing course assignments; they will be strictly enforced. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism (e.g., the rules for properly attributing cited material or how to paraphrase), please ask for clarification.



Course Schedule

Week #1: Wednesday, August 31: Colloquium overview

Week #2: __Sept 15__ : From prospectus to work plan

- * Due: Progress report #1
- * Class topics: (1) the merits of keeping a research diary; (2) setting a schedule for thesis completion; (3) general project discussion (especially your research goals).
- * Suggested reading on BB: Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, c. 4.
Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis*, ch. 2-4, 15.
Excerpts from *The Flood* and/or *The Ghost Map*

Week #3: _____ : Writing a literature review

- * Due: Progress report #2 and thesis prospectus
- * Class topics: (1) creating literature maps and finding the top of the research pyramid; (2) writing an effective literature review; (3) general project discussion (especially how your literature review is likely to be structured given your research aims).
- * Suggested reading: Jeffrey Knopf, "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics* (January 2006).

Week #4: _____ : Writing a theory chapter

- * Due: Progress report #3
- * Class topics: (1) Types of research aims; (2) how to structure theory chapters for inductive and/or deductive research; (3) general project discussion (especially what you intend to accomplish in your theory chapter and why).
- * Suggested reading: Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, ch. 1.
Gerring, *Social Science Methodology*, ch. 8-10.

Week #5: _____ : Writing a thesis introduction and how to review a paper

- * Due: Progress report #4
- * Class topics: (1) the purpose of an introduction and answering the "so-what" question; (2) the dos and don'ts of peer review; (3) general project discussion (especially how you will structure your introduction and use it to set up your project).
- * Reading: Sample journal article reviews (available on Blackboard).

Week #6: _____: Peer review of theory chapter drafts

- * Due: Progress report #5 and two peer reviews for your colleagues
- * Class topics: Discussion of peer reviews.
- * Reading: Two of your colleagues' theory chapters.

IMPORTANT: Please submit the draft of your theory chapter to your peer reviewer (and me) by 5:00 p.m. on _____.

Week #7: _____: Peer review of introduction chapter drafts

- * Due: Progress report #6 and two peer reviews for your colleagues.
- * Class topics: Discussion of peer reviews.
- * Reading: Two of your colleagues' draft introductions.

IMPORTANT: Please submit a draft of your introduction to your peer reviewers (and me) by 5:00 p.m. on _____.

GOVT 495/496
Guidelines for Thesis Progress Report

Directions: Your report should describe your thesis activities during the last two weeks. Write nothing in categories where no progress has been made.

1. Reading (e.g., articles, books, internet searches, etc.):

2. Data collection and analysis (e.g., downloading datasets, primary source collection, coding, etc.):

3. Writing (e.g., outlining, drafting, revising, brainstorming, sudden and profound realizations about your argument, etc.):

4. Other thesis activities:

5. Questions for me:

6. Anything else you want to report:

7. Thesis goals for the next two weeks: