

University of British Columbia

Political Science 492

HONOURS THESIS

Fall 2013 & Spring 2014, Thursdays, 10:00 – 12:00

Instructors

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Office Hours

Wednesdays, 11:00 – 12:00
Thursdays, 12:00 – 3:00
and by appointment

Thursdays, 1:00-5:00
and by appointment

Course description

This course complements the writing, presentation, and defence of your Honours essay. It aims to:

- help you integrate knowledge from other political science courses;
- identify where you can make an original contribution;
- give you experience in designing, conducting, and writing up original research;
- take the research “beyond the case”;
- develop your presentational skills; and
- learn how to criticize work by others in a way that is helpful and respectful.

Assessment

Thesis	80%
Participation	20%

Seminar Schedule

Thursdays, 10:00-12:00, Buch D 209 (Term 1) and TBD (Term 2)

Format	Term	Week(s)	Date(s)
Course overview		1	Sept 5
Research design		2, 4, 5	Sept 12, 26, Oct 3
Individual meeting with instructors	1	6-7	(weeks of) Oct 7, 14
Introduction to Stata (software)		11	Nov 14
Prospectus presentations		9, 10, 12	Oct 31, Nov 7, Nov 21
Breakout discussions		13	Nov 28
Stata support session		1	Jan 9
Presentation of section 1		2-3, 5	Jan 16, 23, Feb 6
Presentation of section 2	2	6, 8-9	Feb 13, 27, Mar 6
Presentation of section 3		10-12	Mar 13, 20, 27
Final presentation		14	April 10 (all day)

No meetings: Sept 19, October 10 + 17 (individual meetings with instructors), Oct 24, Jan 30, Feb 20 (reading week), 27, Apr 3.

Deadlines

Requirement	Term	Week	Date
Prospectus		Week 8	Oct 30, 10am
Thesis Draft Section I	1	Week 15	Dec 12, 10am
Thesis Draft Section II		Week 4	Jan 30, 10am
Thesis Draft Section III		Week 8	Mar 6, 10am
Thesis Full Draft	2	Week 13	April 7, 10am
Thesis Final Presentation		Week 13	April 10
Thesis Submission Final Version		Week 14	April 17, 10am

Supporting material for in-class presentations must be posted by 10am Wednesday, the day before the presentation.

The Thesis

Format: The thesis should not exceed 35 pages (12,000 words) and must be double-spaced in a 12-point TrueType font, with at least 1-inch margins.

Submission: Deadlines for submission of partial and preliminary full drafts are the dates indicated above. Three hard copies and one electronic copy of the final version must be in our hands by Monday, April 17, 10am. One hard copy must be unbound and unstapled.

Outside Reader: Each student will identify an outside reader in consultation with the instructor and with the reader's agreement. Do not approach potential readers directly. The reader should be a regular member of the Political Science department, i.e., not a sessional lecturer, a graduate student, or a member of another unit. The reader should be called upon for advice on a timetable agreed as much as possible between the student and the reader in advance. The reader will read the final submission and advise the instructors, who will determine the final grade. The outside reader should be identified no later than the submission of the prospectus, Week 8 of Term 1.

Seminar Participation and Presentations

The success of a research seminar depends primarily on the extent to which students actively engage in discussion of their fellow students' research and provide each other constructive advice and support. Students should come to class having read any materials circulated before the class and prepared to discuss each other's work. Participation marks are based on the quality of feedback and support they provide their fellow students, as well the seriousness with which they take the interim tasks, of which more below. On this broad definition, participation will contribute 20% of the final course mark. Participation could, at the margin, make the difference between A- and A, and so on.

The structure of the class will vary over the year. In early weeks, we will discuss common readings on method. Many weeks will see formal presentations by students followed by feedback from the class. One week will involve informal presentation and discussion in somewhat specialised "breakout" or workshop groups. One week will be an introduction to Stata, a statistical software suite, followed by another week of Stata trouble-shooting in January.

On Thursday, April 10th, in lieu of a final seminar in Week 14, we will have a full day of public thesis presentations in the style of an academic conference: a wide range of people will be invited to attend, students will be grouped into panels, and expert discussants will be recruited to comment. Students will need to provide full drafts by April 3rd, so that discussants have time to prepare. We hope to convey a sense of occasion. In the past students have been known to dress up for it. You might even coerce the instructors to do the same.

The purpose of all presentations is to force you to start work early and to compose your thoughts, even as you use discussion in class to develop and refine the project. The first presentation will be a "prospectus": research question, summary of the relevant academic literature, proposed answer/argument, and research plan. Later presentations will be drafts of parts of the thesis.

Before each presentation to the whole group, the student must email supporting documentation by 10am Wednesday before the class, and other students are expected to have read the material before coming to class Wednesday morning. For presentations, this is ideally in the form of supporting slides and/or notes.

Note that the prospectus and literature reviews are "living documents", and substantial portions may eventually be incorporated into the thesis.

A prospectus should be no more than 7-10 double-spaced pages in length and provide:

- An overview of the question/puzzle you are addressing.
- A clearly stated thesis. This is your proposed answer to the question you pose.
- A brief overview of relevant academic literature and scholarly debates.
- A research design. This is your plan of attack; how you will go about supporting your own thesis, as opposed to reasonable alternative answers to your question.

Draft Thesis Sections. Students are expected to submit drafts of portions of their thesis to the instructors in December and over the course of Term 2. The specific sections to be submitted will be agreed upon between the instructors and each individual student, as they will vary from individual to individual.

Literature review. For all students, the first submitted section (due December 12) will include (among other materials) a literature review. The literature review part of Section I should be 7-10 double-spaced pages in length and provide a synthetic review of relevant scholarly and any other written work that is central to your thesis. The central point is to not to show off that you've read lots of things on your topic, but to situate your research question and central argument. A literature review is the opportunity to explain where you think your work will fit in and contribute to existing scholarly dialogue and debate. It is particularly helpful to contrast your answer to your research question with other answers you have come across.

This is not the only important thing that reviewing academic literature can do for your project. Academic literature can also be used to, amongst other things, justify the importance of a topic/research question, justify a theoretic approach, provide evidence for or against your central argument, and so on. However, the central role of this literature review assignment is none of these, it is to situate your work in scholarly discourse.

Research Ethics

Research which collects primary data about individual people, (e.g. by questioning or observing them), needs to be approved by the University Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). Using data collected by other researchers (e.g. datasets from existing surveys) or that is in the public domain (e.g. media reports or speeches made in a public forum) will generally not require BREB approval. Interviews with experts such as academics are also exempt – as long as the interviewee is not the subject of your research. If your research question is about the behaviour or opinions of your interviewee, or a group that she belongs to, then they are your research subject. If, however, the interviewee is sharing her specialised knowledge of how others think or act then she is an expert interviewee. The instructors will discuss whether your research requires BREB approval with you, and, if so, will guide you through the process. Most political science research involves minimal risks to the participants and can be approved quickly. However, if you wish to collect this kind of data, you will have to ensure that you have enough time built into your research plans to familiarise yourself with research ethics and to wait for project approval before beginning data collection.

Academic Integrity

The usual standards of academic honesty apply – students should be scrupulous in ensuring that they do not plagiarise (see <http://www.arts.ubc.ca/arts-students/plagiarism-avoided.html> for details on how to avoid this). While UBC policy restricts the extent to which students can re-use previous work for course

assignments at UBC, students are permitted to use their work in other courses as a springboard for their thesis research. For example, students may wish to design empirical research to test a theoretical argument that they made in an earlier term paper. If you wish to use work from other courses in any way for your thesis you should discuss this with the instructors in the individual meetings at the beginning of Term 1. We will require all final drafts to be submitted to TurnItIn.

Accommodation

The University accommodates students who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) and/or students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance or submitting assignments. Please let the instructors know if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who plan to be absent or who have difficulty meeting deadlines for other reasons cannot assume they will be accommodated and should discuss their commitments early on with the instructors. An honours degree is not merely a box to check on your CV; it represents a commitment to scholarship. In particular, attendance at the final thesis presentation on Thursday April 10th is especially crucial, so students should ensure their schedule is free all that day.

Instructor Availability

As you write your honours thesis, you will work closely with us as instructors. In order to facilitate time management on our part, please follow these guidelines:

Antje Ellermann

Contact Ellermann at ubcpoli-g-poli492@mail.ubc.ca (please do not use her regular email address for anything relating to Poli492). Please note that Ellermann will respond to non-emergency course-related emails on Wednesdays in Term 1, and on Tuesdays in Term 2.

Charles Breton

Contact Breton at cbreton@alumni.ubc.ca. However, make sure to start the subject line with POLI492, followed by the precise topic of the email (if applicable). Breton will respond to non-emergency emails on Fridays in Term 1 and 2.

Final Note

Writing a thesis can be both exhausting and exhilarating. As your instructors, our job is both to challenge you to write as good a thesis as you can and to support you through the experience. Our ultimate goal is helping you complete a thesis that you will be proud of. At various points during the year we will solicit your feedback on how everything is going, and at any time if there is anything more you think we can do to assist you individually or as a group, please don't hesitate to talk to us.

Introductions to Method

The first four weeks are devoted to introducing (or reintroducing) the major approaches. We privilege no single approach in the seminar, so long as your thesis is recognisable as belong in the big tent that is political science. Even students who do not intend to a particular strategy will benefit from learning about them as the level of self-consciousness attending each approach is quite high. The exercise will also help you organise the discipline at large in your heads. For the weeks in question, we append a reading list. Some of the material on the list is available online. For the rest we will make one photocopy. Photocopied materials will be available in a box in the 3rd floor corridor, in front of Ellermann's office. We will set up a sign-out system. What you do with the copy when you sign it out is up to you. Here are the topics and readings:

September 12: Methods I (General)

Karl R. Popper. 1965. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge. Chapter 1, pp. 43-78 only (ignore appendix, and skim discussion of Hume).

Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley-Interscience. Chapter 1, pp. 17-30.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 3.

Zigerell, L.J. 2013. "Rookie Mistakes: Preemptive Comments on Graduate Student Empirical Research Manuscripts." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 142-146 (e-journals).

September 26: Methods II (Quantitative)

Lewis-Beck, Michael S. 1980. *Applied Regression: An Introduction*. Beverly Hills and London: Sage, pp. 9-35, 47-56.

Achen, Christopher H. 1982. *Interpreting and Using Regression*. Beverly Hills and London: Sage, pp. 68-77.

King, Gary. 1986. "How Not to Lie with Statistics: Avoiding Common Mistakes in Quantitative Political Science" *American Journal of Political Science* 30 (3): 666-687.

Schrodt, Philip A. 2010. "Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis" Unpublished paper presented at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Online: <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/media/Paper/Schrodt7SinsAPSA10.pdf>

October 3: Methods III (Qualitative)

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific*

Inference in Qualitative Research. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2 ("measurement error," pp.151-158).

Collier, David, Jason Seawright, and Gerardo L. Munck. "The Quest for Standards: King, Keohane, and Verba's Designing Social Inquiry." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) 2010 (2nd ed.). Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapter 2 (pp.33-63).

Andrew Bennett. "Process Tracing and Causal Inference." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) 2010 (2nd ed.). Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapter 10 (pp.207-219).

Henry E. Brady. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) 2010 (2nd ed.) Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapter 12 (pp.237-242).

David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright. "Critiques, Responses, and Trade-Offs: Drawing Together the Debate." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) 2010 (2nd ed.) Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Part of Chapter 8, section on "selection bias" (pp. 140-145).

Ellen M. Immergut. 1992. The Rules of the Game: The Logic of Health Policy-making in France, Switzerland, and Sweden. In Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstreth. Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis. New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 57-89.

Recommended:

McKeown, Timothy J. "Hegemonic Stability Theory and 19th Century Tariff Levels in Europe." International Organization 37(1983): 73-91 (e-journals).

November 14: Introduction to Stata

Stata is the most widely used software for political science research. Not only is it powerful, it is cheap and continuously being improved. We will make the software available to you at no cost as under this department's collective licence with the supplier. We will devote this meeting of the class to introducing the package. We will distribute the software earlier, however, and you should try to take the Stata tutorial at this site:

<http://data.princeton.edu/stata/Introduction.html>

A general list of Stata teaching resources can be found here:

<http://www.stata.com/links/resources-for-learning-stata/>

January 9: Stata support session

In this session, we will work with students using Stata to tackle challenges in data analysis.