

BA Thesis Colloquium II
Political Science/PLSC 29800, Autumn 2018
M, 3:00PM-5:20PM (Section 2)
Rosenwald Hall 432

This is a draft syllabus and is subject to change

Instructor: Alex Haskins
Email: ahaskins@uchicago.edu

Office hours by
appointment

i. Overview and Objectives

For most students, writing a thesis is their first experience producing an original argument based on their own primary research. This colloquium is designed to help you, the students, carry out your BA thesis research while receiving periodic feedback on your progress. Like last term, you will work with a preceptor (me), your faculty advisor, and your peers. Building on last term's research proposal, this term will focus on developing your actual research project. We will meet less frequently, but our classes will still be run as a peer workshop. **The final assignment will be a written draft determined in consultation with your preceptor (me).** The specific structure of this assignment will vary depending on the nature of your project and your current progress, but should be a **substantial improvement** upon the proposal. Examples include a summary and/or analysis of your data collection, an extensive secondary source literature review, an extensive analysis of archival material, a rough transcript of interview material, a finalized analysis of and/or results from an administered survey, etc.

Put simply, by the end of this course, you should be able to clearly articulate in written and oral formats:

- A detailed plan for the autumn quarter (with deadlines) that improves upon the proposal
- How your plan builds on previous work done and what progress you've made over the term
- The relevance of your project for the broader political science community

ii. Required Texts

There are no required texts, but I would encourage you to consult top journals in political science (e.g. *The American Political Science Review*, *The American Journal of Political Science*, *World Politics*, *International Security*, *Political Theory*, etc.) as examples of how to construct an argument for an academic audience. Articles in these journals will help you get an idea of how to structure your projects for clarity and cogency.

iii. Assignments, Grading, and Policies

Attendance and Participation **20 %**

Regular class attendance and active participation not only facilitate your ability to develop and execute your research plan for the quarter, but also facilitate your ability to articulate your research to other researchers in a collaborative environment. Thus, attendance and participation in class is mandatory. We will meet five times over the quarter: an introductory meeting (week 1), a follow-up meeting based on your drafts of the research plan (week 2), a progress check-up meeting (week 5), and two sessions for presenting your progress on the research plan (weeks 9/10). Absences due to personal emergencies, illness, religious observance, or other legitimate causes will be excused with advanced notice and proper documentation, where applicable. Good participation reflects both the quantity and quality of in-class comments. Presenting students are expected to come to class, having advanced their research project in some noticeable manner and having prepared for respectful and substantive discussion. Laptops are allowed only for course-related activities; other observed activities will result in a grade reduction. **Note: Even if you are not presenting/discussing a specific project, you are expected to attend and contribute during the Q&A period. Failure to attend/participate will adversely affect your grade in this course.**

Presentations **20 %**

In this course, the final presentations are a key means by which we can collectively assess progress on your project. In weeks 9 and 10, students will be divided into two groups and each student will have a partner in the other group. For each student presenting, their partner in the other group will act as a discussant for the presentation. Discussants are expected to be familiar with the presenter's project and must pose at least two substantively unique questions to the presenter as well as facilitate questions from the larger group. Presentations will begin with introductory comments by the presenter to situate the project, followed by comments by the discussant and finally, questions from the rest of the group. I will announce the pairings no later than a week in advance. I recommend presenter and discussant meet up in advance of the class session to discuss the project's latest developments; however, I expect that the presenter's comments and discussant's questions will be drafted independently of each other. Substantial overlap will result in a lower grade.

Breakdown

- Individual Presentations: 10%
- Discussant Roles: 10%

Research Plan and Final Written Assignment **60 %**

Students in this course are expected to build on their proposals through the composition of a final written assignment that develops their project in a substantial way and lays the groundwork for writing the final draft of the BA during the winter term. As stated above, examples could include a summary and/or analysis of your data collection, an extensive secondary source literature review, an extensive analysis of archival material, a rough transcript of interview material, a finalized analysis of and/or results from an administered survey, etc. You will determine the nature of this written assignment through a research plan developed in consultation with your preceptor (me) during weeks 1 and 2. Final written assignments must be a substantial advancement on the proposal and be original work from the student; plagiarism is not tolerated under any circumstance and will result in failure on the assignment and possibly failure in the course or further sanctions. If students are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism, they should consult

<https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/Policies#Honesty>. Final written assignments must be emailed

to me and the student's advisor by 5pm the day they are due. I am willing to discuss challenges and developments either during our regular class time on "off" weeks (e.g. week three) or by appointment (email me). Late drafts will be reduced by one-third a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for every day past the due date. Drafts should be 12 point font, Times New Roman or Garamond style, and normal margins.

Breakdown

- Draft Research Plan (week 2): 10%
- Mid-term Memo (week 5): 10%
- Final Written Assignment (week 10): 40%

If you have a documented disability and require a reasonable accommodation to complete the course, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services (<http://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>) as soon as possible. If you already have an Accommodation Determination Letter, I am available to discuss how to implement the accommodation.

iv. Class Schedule

Week One (10/1):

Introductory Meeting: Syllabus Review, Expectations, Questions

Week Two (10/8)*:

Draft Research Plan Meeting

Week Five (10/29)*:

Progress Check-in Meeting

(You should also meet with your advisor during this week)

Week Nine (11/26):

Presentations of Research Projects/Writing Assignments – Group A

Week Ten (12/3):

Presentations of Research Projects/Writing Assignments – Group B

FINAL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE DECEMBER 5, 2018, 5PM (by email)

*Students who complete my course evaluation (in its entirety) at least 48 hours before the due date will receive a twenty-four-hour extension. This evaluation will be posted on Canvas.