

POLS-4970 Political Science Thesis 1: Research Design

Dr. Jamey Essex / Fall 2019

Tuesday 10:00 am – 12:50 pm / CHN 1137

Office: 1139 CHN / Office hours: T 2:00 – 4:00 pm or by appointment

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Course description

This course provides students instruction and guidance in identifying, designing, and planning an original, independent research project, resulting in the development of a research proposal under the supervision of the course instructor and a faculty supervisor. The course includes both regular individual meetings with the faculty supervisor and seminar meetings with the course instructor to discuss issues related to research planning and design, including but not limited to developing a research question and methodology, constructing a literature review, conducting research ethically, and collecting, organizing, and analyzing data.

Course goals and learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, successful students will be able to:

- Critically analyze issues related to the study of politics and international relations and apply this knowledge in identifying and designing a research project on a specific topic and taking appropriate methodological considerations and approaches into account.
- Examine and assess the historical roots of political ideas and practices, and identify and analyze existing academic literature relevant to a specific research problem and approach.
- Plan an independent research project, including formulating a clear question, selecting and applying appropriate methods, carrying out literature searches, and presenting work in written format.
- Articulate the social, academic, and practical significance and impact of political science and international relations research.
- Clearly articulate ideas and issues relevant to research and oral communication and presentation skills through participation in seminar discussions of salient issues related to research design, data collection and management, and research ethics.

A full listing of course learning outcomes for POLS-4970 can be found on the University of Windsor Registrar's page [here](#). This course's primary goal is to get you started on your undergraduate capstone thesis by completing a research proposal and literature review.

Required readings

There are **three books** required for this course, listed below. All are available through the university bookstore and online in hard copy and e-book formats from the publishers and from other book sellers like Amazon and Chapters. Any other assigned or recommended readings will be made available for free on the course Blackboard site and/or through Leddy Library.

- Michael Billig. (2013) *Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charles Lipson. (2018) *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper (2nd edition)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Randy Olson. (2015) *Houston, We Have a Narrative: Why Science Needs Story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

I should not have to tell you that keeping up with the readings is a key part of the seminar portion of this class (but I just did it anyway).

Assignments and grades

Your grade in this course will be based on several components, though all are directly relevant to the larger goal and product of a research proposal and literature review. As POLS-4970 is one of two capstone set of courses, the usual rule of no one graded assignment being worth more than 50 percent of the final grade is waived (see University Senate Bylaw 54, section 2.6.1) , and the final research proposal accounts for 60 percent of the course grade.

- **Thesis bureaucracy (5%)** – includes submission of regular reports detailing meetings with your faculty supervisor and completion of TCPS2 CORE research ethics certificate
- **Blog post/Twitter story (5%)** – a short summary of a research problem and results in political science that can be posted on the internet and using social media
- **Proposal rough draft (10%)** – a preliminary draft of the final research proposal and literature review, for low-stakes feedback and critique
- **Presentation (10%)** – a 15-minute presentation of your research question, approach, and context
- **Participation (10%)** – no person is an island, and we all learn together, so you will need to participate in discussion in the seminar portion of the course
- **Research proposal and literature review (60%)** – the final product, due during the finals period, a 12- to 15-page research proposal detailing research question, appropriate methodologies, and the broader context in the relevant existing literature

During the final two weeks of the term, I will give out the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) forms in class and you will be able to evaluate your experience and my teaching in this course.

Late Policy

All work is to be turned in **on time**. If you must miss a due date for medical or personal reasons, you need to contact me beforehand or **as soon as possible** afterward (*i.e., usually within 24 hours*) to let me know and make arrangements for submission of late work. I only permit late work due to emergency or illness. You **must** provide me with a valid doctor's note or some other formal documentation. Problems with marks and requests to reconsider or change marks must be brought to me **within one week (7 calendar days) from when they are delivered in class, with a rationale** for why reconsideration of or a change to received marks is warranted. Please be mindful of the course schedule listed below.

Email and office hours

I am available in my office, 1139 Chrysler Hall North, on Tuesdays from 2:00 to 4:00 pm, or by appointment. If I have to change or cancel office hours, I will post alternative times and other information on the course Blackboard site. If you need to see me but are unable to make it to these office hours, please email me and we can arrange a suitable alternative meeting time. As a general rule, I try to reply to emails sent to me within two working days of receiving them. **I do not usually answer student emails after 5:00 pm, or on the weekends.** If you email me and do not receive a reply within two working days, assume that I did not receive your email, and try again. Please also note the university's email policy states that students must use their @uwindsor.ca email account to communicate with faculty. I also request that you use appropriate etiquette when using email – I may not reply to emails that do not include a subject line, a greeting, and your name.

Students with learning/physical differences

If you have a learning or physical difference, please obtain the appropriate paperwork from the University and let me know as soon as possible so that necessary arrangements can be made. More information is available via Student Accessibility Services, located in the basement of Dillon Hall and online at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/studentaccessibility/>.

Course expectations

Below I outline very clearly what I expect of you as a student in this course, and what you should expect of me as the instructor. For more information on the rules and regulations that govern student rights and responsibilities, please consult University Senate Bylaws 31, 32, 33, and 54 at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/secretariat/49/senate-bylaws>; the Academic Integrity Office at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/academic-integrity/>; and relevant Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Science policies at <https://bit.ly/2sK7AG6>.

In this course and in this classroom, I expect that you will:

- Attend class regularly, arrive on time, and do all required reading;
- Pay attention, put down your phone, refrain from distracting yourself and your classmates, and use your electronic devices for class-related activities only;
- Approach the course materials with an open mind and a serious attitude;
- Strictly adhere to the student code of conduct and observe the University's policies regarding academic honesty;
- Respect your fellow students' right to learn in a safe and hospitable classroom;
- Respect and take advantage of office hours, particularly if you are falling behind or having difficulty with the material;
- Understand that grades refer to the quality and precision of work being graded, not to your need for a particular grade or to an open-ended negotiation between you and me.

For my part, you can expect that I will:

- Arrive to class on time and well-prepared to lecture and facilitate discussion;
- Complete the grading of exams and assignments in a timely fashion;
- Reply to emails in a timely fashion, normally within two working days;
- Be available during my scheduled office hours, and will re-schedule them if necessary (i.e., I won't cancel them without making them up at some other time);
- Take your questions and ideas seriously, so long as they are relevant to the material;
- Maintain a relaxed but professional classroom space for learning and discussion;
- Treat all students equitably with regard to grading and class discussion.

Classroom etiquette and academic integrity

Consistent with University of Windsor policy, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct are not tolerated. **Relevant official university and faculty policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct are at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/academic-integrity/>.**

Those suspected of violating these policies will be referred to the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences for potential disciplinary action. If you feel you need help with the materials, don't cheat – please see me instead for assistance.

In class, you are expected to respect others' right to learn and discuss course themes and content in an environment conducive to learning and open engagement with your peers and course ideas and materials. You should rely on facts, reason, and evidence for your arguments. Racist, sexist, threatening or otherwise derogatory remarks and actions will not be tolerated.

Course schedule

- **Sept 10: introductions**

- No reading – we will discuss course goals and expectations, finding a faculty supervisor, and your ideas for the thesis project
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- **Sept 17: Academic research is important, academic writing is terrible**

- Billig, chapters 1-3 (pp 1-66)
 - Lipson, section I (pp 1-40)
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- **Sept 24: Using and abusing language**

- Billig, chapters 4-5 (pp 67-114)
 - ***DUE: Thesis bureaucracy #1, signed faculty supervisor form***
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- **Oct 1: Building and presenting your argument**

- Billig, chapters 6-8 (pp 115-205)
 - Lipson, chapters 4-5 (pp 41-75)
 - Guest speaker: Mita Williams, Leddy Library
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- **Oct 8: You, your audience, and your research**

- Billig, chapter 9 (pp 206-215)
 - Olson, Introduction and chapters 1-4 (pp 1-66) plus Appendix 3 (pp 237-239)
 - Lipson, chapters 6-7 (pp 76-112)
 - ***DUE: Blog post/Twitter story***
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- **Oct 15: Reading week**
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- **Oct 22: Different narrative structures**
 - Olson, chapters 5-8 (pp 67-140)
 - Lipson, chapters 9-10 (pp 127-158)
 - Guest speaker: Suzanne McMurphy, UWindsor REB
 - ***DUE: Thesis bureaucracy #2, supervisory meeting report***
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- **Oct 29: Identifying and building on good research writing**
 - Olson, chapters 9-10 (pp 141-174)
 - Lipson, chapters 11-12 (pp 159-192)
 - ***DUE: Thesis bureaucracy #3, TCPS2 CORE research ethics certificate***
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- **Nov 5: Telling the story of your research**
 - Olson, chapters 11-14 (pp 175-232)
 - ***DUE: Proposal rough first draft***
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- **Nov 12: Applying for graduate school**
 - Guest speaker: Dr. Jesse Ovidia, Graduate Program Chair
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- **Nov 19: Asking for money**
 - Read: SSHRC and OGS application information
 - Lipson, chapters 14-15 (pp 209-250)
 - ***DUE: Thesis bureaucracy #4, supervisory meeting report***
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- **Nov 26: Research presentations**
 - No reading, be prepared to both present and ask questions for participation credit
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- **Dec 3: Preparing the final paper, preparing for next semester**
 - No reading, just come with questions and whatever you have written so far
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**FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL
+ THESIS BUREAUCRACY #5, SUPERVISORY MEETING REPORT
DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12**