

Political Science 495: Junior Honors Seminar Syllabus

Instructor: Michael S. Rocca, Associate Professor
Office: Social Science Building, Room 2043
Office Hours: TR 10:00am – 11:30pm, or by apt.
Course Website: learn.unm.edu

Spring 2016
TR 1:00pm - 2:15pm
SSH 2065
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Overview:

The purpose of this course is to teach you about conducting your own political science research. The course will also help prepare you to do an honors project and thesis in your senior year (should you wish to pursue that option). In particular, you will read and evaluate published research papers and undertake a small-scale individual research project. We will cover such topics as framing a question for original research, thinking theoretically, finding appropriate data, undertaking rigorous analysis, and writing for a social science audience. Excellent work in this seminar is a prerequisite for continuing in the honors sequence as a senior.

Political Science Student Learning Outcomes

The student learning outcomes for this course are consistent with all undergraduate courses in the UNM Department of Political Science. They are as follows: (1) the students will demonstrate an ability to think critically regarding political problems, trends, and developments. (2) The students will demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively. (3) The students will demonstrate strong analytical writing skills. (4) The students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts and theories in political science. (5) The students will be able to apply political science theories and/or concepts to real-world cases or be able to apply a case or set of cases using an appropriate theory. (6) The students will be able to evaluate theories, either in light of empirical evidence or on theoretical grounds. (7) The students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their rights and obligations as a citizen.

Required Books:

The Chicago Manual of Style Online. Available at:
<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Class Structure:

Each week's class time will be divided into two time periods: (1) a seminar when we will discuss reading and lab assignments, thesis progress, aspects of political science, aspects of research design and philosophy of science, and (2) a lab period when you will complete assignments and work on your thesis. Readings for the seminar are to be completed *before* class for the date that they are given on the syllabus. Please bring your textbook to class. Lab assignments are to be completed *during* the lab period and are due at the end of the period. Assignments will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Assignments that do not meet my expectations are eligible for a "no-credit" grade. These include sloppy or rushed assignments. Note that assignments done with care, *but with*

incorrect answers, may still receive a grade of “credit.” In the end, the most important grading criteria for these assignments will be my judgment regarding the care with which they are completed. Two or more “no-credits” on assignments will result in zero points for your total participation grade.

The main product of this course is your junior honors thesis. As such, we will spend much time writing and rewriting in addition to discussing other aspects of conducting research. This will often mean commenting on the work of your peers and rewriting to address those comments (in addition to my comments). Thus, your thesis will go through numerous rounds of writing and revision. Only the final product will be explicitly graded. To facilitate this research process, you will be asked to complete thesis-related writing assignments from week to week (in addition to or in place of lab assignments). *These assignments are NOT the end-all and be-all of your thesis.* You are also expected to work on your thesis outside of the class outline. This includes working on your own, consulting with me, and working with your classmates.

Attendance is mandatory for all classes. If you will miss a class, you need to contact me via email BEFORE the class begins. Otherwise it will count as an unexcused absence. Two or more unexcused absences will result in zero points for your total participation grade.

Grading:

Participation	20%	Includes attendance, completing assignments, and participation in class discussion.
Poster presentation	30%	Includes both aesthetic and substantive elements of the presentation
Final paper	50%	Includes clarity and sophistication of argument, overall logical flow of paper, and mechanical proficiency

SEMINAR AND LAB SCHEDULE

- **Group A will meet in seminar on Tuesdays and lab on Thursdays**
- **Group B will meet in seminar on Thursdays and lab on Tuesdays**

Week 1: Intro

➤ *Task: Begin thinking about a topic*

Week 2: What is Political Science?

Seminar reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 1

*Complete Lab Assignment 1 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Identify a topic, begin thinking about a research question*

Week 3: Thinking Critically about Political Science Research

Seminar reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 2

*Complete Lab Assignment 2 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Find relevant research, draft an annotated bibliography*

Week 4: Justifying your Question's Importance

Seminar reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 3

*Complete Lab Assignment 3 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Identify a research question*

Week 5: Theories and Hypotheses

Seminar reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 4

*Complete Lab Assignment 4 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Write introduction, begin literature review*

Week 6: Measurement

Seminar reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 5

*Complete Lab Assignment 5 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Complete literature review, identify a thesis*

Week 7: Making Causal Inferences

Seminar reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 6

*Complete Lab Assignment 6 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Develop a theory and hypothesis, begin writing theory section*

Week 8: Making Empirical Observations

Seminar Reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 8

*Complete Lab Assignment 7 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Edit the front half of your paper*

Week 9: NO CLASSES

Week 10: Making Sense of Data

Seminar Reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11

*Complete Lab Assignment 8 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Operationalize dependent and key independent variables, find data*

Week 11: Statistical Inference

Seminar Reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12

*Complete Lab Assignment 9 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Begin Data and Methods section*

Week 12: Investigating Relationships Between Variables

Seminar Reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 13

*Complete Lab Assignment 10 (Due at end of lab period)

➤ *Task: Finish Data and Methods section, begin results section*

Week 13: The Research Report

Seminar Reading: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 15

➤ *Task: Finish Results section, begin tables and figures*

Week 14: Final Touches

➤ *Task: Write conclusion, begin reference page*

Week 15: Final Editing

➤ *Task: Final editing, plan for poster presentation*

Topic 16: Turn in Paper, Poster Presentations

➤ *Task: Finish paper, present poster in class*