RI: Honors Thesis in Political Science

POS 4970 Dr. Mark Tunick

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Fall Term, 2016 HC 130

561 799-XXXX

Course Prerequisites: Permission of the Instructor

Office Hours:TBA

Text: American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association. (or other area appropriate style manual to be determined by the instructor)

Course Description: This is a three-credit graded course, taken twice. It is required of all students concentrating in Political Science at the Honors College. Students will formulate a research topic, develop an outline, complete the responsible conduct of research trainings or other trainings as appropriate for the student’s discipline, conduct research and write notes on that research, write and revise drafts, and ultimately submit a substantial final paper that complies with College requirements for the honors thesis. The final version will be at least 30 but in many cases up to 60 pages at 300 words/page, for a total of 9,000-18,000 words; there is no upper page limit, though students must be concise. Because each part of the thesis is revised, total writing will typically range between 18,000-36,000 words for the two semesters combined, not including notes taken on research. Students will be encouraged to present at the Honors Research Symposium.

Course Objectives: Objectives are for students to demonstrate proficiency in a content area, formulate their own arguments, and demonstrate proficiency in communicating ideas effectively and responding to feedback effectively. The honors thesis is assessed as part of the Honors College assessment program laid out in the Academic Learning Compact.  
  
WAC Designation: This writing intensive course serves as one of two "Gordon Rule" classes at the 2000-4000 level that must be taken.  You must achieve a grade of "C" (not C-minus) or better to receive credit.  Furthermore, this class meets the University-wide Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) criteria, which expect you to improve your writing over the course of the term. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions.  
  
The written thesis in political science promotes critical thinking and analytical writing; requires students to analyze academic discourse; and encourages students to recognize and examine the intellectual and/or cultural assumptions that underlie course readings and their own writing.

If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide WAC assessment program, you will be required to access the online assessment server, complete the consent form and survey, and submit electronically a first and final draft of a near-end-of-term paper. This course contains an assignment or multiple assignments designed to help students conduct research and inquiry at an intensive level. If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide assessment program, students will be asked to complete a consent form and submit electronically some of their research assignments for review. Visit the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) for additional opportunities and information at <http://www.fau.edu/ouri>.

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Course Evaluation Method: You will receive a letter grade in this course. Comprehensive feedback including tentative grades will be given on drafts of individual chapters. The course grade will be based on the final revision; an incomplete will be issued at the end of the first semester and will change to the grade received on the basis of the final revision. [Note: Some instructors may modify this and establish a grade for 1st semester work, based on the thesis statement, outline, introduction, writing responses to the literature, and chapter drafts; and a grade for the 2nd semester based on the final thesis.] The written work counts for 100% of the grade, and the grade will be based on quality and persuasiveness of the academic argument, including the extent to which an understanding of the topic is demonstrated, organization, thoroughness and validity of the research, clarity, and grammatical correctness of the writing. [Note: Some faculty may modify this and include other components in the evaluation. Written work will count for at least 50% of the grade].  
  
Individual chapters will be of a length required by the topic, but typically will be 5-15 pages. Students will provide evidence to support their argument, using proper citation. Feedback to writing will be in the form of comprehensive comments and discussion of each of the student’s draft chapters, focusing on content as well as particular writing elements. Students will make substantial revisions of all chapters of the thesis. These may involve global revisions and major re-workings.   
  
All students are encouraged to use the University Center for Excellence in Writing (UCEW) error tracking system, which is available through the UCEW scheduling system.  <http://www.fau.edu/UCEW>

Thesis Grading Metric:

(A)—makes an original contribution to its field/argued convincingly/written lucidly with few to no errors/40-60 pages in length

(A-)—lacking in one of the above areas

(B+)—generally well done, but lacking excessively in one of the above areas

(B)—good in some respects but fundamentally flawed in one or more of the above areas

(B-)—passable but fundamentally flawed in more than one of the above areas

(C+ or below)—fundamentally flawed in more than one of the above areas/as a rule a thesis at this level will not pass

Policy on Late Work and Incompletes:Late work will be accepted in the event of University-approved excused absence such as illness or religious observance. As soon as possible, the student should contact Dr. Vernon regarding the absence, preferably ahead of time. Incompletes for the semester will be given at the discretion of the instructor for cases in which extreme medial or personal events interfere with completion of thesis work.

Schedule: Students will arrange to meet regularly with the faculty in one-on-one meetings, typically once every two weeks. In the first semester, meetings will focus on developing a thesis statement, list of sources, outline, notes on research, and completing the responsible conduct of research trainings or other trainings as appropriate for the student’s discipline and drafts of preliminary chapters. In the second semester, the student will continue writing drafts of the rest of the thesis, and rewrite previous drafts. Students will be encouraged to present at the Honors Research Symposium.

Additional notes:  
Disability Policy Statement: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)—in Boca Raton, SU 133[*(561-297-3880*](tel:%28561-297-3880)); in Davie, LA 203[*(954-236-1222*](tel:%28954-236-1222)); or in Jupiter, SR 110[*(561-799-8585*](tel:%28561-799-8585)) —and follow all SAS procedures.

FAU Code of Academic Integrity Policy Statement: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

Students also agree to adhere to the honor code, at <http://www.fau.edu/divdept/honcol/academics_honor_code.htm>

Classroom Etiquette Policy: In order to enhance and maintain a productive atmosphere for education, personal communication devices, such as cellular telephones and pagers, are to be disabled in class sessions.

Policy on Recording in Class: The Honors College of FAU prohibits the audio and/or video recording of class lectures and discussions without the express permission of the instructor. Students who record class lectures or discussions without express permission may be subject to disciplinary action under the FAU Student Code of Conduct, Regulation 4.007; the FAU Code of Academic Integrity, Regulation 4.001; or the Honors College Honor Code. Unless otherwise expressly permitted by the instructor, permission to record class lectures or discussions applied exclusively to the individual student who receives such permission from the instructor whose class is to be recorded. In no case shall recording occur without notice to all students in the class that the lecture and discussions may be recorded. The recording may not be replicated, accessed, utilized by, or made available to any other student or individual without the permission of the instructor. Students who request recording of class lectures or discussions under the Americans with Disabilities Act must contact the Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) to obtain such permission or accommodation, and must otherwise comply with the requirements of OSD. Information for the OSD is available at http://www.fau.edu/sas/. This policy remains subject to existing policies, procedures, and regulations of FAU, all of which shall continue to apply. This policy is not intended to address recordings or videos taken by faculty or FAU officials.

**Example Schedule of Typical Progress in the Thesis (Two Semesters)**

*Please note the word “typical.” Everybody’s thesis varies, and everybody starts at a different place and works at a different pace. These are general guidelines rather than fixed rules.*

**Semester 1**

By Week 2-3) Begin by figuring out a thesis topic. This may be the most difficult task of all. It is certainly the most important, and unfortunately it must be done in a hurry so you can get started on research and writing.

Questions to ask yourself at this stage:

1. What kind of subject do I like to work on enough that I can spend an entire year doing it?
2. What kind of methods do I prefer to use? (i.e. data analysis, textual analysis, narrative, comparison, etc.)
3. How can I find a topic narrow enough to master in one semester, yet broad enough to make a significant, original contribution in history?

By Week 8-10) Complete an exhaustive search of materials on your chosen subject.

Steps:

1. Search all sources: includes articles from Historical Abstracts, books from Worldcat, encyclopedias, all appropriate sources that turn up in footnotes and bibliographies
2. By around week 5 hand a properly formatted bibliography that includes at least 25 sources you have either received or at least ordered.
3. By around week 9 hand in a fully annotated version of the same bibliography that offers a full description of the source in one or two paragraphs per source.

*Note: By now you should have arranged a second reader for your thesis*

By Week 13) Complete a single chapter and hand in to primary reader for feedback. If you allow time for it, you can get feedback and improve the chapter. If not, the chapter will have to be graded as is. This may be the first chapter, but it need not be depending on the way you work. Some students prefer to begin at the end for example.

Your grade for this semester will be based 50 % on your annotated bibliography and 50 % on your first chapter. Perfection is not expected, or even possible, at this point. The effort to accomplish as much as possible in these two assignments will be rewarded by a good grade, an easier second semester, and eventually a better finished product.

**Semester 2**

By Week 3) Finish a second chapter. Hand in to primary reader for feedback.

By Week 6) Finish a third chapter. Hand in to primary reader for feedback.

By Week 8) Finish any extras (introduction, conclusion, epilogue, etc.). Hand in to both professors.

By Week 10) Respond to criticisms from primary (and if possible secondary) reader, and hand in a finished thesis.

*{Note that somewhere around week 10-12 you will probably be giving a symposium talk on your thesis. This talk is a very brief overview (about 10 minutes) with time to answer questions from the audience. All you will be able to do is give a general summary and a few choice examples. Do your best to communicate with the audience, but don’t sweat it. Have fun.}*

By Week 12) At this point you should have all the forms signed, permissions given, and the thesis printed on the proper paper and ready to be catalogued at the library.

Example Schedule of Typical Progress

for Thesis Involving Data Collection from Human Participants (2 Semesters)

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| --- | --- |
| 3 weeks | Initial literature search: generate topics: begin Introduction Section (This section will be revised and expanded many times throughout the year.) |
| 1 week | Develop research question |
| 1 week | Finalize research methods to answer question  Annotated bibliography  \*Literature grid |
| 2-3 weeks | Write up human subjects (IRB) proposal (multiple revisions will be written and evaluated)  \*IRB questions  \*Consent, Debrief, Flyers, Questionnaires  CITI training |
| (1-2 weeks) | (Questionnaire generation, Pilot testing) |
| 2 weeks | Write Method section (multiple revisions will be written and evaluated) |
| (1 week) | (Draft Intro)  Outline  Begin initial paragraphs on main variables  Write up hypotheses/questions paragraph |
| 1-2 weeks | Set up lab  Photocopy questionnaires, consent, etc.  Decide times, rooms, make flyers  Set up lab rooms (if needed)  Make extra credit vouchers  \*Write protocol  Experimenter training |
| 2-4 months | Run participants (collecting data)  Get permission from instructors  Reserve rooms (if needed)  Post flyers, send e-mail announcements |
| 1 week | Make data keys, set up SPSS database |
| -- | Data entry |
| 1-2 weeks | \*Data checking & cleaning |
| 1 week | \*Data analysis: reliability analysis |
| 1-4 weeks | Primary data analysis (answer research questions) |
| 2 weeks | \*Write results (multiple revisions will be written and evaluated) |
| -- | \*Make tables |
| -- | \*Prepare research symposium presentation  Submit abstract |
| 2 weeks | Complete Intro (turned in for final revisions) |
| 3 weeks | Write Discussion (multiple revisions will be written and evaluated) |
| 2 weeks | Give to second reader and make revisions based on suggestions |
| 1 week | Finalize thesis  Reference section & citations  Abstract, author info  Formatting |