POLI 404
Honors Colloquium
Fall 2010

Dr. Julie Dolan
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Course meets W 7:00-9:00 p.m.
CAR 208
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Required Texts

Charles Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis (Chicago, 2005)

Other shorter readings available on Moodle or handed out during class.

Course Objectives

The catalog description of the course goes this way: “A workshop for students pursuing honors projects in the political science department. Pass fail grading.” That doesn’t tell you a lot. In my mind this course has four primary objectives:

(1) to help students learn practical strategies and research techniques that lead to the successful completion of the honors project (and, by extension, any research project);
(2) to prepare advanced students for graduate training in political science or other fields;
(3) to demystify the process of pursuing an honors project; and
(4) to help create a supportive and challenging intellectual community that models the kinds of communities that support research in the academic or policy worlds.

Attendance

Attendance in this course is required. The word “colloquium” suggests an informal meeting for the exchange of views. The term “workshop” implies an even stronger role for mutual exchanges and intellectual stimulation. Early in the term, we will help each other refine our projects. We will spend several weeks working together on the issue of methods as each of us designs her or his project. Each week we will spend time “checking in” on our progress, the difficulties we are facing, and learning from each another’s experience. Thus, being in class is the only way for you to formally or informally exchange your views, to share your joys and sorrows, and to learn from each another. Timely attendance is expected. (Class also seems to work better if you have eaten dinner prior to coming to class!) If you cannot make it to a class meeting, please call and let me know in advance.
Assignments

To receive a passing grade in this course, all students much acquire at least 14 of 21 possible points. This includes the 9 required assignments (marked as REQUIRED), at least 1 of assignments 4 and 7; and at least 4 of the 5 pages prose / 2 pages peer review assignments. The assignments are designed to help you put in place the foundation and building blocks of the honors thesis, and so I encourage you to exceed the 14 required assignments.

Technically, none of these assignments is "graded" in a precise fashion. Either you do them to a sufficient level (C-) or you do not. The more writing that you do by the end of the course, the better your prospects for completing Honors. Given the flexibility in choosing many of your own assignments, I will not accept late assignments. Papers are due at noon on the day assigned. Please note that many assignments are due on the MONDAY preceding our Wednesday evening meeting.

The weekly research and/or writing assignments should range from 3-5 pages in length. You will receive feedback and commentary from me and your colleagues on these weekly writing assignments. My goal in designing the course in this manner is to create an intellectual environment in which you work creatively, cooperatively, and systematically toward an invigorating, original, and intellectually rigorous final thesis. I want you to be able to struggle and freely grapple with complex problems that cannot be resolved in a last-minute, stay-up-all-night flurry of writing that does not begin to do justice to your intellectual capabilities.

List of Assignments and Due Dates

1. Rough Draft of the research proposal
   - Sept 8th
   - REQUIRED

2. Final Draft of the research proposal
   - Sept 15th
   - REQUIRED

3. An oral defense of your proposal in front of the faculty
   - Week 3
   - REQUIRED

4. A written description of a formal interview with your advisor
   - MON, 9/27

5. A detailed calendar/schedule for the completion of your project
   - MON, 9/27
   - REQUIRED

6. A working annotated bibliography related to your project
   - MON, 10/4
   - REQUIRED

7. A written comparison of three honors theses recommended by your advisor (focus especially on methods)
   - MON, 10/11

8. 5 pages of written prose
   - MON, 10/18
   - REQUIRED

9. 2 pages of peer review
   - WED, 10/20
   - REQUIRED

10. A methodological statement that supports your project
    - MON, 10/25
    - REQUIRED

11. 5 pages of written prose
    - MON, 11/1
12. 2 pages of peer review  
13. 5 pages of written prose  
14. 2 pages of peer review  
15. Resume  
16. 5 pages of written prose  
17. 2 pages of peer review  
18. 5 pages of written prose  
19. 2 pages of peer review  
20. 5 pages of written prose  
21. 2 pages of peer review  

WED, 11/3
MON, 11/8
WED, 11/10
MON, 11/15 REQUIRED
MON, 11/15
WED, 11/17
MON, 11/29
WED, 12/1
MON, 12/6
WED, 12/8

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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| 1     | 9/8  | Crafting the Proposal                    | Class activities: workshop on research proposals  
       |      |                                          | Readings: Lipson, chapter 4; Kirshner “Alfred Hitchcock and the Art of Research” (Moodle) |
| 2     | 9/15 | Effective Oral Presentations             | Class activities: practice oral defense of the proposal (4-6 volunteers)  
       |      |                                          | Reading: colleagues’ research proposals |
| 3     | 9/22 | Thesis Statements and Research Plans     | Class activities: discussion of oral defenses, Human subjects in research  
       |      |                                          | Reading: Lipson, chapters 5 and 7; Macalester SSIRB materials (Moodle) |
| 4     | 9/29 | Effective Research Habits and Skills     | Reading: Lipson, chapters 13 and 15 |
| 5     | 10/6 | Prewriting                                | Reading: Lipson, chapter 8 (and review chapter 4) |
| 6     | 10/13| The Logic of Comparison: Case Studies    | Reading: Lipson, chapter 6; Lijphart (Moodle) |
| 7     | 10/20| The Logic of Comparison: Other Methods   | Reading: TBD – depending on student needs |
Week 8 10/27 Methodological Statements
   Class activities: workshop methodological statements
   Reading: colleagues' methodological statements

Week 9 11/3 Effective Writing and Peer Review
   Class activities: writing exercises and peer review strategies
   Reading: Lipson chapters 9 and 10

Week 10 11/10 Writing, Editing, Rewriting
   Class activities: more discussion about strong writing
   Reading: Lipson, chapter 11

Week 11 11/17 Life After Macalester
   Visit from Career Development Center – Resumes and Job Searches

Week 12 11/24 No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 13 12/1 Peer Review

Week 14 12/8 TBD