

PSCI 4715: Honors Thesis in Political Science

Professor E. Scott Adler
Thursday 3:30-6:00, Educ 138
Fall 2016

Office: Ketchum 251
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• **Course Description**

This yearlong course is designed to assist you in writing a senior honors thesis in Political Science. During the early stages of the course, we will explore the foundations of social science research, common forms of such work, and its applicability to wide-ranging topics. The key tasks of the course is to create an opportunity in which you can develop your ideas, test them out, and present your research findings in a well-articulated and defensible thesis. This is a demanding course designed for dedicated students who already possess good academic writing skills and are prepared to learn new research techniques in pursuit of their thesis topics. Much of the work will be self-directed.

In the second semester, students will build upon their work in the fall, and are expected to complete a thesis under the supervision of their primary advisor, a full-time professor in the Political Science Department. Students will work closely with their advisor, who has expertise in the student's area of research. The advisor will be involved in all stages of the project.

The format of the course is a seminar (sorta). That is, there will be a little bit of lecture, but mostly there will be guided classroom/small group discussions of components of honors theses that you and your peers will be writing. As well, there will be frequent opportunities to interact with one another over components of your research projects. Through these interactions, the expectation is that useful feedback will be generated for the improvement of your thesis.

Honors theses are much more substantial than term papers written for an upper-division political science class. In general, students will be expected to have a strong working knowledge of the most prominent literature in the field immediately related to their topic. You should read and understand the requirements for graduating with Latin Honors by reading carefully the CU Honors website at www.colorado.edu/honors. The requirements and deadlines listed on this website are absolute. Failure to abide by these requirements and deadlines will preclude graduating with Honors, regardless of the amount of effort you have put into your thesis. Taking and passing this class does not guarantee graduation with honors.

For some students funding for collection of data sets, conducting interviews, or travel to far-off locations are important parts of their research. The University's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) provides just such monies ideal for thesis research. Please review the criteria and materials necessary for an individual grant ASAP – the grant proposal deadline is October 14! <http://www.colorado.edu/suep/about-urop>

Honors Requirements

Ultimately, there are three requirements for graduations with Latin honors: (1) Write and submit a thesis that meets the standards established by the Political Science department and defense committee; (2) Orally defend your thesis before this committee; and (3) Complete these tasks and submit all other paperwork on time. Each of these three requirements is detailed below.

1. Standards.

A. Departmental Standards for All Theses Receiving Latin Honors

Because you are seeking to graduate with honors in political science, your thesis must go beyond “library research” of published material – that is, beyond a mere repackaging of secondary sources. All theses in Political Science involve original data collection and/or analysis. At least one of the following examples of original data collection and/or analysis would fulfill this requirement:

- 1) Secondary analysis of existing quantitative datasets.
- 2) Collection and analysis of unpublished documents gathered from archives, organizations, or individuals.
- 3) Systematic collection of data from the internet or other electronic sources.
- 4) Interviews with masses or elites.
- 5) Participant observation
- 6) Other possibilities that are approved by me or by your advisor in consultation with me.

Please note: IF YOU ARE GOING TO COLLECT ORIGINAL DATA FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS, YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL MUST BE APPROVED PRIOR TO DATA COLLECTION BY THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB). For more information, visit <<http://www.colorado.edu/vcr/irb>>.

B. Standards for levels of Latin Honors in Political Science

Cum Laude. A *cum laude* designation should be awarded for good work, defined in the following way:

- 1) The student should maintain a good GPA (3.3 or higher); **AND**
- 2) The thesis must be well argued, although not necessarily original; **AND**
- 3) In the oral defense, the student should be able to defend at least some of her or his thesis arguments and have a command of substantial portions of the subject matter; **AND**
- 4) The thesis must present a clear argument that is well written and well organized.

Magna Cum Laude. A *magna cum laude* designation should be awarded for excellent work, defined as follows:

- 1) The student should maintain a high GPA (3.5 or higher); **AND**
- 2) The thesis must demonstrate mastery of the literature in the field and say something that adds to the literature; **AND**

- 3) In the oral defense, the student should be able to defend the work and show a command of the subject matter raised in the thesis; **AND**
- 4) The thesis must be very well written, well organized, and make a clear argument.

Summa Cum Laude. A degree awarded *summa cum laude* should represent outstanding work. To that end, PSCI requires the following standards:

- 1) The student should maintain a very high GPA (3.8 or higher); **AND**
- 2) The thesis must break new ground in the field; it must say something original that goes beyond the existing literature; this means it should be publishable, with the possibility of revisions; **AND**
- 3) In the oral defense, the student should be able to defend the work, understand, and accept critiques and suggestions, and interact on a collegial level. The oral defense should also demonstrate knowledge of the subject beyond what is in the thesis itself; **AND**
- 4) The thesis must be extremely well written, well organized, and well argued.

2. Oral Defense Committee

A defense committee consists of at least three people: the Political Science Honor Council Representative (i.e., me or Janet Donovan), the professor who is your thesis advisor, and one professor from outside the Department of Political Science. The oral defense committee recommends to the Honors Council the level of Latin Honors, if any, for your thesis.

You will be required to pick an advisor for your thesis early in the fall semester. It is important that this individual be deeply involved in the project every step of the way. Your advisor should be part of the process of (1) formulating the research question, (2) the review and understanding of the literature, (3) and decisions about evidence, (4) the choice of an oral defense committee. The advisor will read and comment on various thesis components and drafts.

You should choose an individual who is willing and able to do all of these things throughout the year. This means you should avoid asking someone who is going on leave or has not been responsive to you. You must arrange a schedule of regular (at least once per month; preferably more often than that) meetings with your advisor. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE THESE CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUR ADVISOR. IGNORING OR AVOIDING YOUR ADVISOR IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER.

3. Deadlines.

a. Class deadlines (Fall semester only): See Calendar below.

b. Honors College Deadlines

October 3, 2016 – Registration form due (Registration to Graduate with Honors form due from students hoping to graduate with Latin Honors in Spring, 2016. The

registration form must have *all the required signatures* and be submitted to the Honors Program Office in Norlin Library, Room M400M).

Late January (watch Honors website for particulars) – Informational meeting (optional) for all Spring 2017 candidates graduating with Departmental and/or General Honors.

April 11, 2017: Defense copy due and last day to defend

- The printed and stapled/clipped defense copy is due in the Honors Program Office by 3:00 p.m.
- The defense copy is a printed version of the thesis you defended in front of your committee.
- Your title page must include your name, department, thesis title, and defense date as well as the names and departments of each of your committee members, with the thesis advisor specified.
- This is also the last day to defend for this semester. You can defend any time prior to this date.

April 14, 2017: Final copy due on CU Scholar

- Upload the final copy of your thesis to the Undergraduate Honors Theses repository by 3:00 p.m.
If you upload your thesis to any other repository, it will not be counted.
- Start at colorado.edu/honors/graduation/cuscholar and follow the “Submitting Honors Theses” instructions. If you need to make changes to your uploaded thesis, CU Scholar will allow you to do so for a limited time. Your thesis will not be available to view on CU Scholar for 2-4 weeks.
- Embargo requests can be emailed to honors@colorado.edu.

April 14, 2017: Recommendation letters from thesis advisors and committee members for Spring 2015 candidates are due in the Honors Program Office located in Norlin Library, Room M400M.

April 21, 2017: Email notification of honors designations

Students will be notified of their honors designation at their CU-Boulder email address by 5:00 p.m. Designations are not given out in person or over the phone.

May, 2017: Honors Convocation

Information about the Spring 2017 Honors Convocation will be posted at colorado.edu/honors/convocation.

- **Course Expectations**

The format of the course will be seminar-style. As with any seminar format, it is imperative that each student be prepared in advance by doing the assigned readings. This often will mean reading the assignments submitted by the other students in the course.

In order to help keep you on schedule for successful completion of a defensible thesis, there are a number of writing and presentation assignments required. For each assignment, you will be given specific guidelines in class several weeks prior to the due date for the assignment. Additionally, we will have a couple of in-class quizzes that will cover the readings from the first stages of the course.

1. ***Participation.*** You will be expected to be prepared and actively engaged in the discussion of readings and the components of the research projects that are assigned for each class session. Indeed, this is the heart of the course. In several instances you will be assigned as the “discussant” for other students’ work. Your participation is essential not just for your own success, but that of your fellow classmates. You may be surprised at how rewarding and exhausting high quality participation can be. 20% of the fall semester grade.

A word about being a discussant: As a discussant you should cover such topics as (but not limited to): What is unclear about the question? Has the author sufficiently given context to the literature? What hypothesis (or hypotheses) is being tested and is this clear? If this is not clear, help to clarify it. What data or evidence is the author using? How is the author operationalizing the hypothesis (how are variables being measured)? Do the data and/or hypotheses seem like valid ways to approach the question? What analysis has been completed and does this start to answer the question? What could be done differently? What important questions still remain with the study? What has the author done well?

2. ***Research Statement.*** 2-3 page statement of your research topic and your proposed plan for carrying out this research project. This should include a discussion of the hypotheses that you plan to test and a detailed account of the evidence that you will gather in order to test these hypotheses. Revised version of the research statement is 15% of the fall semester grade.
3. ***Annotated Bibliography (eventual Literature Review).*** 5-7 page review of the relevant literature that you are using as a foundation for your research project. This should include a clear statement of how your research project fits into and adds to previous work. Revised version of the literature review is 15% of the fall semester grade.
4. ***First Draft.*** 15-20 page “draft” of your Honors thesis. This paper will serve as the foundation of your final thesis. It should clearly state the structure of the study, including the developed literature review, discussion of research hypotheses, an explanation of the research design, the kinds of evidence that you are utilizing, and a first cut at the insights

that you are able to discern. This revised draft, while still preliminary, should include materials for every section that will be in the final thesis. 50% of the fall semester grade.

- **Course Materials**

The primary text for this course is W. Phillips Shively's *The Craft of Political Research*. You may purchase the 7th, 8th, or 9th edition. Depending on the research topics that each you bring to this course, we may also read articles or papers in political science journal or that have been presented at political science conferences. These articles should be accessible at www.jstor.org or via <http://Scholar.google.com>. To access articles or papers on either of these sites, you will need to use an on-campus computer or setup a VPN account for an off-campus computer. Information about setting up VPN accounts can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/its/vpn/>.

To keep current with important political events I require daily reading of a major national newspaper. This can be done through reading of hardcopy papers such as *The New York Times* or on-line versions of papers like *The New York Times* (there will be opportunity to order reduced price subscriptions).

University Policies

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries](#) guidelines under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your professor.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and [the student code](#).

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual

harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [academic integrity policy](#) of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at honorcode.colorado.edu.

Fall Schedule (** denotes class meeting in Educ 138)

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| Aug. 25** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction – review syllabus, begin readings |
| Sep. 1
(No Class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research Enterprise: Types of research and measurement • Reading: Shively, chs. 1-5.; Minkoff, "Guide to Political Science Research" • Email Prof. Adler 3-4 paragraph rough articulation of your research question |
| Sep. 8** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research Enterprise: Causal Thinking, Hypotheses, and Selection of Evidence. • Reading: Shively, chs. 6-7. |
| Sep. 15** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research Enterprise: Inference and the role of statistics in inferential thinking. • Reading: Shively, chs. 8-10. • Deadline: Selection of Faculty Advisor (submission of schedule of meetings) |
| Sep. 22
(No Class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline (5:00 pm): Full draft of Research Statement (submitted in paper and electronically) |
| Weeks of Sep.
29, Oct. 6 & 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal class meetings, meet in smaller "breakout groups" • Independent work on thesis and bibliography |

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| Oct. 20
(No Class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deadline (5:00 pm): Revised Research Statement and Annotated Bibliography due (submitted in paper and electronically)</i> |
| Oct. 27** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Research Statements and Annotated Bibliographies |
| Weeks of Nov.
3, 10, & 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal class meetings, meet in smaller “breakout groups” to discuss research question, research design, data/evidence, proposed analysis, etc. • Independent work on thesis and bibliography • <i>Deadline (Nov. 17, 5:00 pm): Draft of “First Draft” including description of data/evidence, plan for analysis, etc. <u>with</u> revised Literature Review</i> |
| Dec. 1** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of First Drafts |
| Dec. 8
(No Class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on revision of First Drafts |
| Dec. 12
(No Class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deadline (5:00 pm): Revised First Draft to me and your advisor (submitted in paper and electronically)</i> |