

# Senior Thesis in Political Science

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F 1:00 - 3:00 PM; And by appointment

## 1 Course Description

The primary activity in this course is a independent study and preparation of a senior thesis under faculty supervision. This course is the first in a two quarter sequence. Students will learn about the process of conducting research in political science. More specifically, students will learn about the process with the aim to conduct their own original research project. Major components of the course include identifying a research question, identifying an appropriate argument, and developing research design. In course meetings, students will present and discuss progress on their projects. Students will also read literature from prominent scholars in each of the subfields of political science. The course meetings will serve to keep students accountable to their own work. Also, as a mandatory part of the course, students are expected to meet with the professor in office hours.

## 2 The Thesis Project

Each student is to develop a research project that focuses on a specific aspect of political science. The project should adopt the perspective of at least one of the subfields of political science: American politics, international relations, comparative politics, political theory, public law, public administration, or political methodology. The student should ideally have completed all 200-level courses and at least three upper division courses in a single subfield (including any course in which the student is enrolled in this quarter). Students should select such an area as his or her area of focus for the thesis. The student should not attempt to write a thesis in an area in which he or she has no or minimal coursework. The topic selection process is a challenging and important part of this course and significant time should be devoted to it.

This class is unlike the typical lecture format of most undergraduate classes. The seminar format of this class requires you to actively participate in group discussions and to occasionally make brief presentations. Other requirements are spread out over additional assignments designed to keep you on task. Please see Section 4 for how these requirements will be used to calculate your final grade.

The thesis project is designed to give you a chance to demonstrate your competence in the following skills and abilities:

1. Develop a research topic within one of the subfields of political science.
2. Design a research project in accordance with the principles of sound research methodology quantitative, qualitative, legal, or theoretical.
3. Apply knowledge and modes of analysis from one of the subfields of political science to the understanding of a current political issue.
4. Conduct library research.
5. Identify appropriate data sources and know how to use the data effectively in support of an argument.
6. Write clearly and persuasively in a technically competent manner.
7. Critique the writing of others.
8. Make an effective oral presentation on a political science topic.

### **3 Required Text**

Guerrero, M. 2017. *Senior Thesis Guide*. Available online.

### **4 Recommended Text**

Van Evera, S. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

This is a short paperback that some of the other sections of thesis have for required reading. There are some passages in this book that are helpful, but this book is written mostly for students studying international relations or comparative politics.

### **5 Course Requirements**

During the fall quarter, your grade will be based on regular attendance, participation in class discussion, and the completion of course assignments. For the winter quarter, your grade is mostly based on the final thesis. However, during winter, you will also be

responsible for smaller assignments and a presentation at the **Senior Thesis Conference**. At the end of winter, the final thesis is graded anonymously by another member of the political science faculty and myself. We grade thesis projects according to criteria that you will be provided in advance. The average of those two grades will determine your grade on the project itself.

For the Fall quarter, your grade will be calculated using the following guidelines:

Percentage	Assignment
15%	<p><i>Proposal</i> (2-3 pages) This assignment asks you to formally propose a research question, hypotheses, and potential research design. <b>Due via email, Week 4, on Friday, October 20, 5:00 p.m.</b> The following three assignments, due earlier, will be the skeleton of your proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Statement of Interest</i> (1-2 paragraphs): This assignment asks you to merely describe your broad general research interests. <b>Due via email, Week 1, on Friday, September 29, 5:00 p.m.</b></li> <li>• <i>Research Question</i> (1-2 paragraphs): This assignment asks you to choose a clearly stated question to be examined in your thesis. <b>Due via email, Week 2, on Friday, October 6, 5:00 p.m.</b></li> <li>• <i>Argument</i> (1-2 paragraphs): This assignment asks you to answer your question by outlining your initial expectations <b>Due via email, Week 3, on Friday, October 13, 5:00 p.m.</b></li> </ul>
45%	<p><i>Literature Review</i> (8-10 pages): This assignment will become a major component of your final thesis in which you summarize the key literature surrounding your topic. <b>Due in the department main office (hard copy), Week 7, on Wednesday, November 8, 5:00 p.m.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Annotated Bibliography</i> (at least 15 sources): This assignment asks you to provide a list of sources with a short explanation of each source's use. <b>Due via email, Week 6, on Friday, November 3, 5:00 p.m.</b></li> <li>• <i>Rewrite</i>: Students have the option of receiving feedback on their literature review to ultimately receive a revised grade. <b>Due via email, Finals Week, on Friday, December 8, 5:00 p.m.</b></li> </ul>
20%	<p><i>Research Methodology</i>: (5-6 pages) This assignment requires students to detail the systematic approach and plan of the project. This should incorporate the most feasible and detailed methodology appropriate to the research question and argument. <b>Due in the department main office (hard copy), Week 8, on Friday, November 17, 5:00 p.m.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rewrite</i>: Students have the option of receiving feedback on their literature review to ultimately receive a revised grade. <b>Due via email, Week 10, on Friday, December 1, 5:00 p.m.</b></li> </ul>

Percentage	Assignment
10%	<i>Exchange Session:</i> There are three days this quarter in which you will exchange written drafts of your work. You will receive credit for submitting your work online, participation in these sessions, along with the substantive comments and feedback you provide to your classmates.
10%	<i>Office Hours, Participation and Attendance:</i> In addition to regular class meetings and participation, students are required to attend office hours at least three times in the fall quarter.

## 6 Communication

One of the most rewarding parts of Senior Thesis is developing your projects in one-on-one meetings. It is near impossible to write a thesis without feedback. While we do meet frequently in class, it is impossible to provide individualized guidance and instruction during our meetings. By the end of the quarter, I expect all students to have least attended office hours three times. Office hours are on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, but I will be happy to schedule alternate times that may work better with your schedule.

### 6.1 Class Participation

Participation is a crucial element in this course. We will have three formal exchange sessions throughout the quarter. You are expected to bring drafts of your proposal, literature review, and research methodology to these respective sessions. On these days, students will work together to provide constructive feedback on drafts. This is also a formal element of your grade worth 10%.

In addition, the course has assigned discussion topics for each week. These discussion topics refer to specific elements of your work and should serve as progress benchmarks. Be prepared to discuss these specific elements of your work during each class meeting. These discussions will apply toward your participation grade.

### 6.2 Methods of Communication

Whenever I am in my office (94-316), I am happy to meet with you. I am guaranteed to be in my office during dedicated office hours, but you can also schedule an appointment so we can meet when it is convenient for you. Feel free to contact me online via Facebook chat (marioguerrero). I am online frequently and will be happy to answer your questions.

### 6.3 Course Website

The course is accompanied by an online webpage that serves as a hub for information exchange between myself and the class. You can find the course webpage at

<http://www.marioguerrero.info/courses/pls461/>. Please remember to check the course webpage frequently. In addition, you should be checking your cpp.edu e-mail account frequently.

## 7 Academic Honesty

Cal Poly Pomona takes academic honesty very seriously. Cheating is not tolerated and students will be held accountable for cheating on an assignment or an exam. Violators will receive an F in the course and then be referred to the Dean of Students and Judicial Affairs for further disciplinary action that may result in suspension. There should be no reason for you to feel compelled to cheat in this class. If you feel overwhelmed with the course, please do not hesitate to contact me for help.

## 8 Special Assistance

A wide range of services is available to support students in their efforts to meet the course requirements. Cal Poly Pomona offers counseling for personal and academic concerns at the Counseling and Psychological Services at no additional charge to students (Building 66-110, 909-869-3220). Additionally, Student Health Mental Services (Building 46, 909-869-3070) provides a range of services to help students identify and overcome obstacles stemming from financial, emotional, social, or family situations. The Disability Resource Center (Building 9-103, 909-869-3333) also provides academic support services to eligible students with temporary and permanent disabilities. You must register with DRC prior to receiving these accommodations.

Separately from these services, the University Writing Center (Library-2921) provides assistance to students writing papers. The Writing Center offers students 30-minute one-on-one appointments. Writing Center tutors specialize in reading for content, but will also read papers for grammar and style. Please utilize this resource if you know you need help with your writing.

## 9 Course Schedule

Please note that the following schedule is subject to change throughout the quarter.

**WEEK 0: SEPTEMBER 22.** INTRODUCTION. WHAT IS A THESIS? WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME? IS WRITING A THESIS DIFFICULT?

DISCUSSION FOR 9/22: Introductions & Ideas

*Required Reading:*

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter One: Walk Before You Run." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

**WEEK 1: SEPTEMBER 25-SEPTEMBER 29.** HOW DO I DEVELOP MY IDEAS INTO A TOPIC? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BASIC CONVENTIONS OF EACH OF THE SUB-FIELDS? WHAT MAKES A GOOD TOPIC?

DISCUSSION FOR 9/25: Topic Selection

*Required Reading:*

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter Two: The First Step: Choosing a Topic." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

*Recommended Reading:*

Geddes, B. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 2, "Big Questions, Little Answers," p. 27-69.

King, G., R.O. Keohane, and S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, p. 14-23 and 28-33, and Chapter 3, p. 99-114.

Salkind, N.J. 2000. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Chapter 7, p. 131-144.

*Friday, September 29: Statement of Interest due*

**WEEK 2: OCTOBER 2-OCTOBER 6.** HOW DOES A RESEARCH QUESTION LEAD TO A GOOD STUDY? WHAT ARE SOME CRITERIA FOR A GOOD RESEARCH QUESTION?

DISCUSSION FOR 10/2: Research Questions

*Required Reading:*

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter Two: From Topic to Research Question." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

*Recommended Reading:*

Geddes, B. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 4, How the evidence you use affects the answers you get, p. 142-173.

King, G., R. O. Keohane, and S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, p. 23-28.

Van Evera, S. 1997. "Chapter One: Hypotheses, Laws and Theories." *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

*Friday, October 6: Research Question due*

**WEEK 3: OCTOBER 9-OCTOBER 13.** HOW DO YOU FORMALLY ANSWER RESEARCH QUESTIONS? HOW DO YOU DESIGN A STUDY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS? DO I NEED HYPOTHESES?

DISCUSSION FOR 10/9: Arguments

*Required Reading:*

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter Two: Answering the Question with the Argument." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

*Recommended Reading:*

Geddes, B. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 2, "Big Questions, Little Answers," p. 69-88, and Chapter 4, "How the evidence you use affects the answers you get," p. 131-142.

King, G., R.O. Keohane, and S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, p. 1-7, and Chapter 2, p. 34-46.

*Friday, October 13: Argument due*

**WEEK 4: OCTOBER 16-OCTOBER 20** EXCHANGE SESSION 1. Bring a hard copy of your proposal to class.

DISCUSSION FOR 10/16: Proposal Drafts.

No Readings

*Friday, October 20: Proposal due*

**WEEK 5: OCTOBER 23-OCTOBER 27.** WHAT RESOURCES DOES THE LIBRARY HAVE TO HELP ME? HOW DO I ACTUALLY CARRY OUT THE BULK OF THIS RESEARCH?



DISCUSSION FOR 10/23: Library Instructional Session

Library Instruction Session led by university librarian.

*Required Reading:*

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter Three: Engaging with Literature." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

**WEEK 6: OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 3.** HOW DO I DO THE LITERATURE REVIEW? WHAT ARE SOME COMMON PITFALLS IN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW?

DISCUSSION FOR 10/30: Literature Review

*Recommended Reading:*

The following is a list of readings from each major subfield. Students should carefully read only the selections from the field they intend to write their thesis under.

*American Politics*

Butler, D.M., and D.E. Broockman. 2011. "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 463-477.

Atkinson, M.D. R.D. Enos, and S.J. Hill. 2009. "Candidate Faces and Election Outcomes: Is the Face-Vote Correlation Caused by Candidate Selection?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 4: 229-249.

*International Relations*

Williams, M.C. 2009. "Waltz, Realism, and Democracy." *International Relations* 23(3): 328-340.

Horowitz, M.C. 2010. "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism." *International Organization* 64(1): 33-64.

*Comparative Politics*

Knutsen, C.H. 2011. "Which Democracies Prosper? Electoral Rules, Form of Government and Economic Growth." *Electoral Studies* 30(1): 83-90.

Eifert, B., E. Miguel, and D.N. Posner. 2010. "Political Competition and Ethnic Identification in Africa." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): 494-510.

*Political Theory*

Katz, C.J. 2003. "Thomas Jefferson's Liberal Anticapitalism." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(1): 1-17.

Phillips, A. 2011. "It's My Body and I'll Do What I Like With It: Bodies as Objects and Property." *Political Theory* 39(6): 724-768.

*Public Law*

Epstein, L., A. Segal, and C. Westerland. 2008. "The Increasing Importance of Ideology in the Nomination and Conformation of Supreme Court Justices." *Drake Law Review* 56(3): 609-635.

Abrego, L.J. 2011. "Legal Consciousness of Undocumented Latinos: Fear and Stigma as Barriers to Claims-Making for First- and 1.5-Generation Immigrants." *Law and Society Review* 45(2): 337-370.

*Public Administration*

Mettler, S. and J. Soss. 2004. "The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 2(1): 55-73.

Whitford, A.B. and B.Y. Clark. 2007. "Designing Property Rights for Water: Mediating Market, Government, and Corporation." *Policy Sciences* 40(4): 335-351.

*Political Methodology*

Beck, N. 1999. "Political Methodology - A Welcoming Discipline." Unpublished manuscript. May 11.

*Friday, November 3: Annotated Bibliography due*

**WEEK 7: NOVEMBER 6-NOVEMBER 10.** EXCHANGE SESSION 2. Bring a hard copy of your literature review to class.

DISCUSSION FOR 11/6: Literature Review Drafts

*Recommended Reading:*

Knopf, J.W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

Cuba, L. 1997. *A Short Guide to Writing about Social Science*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 3, "Summaries and Reviews of Social Science Literature," p. 56-78.

Cuba, L. 1997. *A Short Guide to Writing about Social Science*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 5, "Library Research Papers," p. 120-151.

*Wednesday, November 8: Literature Review due*

**WEEK 8: NOVEMBER 13-NOVEMBER 17.** WHAT IS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY? WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO I NEED TO DO TO ANSWER MY RESEARCH QUESTION? WHAT IS ORIGINAL RESEARCH AND HOW DO I PROVIDE EVIDENCE FOR MY ARGUMENT?

DISCUSSION FOR 11/13: Research Methodology

*Required Reading:*

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter Four: Designing Your Study." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

Guerrero, M. 2017. "Chapter Five: The Guide to Methodology." *Senior Thesis Guide*.

*Recommended Reading:*

Cuba, L. 1997. *A Short Guide to Writing about Social Science*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 4, "Papers Based on Original Research," p. 79-111.

Salkind, N.J. 2000. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Chapter 6, p. 109-124.

Scott, G.M., and S.M. Garrison. 2002. *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, Chapter 2, "Writing Competently," p. 17-41.

Schmidt, D. 2010. *Writing in Political Science: A Practical Guide*. 4th ed. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 7, "Common Writing Problems."

Schmidt, D. 2010. *Writing in Political Science: A Practical Guide*. 4th ed. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 9, "Manuscript Format and Referencing Styles."

Van Evera, S. 1997. "Chapter Two: What are Case Studies?" *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

*Friday, November 17: Research Methodology due*

**WEEK 9: NOVEMBER 20-NOVEMBER 24.** HOW DO I WRITE MY PROPOSAL, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY TO MAKE MY LIFE EASIER NEXT QUARTER? WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING OVER WINTER QUARTER?

DISCUSSION FOR 11/20: Winter is coming

*Recommended Reading:*

Van Evera, S. 1997. "Chapter Four: Helpful Hints in Writing a Political Science Dissertation." *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

**WEEK 10: NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 1.** EXCHANGE SESSION 3. Bring a hard copy of your research methodology to class.

DISCUSSION FOR 11/27: Research methodology drafts

No Readings

*Friday, December 1: Research Methodology Rewrite due*

**FINALS: DECEMBER 4-DECEMBER 8.** HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY LITERATURE REVIEW?

*Friday, December 8: Literature Review Rewrite due*