

Honors Seminar: Thesis Clarification and Research

GOVT 4949

Fall 2020

What do they know of England who only England know? – Rudyard Kipling

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|---------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Instructor: | Jeremy Wallace | Email: wallace@cornell.edu |
| Time: | M 3:00-4:55 (~biweekly) | Place: Online (Zoom) |
| Office Hours: | T 2:00-3:30, or by appt | Place: Online (Zoom) |

This class represents the first of a two-course program for students writing Honors Theses for the Government Department. Each thesis represents original research by the student in consultation with an advisor, and, when completed, will be graded by a second faculty member as well as by the advisor. The class meets biweekly to facilitate one-on-one meetings with the instructor, advisor, or others.

Fall 2020 Note: we will endeavor to create the best course that we can given the myriad obstructions that 2020 has dealt us, experimenting with outlines, recorded comments, pre-discussions, & different communications technologies (Zoom, Slack, etc), over the semester. I strongly prefer to handle all communications, especially about assignments for the course, in the course slack channel or through Slack DMs, as the virtual semester has made email inboxes a dumping ground the world over.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Participation & Attendance - 30% Assignments - 40% Chapter Drafts - 30%

Participation & Attendance – The course is a seminar; active participation—asking and answering questions—in the discussion is required.

Assignments – Each student will complete a series of short assignments during the semester. These will attempt to connect the methodological and substantive readings for the course to your thesis project.

Chapter Drafts – At the end of the term, students are expected to turn in drafts of text equivalent to two chapters of their thesis (8-10,000 words). An initial 4000+ word section is to be shared with other students and the instructor on 13 November.

Integrity and Accommodation:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University's Code of Academic Integrity. In compliance with university policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities.

Resources

The [*Annual Review of Political Science*](#) provides excellent pieces that describe the state of the art on a wide variety of topics and can be a great place to start building out a sense of the existing arguments in the field on your research question.

The Cornell library system is an impressive resource in normal times. During this particular semester, it will likely have restrictions that we will endeavor to navigate as best we can.

Other resources:

Writing:

Links to various academic writing guides: <http://fhollenbach.org/WritingAcademic/>
Lipson, Charles. *How to Write a B.A. Thesis: A Practical Guide From Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).
Strunk, William. *The elements of style*. Penguin, 2007.

Design:

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, 1994.
Gerring, John. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Methods and Software:

E-GAP. Methods Guides. <https://egap.org/methods-guides/>
R. <http://cran.r-project.org/> & R-Studio <https://rstudio.com/>
Zotero. <http://zotero.org/>

Assignments:

1. **Weekly updates.** Starting 28 Sept 2020, send a short (not more than 1 paragraph) update to the govt4949 slack channel about your progress.
2. **Research Question Tweet. 27 September 2020.** Review your initial proposal and the current state of your project. [1 page, posted to govt4949 slack channel]

Are you happy with the proposal or do you think you might want to modify it or pursue a different thesis topic?

Imagine you have finished your thesis and you want to Tweet about it. In 280 Characters, describe your central question and your answer to this question.

3. **Existing Research. 04 October 2020.** Find and closely examine a piece of state of the art research related to your research question (2017 or later). Write a short memo (2-3 pages) that describes the research as well as a similarly connected annual review piece. Note its research design, data, weaknesses, strengths, and implications for your project.
4. **Research Design. 18 October 2020.** Complete a memo related to your research design. (~4-5 pages)
5. **Annotated Bibliography. 1 November 2020.** Building off of the existing research assignment, find the main sources you will use in your thesis. These should include the relevant theoretical literatures, but also your data sources and other material. Note if replication data is available for any recently published works and whether you have downloaded and examined it. (~4-5 pages).
6. **IRB Application. 6 November 2020.** In consultation with your advisor, draft and submit an application to Cornell's IRB (if needed).
7. **Draft Text. 11 November 2020.** Share draft text with instructor, advisor, and slack channel. Students will provide feedback on two drafts from your colleagues.
8. **Submission of Chapters. 12 December 2020.** Submit 8000-10000 words of draft text for your thesis (the first two chapters) to your advisor and the instructor.

Session 01. Starting out, or Introductions and How to Write Them [2020.09.14]

- [1] Andrew Little. 2016. "Three Templates for Introductions to Political Science Articles."
- [2] Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. (Selections.)

Session 02. Methods and Plans [2020.09.28]

- [1] Humphreys, Macartan, and Alan M. Jacobs. "Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach." *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 4 (November 2015): 653–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055415000453>.
- [2] Mahoney, James. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (January 2010): 120–47. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109990220>.
- [3] Wedeen, Lisa. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (May 2010): 255–72. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.052706.123951>.

Session 03. Learn from the Best [2020.10.05] [note date]

- [1] Reading previous award-winning honors theses from your predecessors.

Session 04. Data Discussions and Resources [2020.10.19]

- [1] Political Science Replication Data <https://www.poliscidata.com/pages/journalReplicationData.php>
- [2] V-DEM. 2020. *Autocratization Surges—Resistance Grows: Democracy Report 2020*.
- [3] The Quality of Government Dataset Codebook. [Most recent version](#).
- [4] Laitin, David D., and Rob Reich. "Trust, Transparency, and Replication in Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50, no. 01 (January 2017): 172–75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096516002365>.

Session 05. Positionality and Ethics [2020.11.02]

[1] Sirnate, Vasundhara. "Positionality, Personal Insecurity, and Female Empathy in Security Studies Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47, no. 02 (April 2014): 398–401. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096514000286>.

[2] Cornell Institutional Review Board (IRB).
<https://researchservices.cornell.edu/compliance/human-research>

Session 06. Workshop I. [2020.11.09] [note date]

Discuss student work in progress, focusing on 4-5 per session.

Draft Text Due [2020.11.13]

Session 07. Workshop II. [2020.11.30] [note date]

Discuss student work in progress, focusing on 4-5 per session.

Session 08. Workshop III. [2020.12.14]

Discuss student work in progress, focusing on 4-5 per session.

Chapters Due [2020.12.20]