

Barnard College
Dept. of Political Science
Senior Research Seminar in American Politics
POLS BC 3761x
Fall 2005

[Prof. Kimberley Johnson](#)

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Description

The senior seminar is intended to be the capstone experience of the political science major and the Barnard degree. This course is designed to assist majors in designing, researching, and writing a year-long essay on American politics, processes and/or institutions relying on primary resources. Over the course of two semesters, students will meet in groups and individually with the instructor. On-going, individual meetings with the instructor are an integral part of the course requirements

Course Requirements

An essay (minimum 50 pages) on an original topic related to American politics is due in the instructor's office on April 18, 2006.

Grading

Since this is a year-long course, a grade of Y will be given for the Fall semester. The final grade will reflect not only the quality of the final product - the senior essay, but also the consistency and quality of effort that a student has put into the process throughout the entire year. The essay cannot be completed in one semester. Students should plan to devote significant effort to this course - and to the essay - throughout the academic year.

Readings

Charles A. Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Available at Columbia University Bookstore.

The following books are suggested, but not required. The instructor will distribute other readings as needed.

Howard S. Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998)

Important Deadlines

- Week of October 4 - Research question
- Week of November 15 - Research outline and preliminary bibliography.
Each student will hand in a draft of research question and outline according to appointment set with Instructor.
- Week of December 6 - Draft of the first chapter of the essay and detailed outline of essay.

Course Schedule

September 6	Introduction and Class Overview
September 13	Finding your voice Lipson, Chapt. 1 & 4 - Becker, “One Right Way” and “Terrorized by the Literature” - Present research ideas
September 20	What’s a research question? Lipson, Chapt. 5 & 6 - Booth, “From Topics to Questions” and “from Questions to Problems” - Present refined research ideas
September 27	Library Orientation, Wollman Library, 2 nd Floor Lipson, Chapt. 2 & 3 - Booth, “Using Resources” - Harvey, All
October 4	Research question (draft) due
October 11	Individual Meetings with Instructor
October 18	Class meeting - Discuss Research Questions and Preliminary Bibliography
October 25	Individual Meetings with Instructor
November 1	What’s a Research Design? - Selected readings
November 15	Research Question and Detailed Outline Due/ Individual Meetings with Instructor
November 22	Individual Meetings with Instructor
November 29	Individual Meetings with Instructor
December 6	Draft of first chapter and detailed outline for rest of the essay due/ Overview of Spring Semester