

Barnard College
Political Science Department
Fall 2007

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POLS BC3761 SENIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Course Meeting Times and Place

Wednesdays, 6:10 - 8:00 PM
Room 809 Altschul

Course Description

The senior research seminar is a two-semester course designed to support the student in her writing of a senior essay, the capstone of academic work at Barnard. The senior essay will analyze a question about American politics and/or the operation of governmental institutions and processes, relying on primary source material to support findings. Students will meet in groups and individually with the instructor over the two semesters; progress toward the completion of the essay is facilitated through a schedule of writing assignments and presentations where a student's on-going work is critiqued by peers and the instructor. The seminar aims to create a research community for advanced undergraduates supportive of the individual effort to produce original research.

Course Requirements

A essay (minimum 50 pages) on an original topic related to American politics is due at the start of our annual senior essay party, April 23, 2008, at 4 PM.

The requirements for the Fall semester are as follows:

- 1) Completion of writing assignments on time
- 2) Participation in the class meetings

You will be evaluated for the quality of your participation in class, your research effort and timeliness, as well as the *quality* of the completed essay. I will furnish grades for written work so that you have a sense of where you stand as we proceed, but issue only a "Y" grade at the end of the semester, assuming satisfactory progress. Please note: the senior essay can not be completed in one semester. It is important that you pace your work accordingly and address problems as they arise. Students should plan to devote significant effort to this course throughout the academic year.

The following books for the course are available at Book Culture (formerly Labyrinth Books), 536 West 112th Street:

Charles Tilly, *Why? What Happens When People Give Reasons, and Why*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*,
2nd Ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1995) 2003.

Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7th Rev. Ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Other reading assignments will be available through our *Courseworks* page.

What follows is an itinerary of meetings for the Fall semester and an outline of deadlines for writing assignments and class presentations.

Schedule of Classes and Summary of Deadlines for Fall 2007

Schedule of Classes

Sept. 5 **Introduction**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR Sept. 12: What interests you about American politics? Propose three possible thesis topics and write a paragraph or two on why each is of interest. Be prepared to discuss your ideas in class.

Sept. 12 **What is social scientific research and why do we do it?**

Turning interests into research questions; reasons, knowledge claims, and strategies of inquiry

Readings: Charles Tilly, *Why? What Happens When People Give Reasons, and Why*

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, Part I Prologue, Chapter 1, Part II Prologue, chapters 3 and 4

Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, chapters 1 and 2

Sept. 19 **Library orientation with Mr. Jerry Breeze:** we will meet in the lower lobby of Lehman Library at the School of International and Public Affairs for an orientation on the use of the U.S. Government Documents collection, and the social science collection

ASSIGNMENT: Begin library research and work on preliminary bibliography; read, read, read.

Readings: Wayne C. Booth *et al.*, *The Craft of Research*, chapter 5

Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, chapter 3

Sept. 26 **How to decide on a topic, Part 1**

Explore a debate to stimulate unanswered questions

Example: Why did voter turnout in the U.S. decline in the late nineteenth century?

Readings: Walter Dean Burnham, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," *APSR* 59: 7-28

Philip Converse, "Change in the American Electorate," in *The Human Meaning of Social Change*, Angus Campbell and Philip Converse, eds., New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972

WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR Oct. 17: Draft a research proposal (no more than five pages) and be prepared to discuss it in class.

Oct. 3

How to decide on a topic, Part 2

Explore an anomaly and look for the 'beautiful surprise'

1) If French peasants say they are not interested in politics, why do they vote at such high rates?

Reading: Sidney Tarrow, "The Urban-Rural Cleavage in Political Involvement: The Case of France," *American Political Science Review* 65(2): 341-357.

2) Why did the size of the undocumented population swell in the U.S. after immigration reform in the 1980s increased border patrols and sanctions on employers?

Reading: Douglas S. Massey and Kristen E. Espinosa, "What's Driving Mexico-U.S. Migration? A Theoretical, Empirical, and Policy Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 102(): 939-999.

Oct. 10

How to decide on a topic, Part 3

Address a normative political question

Example: How *should* we evaluate the impact of globalization on the meaning of democratic citizenship?

Reading: Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chapter 5 'Democratic Iterations: the Local, the National, and the Global,' 171-212.

Wayne C. Booth *et al.*, *The Craft of Research*, Part Three

Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, chapter 7

Oct. 17

Conducting research: action research methods

Discussion of research proposals

Readings: Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Why Americans Still Don't Vote and Why Politicians Want It That Way* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), Part II 'Experiment in Democracy,' 139-272.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR Oct. 24: Prepare an annotated bibliography.

Oct. 24

Conducting research: applied fieldwork and the 'social autopsy'

Discussion of research proposals (con't.)
Annotated bibliography due

Reading: Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, Prologue, Introduction, chapters 1 and 2

Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, chapter 4

- Oct. 31 **Conducting research: the theory-oriented case study**
- Readings:* John Walton, "Making a Case," in Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker, eds., *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, 9th ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 121-137.
- Douglas Harper, "Small N's and Community Case Studies," in Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker, eds., *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry* 9th ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 139-158.
- Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, chapter 6
- Nov. 7 **How to conduct a literature review**
- Reading:* Wayne C. Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, Part Four
- Charles Lipson, *How To Write A B.A. Thesis*, chapter 5
- Nov. 14 **Pulling it all together: designing your research**
- Reading:* Wayne C. Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, Part Four Prologue, chapter 12
- ASSIGNMENT FOR Nov. 28 or Dec. 5:** Diagram your research for a poster session.
- WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR Dec. 12:** Prepare a draft of chapter 1.
- Nov. 21 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**
- Nov. 28 **Poster session I**
- Students will make constructive critical appraisals of peers' research designs. We will summarize the strengths and weaknesses of designs with a view to how well they turn research interests into a researchable question (or questions), and whether the research methodologies to be used will likely produce the data needed to support arguments.
- Dec. 5 **Poster session II**
- WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR Dec. 12:** Write a five page progress report.
- Dec. 12 **Draft of chapter 1 and progress report due** (no class)

Summary Schedule of Due Dates for Fall Semester Writing Assignments

- Sept. 12 Topic statement (2 pages)
- Oct. 3 Research proposal (five pages)
Your research design will include a discussion of your topic, your research questions or hypotheses, and the methods you plan to use to study your topic. In discussing your methodology, you should distinguish between the use of primary and secondary source material. Please keep in mind that the senior essay project requires the use of some primary source material - the collection and analysis of raw data, or information unmediated by another.
- Oct. 26 Annotated bibliography (at least 20 sources)
- Dec. 12 Draft of chapter 1 (see handout) and progress report (five pages)
The progress report should describe the work completed to date on your essay project. It should address the problems you've encountered in focusing your topic ideas, developing your research questions, and in your preliminary library research. Conclude your report with a plan for completing your research in the Spring semester. We will meet together as a group during the first week of classes in January to discuss progress and agendas for the semester.

Schedule of Fall Semester Class Presentations

- Sept. 12 Research topic (5 minutes):
You should be prepared to discuss your topic ideas - basic questions you have about the topics, the source of your interest, and any previous work you may have done on related subjects.
- Oct. 17/24 Discussion of research proposals
- Nov. 28 Poster sessions (5 minute presentation, 15 minutes for discussion)
- Dec. 5