

Political Science W3998-W3999Y
Senior Honors Seminar
2016-2017 Academic Year

Prof. Macartan Humphreys
International Affairs, Room 812
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Office Hours by Appointment

Preceptor:
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Office hours: TBD.

Locations: Room 711 IAB reserved on Fridays F 9:00am-10:50am. In practice we mix it up a lot and also vary locations, see below.

1 OVERVIEW

The Senior Honors Seminar is a yearlong course designed to help seniors in the major complete a publishable scholarly paper on the topic of their choice. Honors theses are typically 80-120 pages, although there is no set page minimum or maximum. At the beginning of the academic year, we will meet as a group to discuss basic principles of research and thesis design. Beginning in mid-October, however, much of your work will be conducted independently. To make sure that you stay on track, it is critical for you to keep in touch with your faculty advisor as well as the seminar advisor and preceptor. Spring semester meetings will be conducted as writing workshops, where students' work is circulated, presented, and critiqued.

Admission to the Spring semester is conditional on successful defense of your design in the Fall.

Three people are crucially involved in guiding and advising you throughout the year and together they constitute an informal "**thesis committee**." The most important of these is your faculty advisor. He or she is the person whose individual research is most related to your own topic and, as such, is able to provide you the most specialized and in-depth feedback. Second, the seminar leader (this year, Macartan Humphreys) will read and review all thesis assignments. The role of the seminar leader is to provide a structure for writing the thesis and a sounding board for outlines and chapters. Finally, the seminar preceptor serves as an additional resource for students in the course who can support you in thinking through arguments and evidence, providing technical support, and pointing you to resources at Columbia and beyond.

2 REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

- The final grade for the seminar is dependent primarily (95%) on the quality of your final thesis
- In addition, you will be required to produce a 3 minute video or multimedia presentation summarizing your research findings. This counts 5% towards your final grade.
- In order for a student to receive departmental honors, her/his thesis must normally receive a grade of A- or higher. The bar for attaining honors is very high, but everyone in the seminar has been accepted because they are capable of producing a thesis that meets that bar.

3 WRITING SCHEDULE: ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES

The most important date is:

- **The Final thesis is due** Friday **31 March, 2017**. That is a **strict, unalterable, and final** deadline. This is the version on which grades will be based. For posterity you will be able to deposit an even more final version with the department up to 14 April but this should vary only superficially (formatting, spelling etc).

Also note:

- Friday **April 14**. You will present your thesis to faculty and peers in a public seminar

FULL SCHEDULE

6 & 7 Sept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sign up for individual meetings with Macartan and Anna http://doodle.com/poll/mc46hfydhnu99bxu
7 Sept	Wednesday evening meeting 5:10 pm: Location 326 IAB: Overview of class and projects
8 Sept	8 – 10 am. Location 711 IAB: Causal inference and quantitative strategies. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. <i>Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research</i>. Princeton University Press, 1994. Chapters 2-3. 2. Dunning, Thad. 2008. Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>. 61: 2, 282- 293. 3. Green and Gerber. Experiments Chapters 1 and 2.
9 Sept	9 – 11 am. 711 IAB: Qualitative strategies and Case Selection. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. "A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research." <i>Political Analysis</i> 14.3 (2006): 227-249. 2. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. <i>Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research</i>. Princeton University Press, 1994. Chs 4 and 5 3. Humphreys, Macartan, and Alan Jacobs. "<u>Mixing Methods</u>" 4. Seawright and Gerring: <u>Case selection techniques</u>
9 Sept– 27 Sept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read two past theses. [See dropbox]Work on design forms.
16 Sept	9 – 11 am. 711 IAB: Review: Getting going in R and Stata (led by Anna)
23 Sept	9 – 11 am. 711 IAB: Review: Working with Human Subjects (IRB presentation) . We will discuss rules and procedures for engaging in human subjects research at Columbia. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deposit first draft of thesis outlines / design form due including table of contents
28 Sept	Individual meetings with Macartan and Anna: http://doodle.com/poll/uibsceyxkkdaxpb3
29 Sept	9 – 11 am. Location 501 IAB: Big Group Discussion of Past Theses 1
30 Sept	9 – 11 am. 711 IAB: Big Group Discussion of Past Theses 2
14 Oct	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Draft of thesis outlines / design form including table of contents submitted to advisers
26, 27, 28 Oct	<u>Design defenses</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Book a 30-minute slot; coordinate your booking with your faculty advisor. Prepare a ten-minute presentation to be followed by 20 minute discussion. A pass is a license to start writing. Otherwise revisions will be requested. Please sign up for as many times slots as you have availabilities in this doodle poll: http://doodle.com/poll/ux6zfhvftfg48skv6
Nov 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post revised outlines to dropbox
Nov 23	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in first draft of your central chapter (core argument; core analysis).
Nov 30, Dec 1,2	Attend one of three small group meetings to discuss first chapter
Jan 16	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in second draft of your main chapter plus first draft of 2 nd substantive chapter
Jan 18, 19, 20	Attend one of three small group meetings to discuss second chapter
Feb 17	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in second draft of 2 nd substantive chapter plus 3 rd chapter / draft intros & conclusion
Feb 22, 23, 24	Attend one of three small group meetings to discuss third chapter (and entire thesis)
Mar 10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in draft of entire thesis to all advisers.
Mar 15, 16, 17	Mini-defense of thesis. Book a 45-minute slot; coordinate your booking with your faculty advisor. Prepare a fifteen-minute presentation to be followed by 30 minute discussion. You are allowed to invite other classmates to your defense if you want to. Please sign up for as many times slots as you have availabilities in this doodle poll: http://doodle.com/poll/r5fie8uazs8d826t
Mar 31	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final draft of thesis due. Return permissions form to the department
Apr 14	Presentation in Lindsay Rogers Room. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Share ppt by Apr 13. <i>Also on this date:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Last date for deposit of theses of record <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multimedia / Dissemination project due

4 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Many have found the resources below useful.

- 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.
- 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).
- Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997).

Writing. People quibble but there is a lot of wisdom in this little book:

- Strunk, William. *The elements of style*. Penguin, 2007.

5 TOOLS

For anyone doing theses that requires mathematical writing you should learn to use LATEX. We can give pointers but see here to get started <http://www.latex-project.org/>

For statistical work we can give support especially in R or in Stata. Anna will do a crash course in getting going on original statistical analysis. R is available free from <http://cran.r-project.org/> Note even if you are not doing statistics you might find R useful for generating graphs or running simulations to illustrate your arguments in an abstract way.

Open science: if you are working with data we ask you to store your data and code in dropbox so that we and others can examine your analysis at any time.

Though not required we recommend that you work on your drafts in **dropbox** so that at any moment the instructors can check progress and give feedback. Include in your dropbox a file that lists any problems you are facing. If you install dropbox on your computer syncing is automatic.

6 NOTES

- Theses must be individually written and no joint projects are allowed, although with the agreement of the advisor, students can collaborate to produce data for use in separate theses.
- Peer support is a critical part of leading research and we strongly encourage all students to put time into reading each other's work and providing feedback and criticism. There should be no competitive component here and no curve will be employed to determine grades, rather grades will be based on the quality of the research.
- Peer criticism should be frank and constructive. You should say when an argument makes no sense to you, but you should also try to think about how to improve other people's arguments that you are dissatisfied with.
- It is your responsibility to complete tasks on time. Failure to submit chapters or drafts of your thesis in a timely manner may preclude you from being granted honors. If you submit assignments late, be advised that comments and feedback may be substantially delayed, which will make it difficult to make progress on your thesis.
- **Distribution:** All assignments are due by **midnight** on the stated due date. All assignments should be distributed electronically via the Dropbox folder. If advisers are not on dropbox you should be sure to keep them up to date with all major submissions.
- **Feedback:** you can expect written feedback on your design document after your design defense and additional written feedback after your mock defense. You can expect short written feedback on the overall thesis after submission from your main adviser. Individual chapters will be read by the instructor and the main adviser sometimes in multiple drafts; feedback will normally be given on these orally or in focus sessions. Depending on need, instructors may mark up copies of chapters or suggest text or code edits.
- Please cc me, your advisor, and your preceptor on emails about your thesis.
- Continue to study for your other courses. Columbia College requires that you maintain at least a 3.6 GPA in your major in order to qualify for honors.
- 31 March is a hard deadline for theses. Theses submitted after this date cannot be considered for honors. Theses submitted after this date also will be marked down one-third of a grade for every day they are late.
- Be prepared to be wrong; be prepared to be disappointed. It is extremely common to find once you go deep into a topic that things are not as you thought at first. In a way that's the point.
- Tell us when things are not going well. This is an intense year and people often run into troubles of one form or another. If you face particular unexpected challenges let us know.
- Have fun – this is an extraordinary opportunity to go deeply into questions you care about. Challenge yourself, stretch your mind and your skills, let go of your prejudices, try things you thought you never could.

7 RESEARCH PROFILE FORM

RESEARCH DESIGN FORM (GREY BITS ARE ILLUSTRATIVE TEXT ONLY)

Section 1: Introduction	
1. Researcher Name:	A.N. Author
2. Research Project Title:	Does international aid weaken political accountability?
3. One sentence summary of research question:	International aid provided to governments of developing countries may make them better able to meet the demands of their citizens. However because they may become less dependent on resources for citizens they may have weaker motivations to address their concerns.
4. Substantive motivation: [half page]	A positive answer to this question has implications for optimal aid policies.
5. Theoretical motivation [half page]	This study will help shed light on how accountability in general works. If accountability derives primarily from underlying competition over access to political office then increased gains from office might increase accountability. If however it derives from control over the purse strings then it might weaken it.
6. Key literatures/debates to which this will contribute: [half page]	This work will speak to theoretical work on agency and representation; for example Besley's work on Principled Agents; it also address work on accountability in Africa, such as accounts given in Bratton and van der Walle (Democratic Experiments). Finally it addresses discussion on dependency including older work on dependency theory (eg Frank, The Development of Underdevelopment) and newer work on the adverse effects of aid (eg Moyo's Dead Aid).
7. Primary Hypothesis [half page]	When countries receive greater access to aid their governments become less responsive to their citizen's demands.
Section 2: Identification Strategy	
8. X: What are the independent variables?	Strategy 1: Aid received
9. Y: What are your dependent variables? What is your primary outputs and outcome of interest (what data is needed)?	Strategy 1: Overall Corruption Strategy 2: Politician responses to citizens requests
10. Units. What are the units for your Xs and Ys? (Politicians? Bills? Individuals? Communities? Schools?)	Strategy1: Country / Years Strategy 2: Politicians
11. Identification <i>How can you make the case that you are identifying causal effects? For quantitative work, how can you rule out confounders? For qualitative work, what are the observable implications of your causal theory? What processes would you expect to observe if your theory is correct, and can these help to rule out rival theories?</i>	For my quantitative analysis I will use an instrumental variables approach and try to instrument for aid by measuring income shocks among traditional donors For my qualitative analysis I will look for evidence that politicians became more responsive to the demands of donors in the run up to or following increases in aid; I will try to assess the amount of time spent by politicians attending to the concerns of donors in at least three episodes. I will also look for evidence that they became less concerned about threats from other politicians.
Section 3: Sample, Data, & Implementation Strategies	
12. Sample [half page] <i>How many units (of X, Y, and relevant clusters) will you study? What is your sampling frame? How will you select</i>	Strategy 1: 150 countries * 20 years. All available units will be selected. Strategy 2: 20 countries * 10 government offices in each. Clustering at the country level. I will seek to generate new measures for the 10 most aid dependent and the 10 least aid dependent LDCs. For the qualitative analysis I will select four countries based on the model

<i>your sample?</i>	developed in Strategy 1 (cases with high aid / low aid times high corruption / low corruption).
13. Measurement strategy: [half page] <i>Describe measurement of Y, X, and auxiliary data. Be clear about units of analysis, methods (admin data, surveys, games, other), # of data collection rounds. If you are doing qualitative work, where will you find the information you need? Which archives, news sources, historical texts?</i>	I will use IMF information on aid dependence (all aid provided to governments as a share of government revenue) For strategy 1: I will use ICRG measures of corruption For strategy 2 I will generate new measures by sending requests to government offices seeking information on a service. For qualitative work I will seek to do telephone interviews with politicians and attempt to assess typical allocation of time to different types of tasks.
14. Heterogeneity [3-5 sentences] <i>Do you expect the treatment to work differently for certain individuals / groups / communities?</i>	I expect the effects to be stronger when donors also provide security to governments and not simply financial support.
15. IRB <i>Will you be working with human subjects, or with data that is personally identified?</i>	I will seek IRB approval both for strategy 2 and for my interviews.
Section 4: Analysis & Threats	
16. Analysis strategy [half page] <i>How will you draw conclusions from your evidence? How will you know if your theory is wrong?</i>	I will use regression analysis for strategies 1 and 2 and reject my hypothesis using a classical t-test and a cutoff of $p = 0.05$. I will reject the hypothesis if I fail to find qualitative evidence that politicians feel beholden to donor interests or that they feel less threatened by domestic political competition.
17. Threats to internal validity <i>(eg. attrition, spillovers and its channels, Hawthorn effects, John Henry effects)</i>	For all strategies I worry that countries and politicians are receiving aid because they are attendant to donor concerns and not the other way around. The instrumental variables strategy will help with this. In the interviews too I hope to get a sense of whether politicians incentives changed when more aid became available.
18. Threats to external validity <i>(eg scope conditions, representativeness of sample).</i>	For strategy 2 I worry that the inferences are limited by the types of services I can reasonably request at a distance.
19. Writing strategy <i>Provide a table of contents.</i>	Ch 1: Theoretical motivation ; literature discussion; include a small model to show two different possible effects of increased aid. [15 pages] Ch 2: Quantitative analysis 1 : Cross national analysis using IMF and ICRG data [15 pages] Ch 3: Quantitative analysis 2 : Describe strategy for collection of data on citizen requests; illustrate data; Report results based on aid levels [15 pages] Ch 4: Case studies / Qualitative analysis : Describe sample selection for case studies. Describe interview procedures. Summarize evidence gathered that supports or goes against the hypothesis. [15 pages] Ch 5: Conclusions / Discussion [10 pages]
Section 5: Packaging	
20. Marketing strategy <i>How will you present your results to general readers? Describe any creative dissemination strategies.</i>	Small video showing graphics and figures with voice over explaining key findings. Include some audio fragments from interviews