

Time: We have two available class times: Mon 8- 10 and Tues 8 – 10 you should be able to make one of these

Prof. Macartan Humphreys
International Affairs, Room 812
mh2245@columbia.edu
Office Hours by Appointment

Preceptor:
Elena Barham
efb2130@columbia.edu
Office hours: TBD.

Locations: Virtual

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** Wednesday **31 March, 2021**. 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 16 April but this should vary only superficially (formatting, spelling etc).

Also note:

- Friday **April 16**. You will present your thesis to faculty and peers in a public (likely Zoom, though TBD) seminar

FULL SCHEDULE

14 Sept	First class – outline and 3-4 minute presentation of all projects. <i>Please plan a first description of your project! Prepare a one or two slide presentation.</i>
15 & 16 Sept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sign up for individual meetings with Macartan and Elena
21 Sept	Research design. <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 1-3. 2. Blair et al. Declaring and diagnosing research designs: https://declaredesign.org/declare.pdf
22 Sept	Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. <i>Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research</i>. Princeton University Press, 1994. Chapter 1. 4. Dunning, Thad. 2008. Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>. 61: 2, 282- 293. 5. Green and Gerber. Experiments Chapters 1 and 2. 6. Humphreys, Macartan, and Alan Jacobs. "<u>Mixing Methods</u>"
16 Sept– 28 Sept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read two past theses. [See dropbox] Work on design forms.
28 Sept	Big Group Discussion of Past Theses 1 [Attend at least one of 28 or 29 Sept]
29 Sept	Big Group Discussion of Past Theses 2
5 October	Review: Getting going in R and Stata (led by Elena) [Attend at least one of 5/6 Oct]
6 October	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
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/ux6zfhvtfq48skv6
Nov 6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post revised outlines to dropbox
Nov 25	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in first draft of your central chapter (core argument; core analysis).
Jan 22	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in second draft of your main chapter plus first draft of 2 nd substantive chapter
Feb 19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn in second draft of 2 nd substantive chapter plus 3 rd chapter / draft intros & conclusion
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 16	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

In addition you will be assigned to small group sessions every 2 – 3 which will meet every 2 to 3 weeks after 6 October and are expected to present your work and give comments to others.

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. Elena 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.