

**Honors Seminar
Judith Kelley
Spring and Fall 2008**

The purpose of the honors seminar is to help you write an honors thesis by giving you:

1. knowledge about how to design and conduct academic research
2. a forum for presenting your ideas and work
3. a set of assignments and deadlines to help move your work along
4. feedback from a professor other than your advisor

Honors projects may take one of two forms:

“Honors projects involve extended scholarly inquiry into a policy area or question. Some projects produce essays that resemble journal articles in the disciplines spanned by public policy research. Others produce research monographs that require students to use the skills and perspectives taught in the public policy major -- economics, ethics, political analysis, statistics, decision analysis, and historical analysis -- to delineate the dimensions of a policy problem, identify alternative policy options, and analyze their strengths and weaknesses. These projects are akin to the scholarly research published by the Brookings Institution or American Enterprise Institute.”

(<http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/undergraduate/forms/honors.pdf>)

Regardless of which form a student chooses, the expectation is a systematic analysis that is based on evidence and sound argument rather than opinion.

A standard academic research project is concerned with understanding the relationship between underlying variables. Do federal programs for single parents improve infant health? Do sanctions lead to changes in state behavior? Traditional academic research may explore such questions across large number of cases or it may examine single or a few cases in depth. It may also take an existing theory and test its ability to explain a given case. Alternatively the researcher may start with a puzzle (i.e.: why did Hitler invade Denmark? Why did President Clinton push for healthcare reform?) and seek to establish what factors were more important and thus what theories seem to have the greatest explanatory power. Another possibility for a standard academic research project (though less common for honors projects) is to develop new theories about the world. One may have ideas about the role of non-state actors in global affairs and conduct a case study of a particular organization specifically with the goal of developing theories about how such actors work. These possibilities are not exhaustive, but they suggest the general type of projects.

Projects that are more akin to Brookings or AEI work are equally rigorous to standard scientific research. Identifying and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of policy options requires a thorough examination of cause and effect. Policy options may appear to have had certain effects, but this is not evidence that they actually caused the observed

outcomes. One therefore cannot recommend a policy option without solid evidence of the causal relationships. Applying decision analysis or cost benefit analysis requires assessment of probabilities of certain effects and therefore also demands attention to collecting and analyzing data. A project that is assessing ethical questions of certain policies or actions cannot be separated from practical consequences and therefore in addition to sound moral argument it also demands rigorous evidence-based research. Historical or economic analysis likewise must be systematic to yield any valid inference. Again, these possibilities are not exhaustive, but they suggest the general type of projects.

Advisors

Your advisor plays a key role in helping you with your topic. You should meet with your advisor when needed, but you should always come well prepared and with a specific agenda. Do not expect your advisor to do your work for you. In preparation for meetings, email your advisor materials and questions you wish to discuss. You need to be the one taking initiative. Your advisor is there to steer your project, not to be its engine. That said, during the spring semester you should talk to your advisor at important points in the development of your honors project:

- Definition of the topic
- Development of your question
- Derivation of observable implications
- Development of the research strategy
- Revised prospectus
- Detailed discussion of appropriate methodology(ies)
- Identification of sources for the research
- Outline of the research project

During the fall semester your primary advisor becomes your main source of input for your thesis and you should take frequent initiative to communicate with your advisor.

Computers

You are allowed to use the computer labs in rooms 07 and 09 for research on this project. Students working on their honors theses will be assigned passwords providing them access to the Institute's network. You will need to see Stan Paskoff to complete the necessary paperwork.

Human Subjects

If you are going to involve people in your research, you are required to consult with your advisor about whether you need approval from Duke University to engage with human subjects. You can read more at <http://www.ors.duke.edu/irb/index.html>. Information for undergrads is at <http://www.ors.duke.edu/irb/forms/index.html#international>.

Plagiarism

Your work must be original. Duke's website on plagiarism states that you may be charged with plagiarism if you do any of the following:

- Copying, quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing from any source without adequate documentation
- Purchasing a pre-written paper (either by mail or electronically)
- Letting someone else write a paper for you
- Paying someone else to write a paper for you
- Submitting as your own someone else's unpublished work, either with or without permission

To learn more, see <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/>.

Grades and continuation requirements

A student who completes the class successfully will be designated a PPS Honors Program Scholar and will receive a continuation grade (Z) for PPS 198 (one credit) and then enroll in PPS 199 (one credit—permission only) for the fall semester. You will be required to turn in all intermediate assignments, including a full draft of your thesis. At the end of the fall semester you will also make an oral presentation of your thesis. A final grade for both courses (PPS 198 and 199) and the thesis will be provided in December.

The thesis will be read by the advisor and the honors seminar director, who may also ask for an additional reader. The honors seminar director makes the final determination of the thesis grade. A student who earns an A- on the thesis and has completed the subset of core courses (i.e., PPS 55, 114, 116, and 128/substitute) and maintained at least a 3.40 average in these classes will graduate with distinction in PPS. Those who meet the grade cutoff and earn an A (or in very rare occasions an A+) on the thesis will graduate with highest distinction in public policy.

A grade of A- indicates that the student has met all the expectations of the department regarding the quality of an honors thesis. The thesis makes an intellectual contribution to the relevant area of study. It displays independent work that engage primary data and resources. The thesis is professionally written with proper style and references.

A grade of A indicates that the student has exceeded the expectations of the department as described above by displaying extraordinary effort, passion, initiative and creativity in engaging the subject and has produced an outstanding final thesis that can be transformed into a publication without much further work.

Research Funding

All students who complete the spring class successfully are designated a PPS Honors Program Scholar and are eligible for reimbursement of research expenses of up to \$500. In addition, PPS Honors Program Scholars are encouraged to compete for departmental research funding. The PPS department will have a competition in Feb/early March for summer research funding. These grants provide a \$2500 stipend for the summer. If students have already done their PPS internship, or if they get a PPS internship related to research, this is something they can compete for.

Travel

On Duke sponsored programs, Undergrads can travel to any place not on the Advisory List but must register with the Duke Travel Registry. They will be covered under the Duke international travel insurance that provides emergency assistance or evacuation only. Travel to places on the Advisory List require a request for an exemption.

Readings

We will have a number of readings to help you through your thesis. I may add readings as we progress. Most of our readings are under e-reserves. The *Van Evera* book is in the Duke Bookstore. The *Strunk* book is online and there is a link in the syllabus.

Assignments

All assignments are underlined in the syllabus on their due date. If you anticipate problems in meeting deadlines you need to submit a note of explanation signed by your advisor.

Syllabus

RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND READING:

LIPSON, CHARLES. 2005. HOW TO WRITE A BA THESIS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FROM YOUR FIRST IDEAS TO YOUR FINISHED PAPER, CHICAGO GUIDES TO WRITING, EDITING, AND PUBLISHING. CHICAGO UNIVERSITY PRESS.

SPRING 2008:

PREPARING YOUR RESEARCH

Week 1 (January 11): Understanding the difference between evidence and opinion

Reasons and Evidence, *Williams and Colomb*, pages 95-112.

How do we know what's true? *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 2-16.

Week 2 (January 18): One page background note due (explain the background/context of your topic and what your research idea is)

This week will focus on formulating your research question so that it can actually be answered. We will continue to discuss the readings from week 1. We will also talk about “observable implications,” and discuss how each student can develop them. We will discuss how to figure out what claims underlie your question and what evidence would support or undermine your underlying claims

Developing research questions, *Punch*, pages 35-41.

Using the Scientific Method in political science, *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 18-41.

The science in social science, *KKV*, pages 3-12.

Strong versus Weak tests: predictions and tests. *Van Evera*, 30-40.

Arguments about Causes, *Williams and Colomb*, pages 199-224.

Assessing relationships: Association or Causality, *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 125-130.

Sample research: *Kelley*, *Assessing the complex evolution of norms.* (to be distributed)

Week 3 (January 25): Research question and observable implications due.
Searching for relevant literature and writing a useful literature review (in lab)

Conducting a Literature review, *Johnson*, 131-135.

Week 4 (February 1): Literature review due.
Writing the proposal, including a work plan

Proposals, *Punch*, 262-268.

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, "*The Elements of Style*." You can find this book online at <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.

Improving Data Quality- *KKV* pp. 23-27

Descriptive Inference - *KKV* pp. 35-50

Past honors proposals (to be distributed)

Week 5 (February 8): Draft Proposal due.

Week 6 (February 15):

***Weds Thurs this week: Three-way meetings between advisor, student and honors thesis seminar director

Friday: Guest appearance by students from last years honors program. Three students will present their papers and we will then have a panel discussion during which you can ask questions about how they dealt with the topics we have discussed so far.

STARTING YOUR EMPIRICAL WORK

Week 7 (February 22):

Techniques:

Recording analysis and data throughout

Conducting content analysis

Conducting case studies

Getting and conducting interviews

Media messages: content analysis, *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 264-271.

What are case studies? How should they be performed. *Van Evera*, pages, 49-88.

Document analysis: Using the written record. *Johnson*, pages 206-237.

Elite Interviewing and Survey research. *Johnson*, 271-275.
Case Studies, *Punch*, pages 142-148.
The Interview, *Punch*, pages 168-178.

Week 8 (February 29):

Searching for existing data and finding primary resources. Session with our public policy librarian Catherine Shreve (in lab, day and time to be confirmed) (may be tailored to smaller groups, i.e. domestic versus international projects).

Week 9 (March 7): preliminary list of primary resources due.

ENDNOTE presentation by Carson Halloway from Perkins.

We will discuss citations, plagiarism and how to respect the ideas of others.

March 14 Spring Break

March 21: Revised proposal due.

After handing in your proposal you must meet with your advisor to get their signature on the proposal approval form (posted under "Course Documents") which you must turn in by March 28.

March 28: Due: Proposal approval form.

Human Subjects office visit by Holly Stafford. Also, for anyone travelling we will discuss travel registration (see above).

April 4: Individual meetings. If need be we will do three-way meetings again this week.

Partially filled in outline of thesis due. Time line for work due.

April 11: First draft chapter due to your advisor for comments. Consult in advance with your advisor and seminar director to determine what you should submit as this will be tailored to your individual plan, but for most students this will be the combination "theoretical framework and methodology" chapter.

April 18: First draft chapter due to ME.

We will have a celebration this week- either at my house or at a different venue.

April 25: Meet a final time with your advisor and me to discuss your "Progress report and revised plan of work for remaining time" which is due then to me this week.

FALL 2008:

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Week 1:

Wednesday August 29: Individual meetings with Prof. Kelley

Week 2:

Friday September 7. 3 pm in Sanford 102: Group meeting

Share time! If you did summer research, tell us about it! Bring pix if you have any and let me know if you need AV equipment.

Due to advisor and professor Kelley: Follow up memo from meeting with prof Kelley. What are the challenges for you now and how may you meet them. Detail: work done and data still needed. Chapters written. Revised outline of thesis. If you are encountering a fundamental problem with the research design, write about it. If you need help, write about what your problems are.

Week 3:

Monday September 10, Tuesday Sept 11 and Weds Sept 12: Individual three-way meetings with your advisor and Prof. Kelley. These will be 45 min - 1 hour long meetings. We will use your memo as your starting point and draw up a plan of action for you.

Week 4-->:

working working working....

Friday Sept 21: Draft of methods/research design chapter due. If this was the chapter to you submitted in April, please choose a differnt chapter to submit now along with a revised methods/research chapter. Thus, by now we should have DRAFTS of two chapters.

Friday Oct 19, 3 pm in Sanford 102:

Writing and organizing the thesis

Getting rid of the scaffolding: Deciding about what needs to go into the thesis (or: how to throw really good stuff in the bin if it is not really relevant!)

Creating Effective Graphs and Visual representation of Findings, *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 424-429.
Creating effective Tables, *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 420-421.
Organizing and presentation of the elements of a research report, *Hyde and Carlson*, pages 410-416.
How to write a paper. *Van Evera*, appendix.

Weds October 24, noon: poster session/panel for interested undergrads

Monday November 19, 9 am: Draft paper due to Prof. Kelley and your advisor

Friday November 30, 2:50 -5:20 pm: Presentations of your theses (guests can be invited)

Friday December 7, 2:50 -5:20 pm: Presentations of your theses (guests can be invited)

Tuesday December 11, 9 am: Final paper due to Prof. Kelley and your advisor

References

- Carlson, James M. and Mark S. Hyde. *Doing Empirical Political Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. *Political Science Research Methods*. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (KKV). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Punch, Keith F. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications, 2005.
- Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, "*The Elements of Style*."
- Williams, Joseph M. and Gregory G. Colomb. *The Craft of Argument*. 3d ed. New York: Longman, 2006.