

PSCI 4718: HONORS THESIS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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University of Colorado at Boulder
Fall 2010
M 3:30PM – 6:00PM
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to assist students in writing a senior honors thesis in political science. During the early stages of the course, we will explore the epistemological foundations of social science research, common forms of such research, and its applicability to wide-ranging topics. The key task of the course is to create an opportunity in which students can develop ideas into a well-articulated, defensible thesis. The format of the course will be akin to a graduate seminar. That is, there will be some lecture, especially in the first few weeks of the course, but mostly there will be guided classroom discussions (involving ample peer feedback) of components of students' honors theses.

Students should read and understand the requirements for graduating with Latin Honors by visiting the CU honors website at www.colorado.edu/honors. The requirements and deadlines listed on this website are absolute. Failure to abide by these requirements and deadlines will preclude graduating with honors, regardless of the amount of effort put into the thesis. Also, taking and passing this class does not guarantee graduation with honors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

In order to keep students on schedule for successful completion of their theses, students must complete a few writing and presentation assignments. My evaluations of these assignments, along with in-class participation, will serve as the grade for this course. A copy of all of these written assignments should be shared with and commented on by the advisor. All written work should be submitted electronically as a *single* .doc Word file through CULearn, and I will return all assignments with extensive constructive criticisms (also through CULearn). DO NOT TURN IN MATERIALS AFTER DEADLINES. Late papers will have 10 percentage points subtracted from the grade. Should a student miss more than one deadline, s/he will be required to drop this course altogether.

- 1) **Participation**: participation in class discussions of the readings as well as peers' research topics is very much expected. (10%)
- 2) **Presentation**: students will make a 25-minute presentation toward the end of the semester. The quality of this presentation will be graded. (10%)
- 3) **Research Statement**: students will submit a 5-6 page statement of the topic and proposed research plan. This should offer a fairly detailed hypothesis that will be tested and some indication of the evidence that will be gathered. (10%)
- 4) **Literature Review**: students will submit a 5-7 page introduction and review and critique of the relevant literature with a clear understanding of where their research question fits into previous work on the subject. (20%)
- 5) **Draft**: students will submit a 15-20 page draft of the honors thesis. This should contain all the elements of the eventual finished study, including a rudimentary version of the main argument/insight and a presentation of some of the evidence. (50%)

Final grades for this Fall course will be determined using the following percentage scale: A=94-100, A-=90-94, B+=87-90, B=84-87, B-=80-84, C+=77-80, C=74-77, C-=70-74, D+=67-70, D=64-67, D-=60-64, F=<60.

READING REQUIREMENTS

There are some required readings we will be doing in the first few weeks of class. One of these is a book available at the CU bookstore. Other required readings will be articles made available through CULearn. Another book, recommended but not required, is also for sale at the CU bookstore.

- Shively, W. Phillips (2011). *The Craft of Political Research, Eighth Edition*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall. (required)
- Pollock III, Philip H. (2006). *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. (recommended)

HONORS REQUIREMENTS

Ultimately, the three requirements for graduation with honors are (A) write and submit a thesis that meets the professional standards established by your defense committee, (B) orally defend your thesis before this committee, and (C) complete these tasks and submit all other paperwork on time.

A. Professional Standards. These will become clearer as students get feedback from myself and their advisors. One among many requirements, however, is that theses must involve original data analysis and/or collection. Because students are seeking to graduate with an honors degree in political science, their theses must go beyond “library research” of published material—that is, beyond a mere repackaging of secondary sources. At least one of the following examples of original data collection and/or analysis would fulfill this requirement:

1. Secondary analysis of existing quantitative datasets
2. Collection and analysis of unpublished documents gathered from archives, organizations, or individuals.
3. Systematic collection of data from the internet or other electronic sources.
4. Interviews with masses or elites.
5. Participant observation.
6. Other unforeseen possibilities that students can have approved by myself and their advisor.

IF A STUDENT IS GOING TO COLLECT ORIGINAL DATA FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS, HER/HIS RESEARCH PROPOSAL MUST BE APPROVED PRIOR TO DATA COLLECTION BY CU'S INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB). FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

<http://www.colorado.edu/VCRsearch/integrity/humanresearch/>

B. Oral Defense Committee. A defense committee consists of three people: political science's honors council representative (that is, myself), the student's advisor, and one professor from outside the political science department. (In other words, each student has a different defense committee.)

Students are required to pick an advisor early in the fall semester. It is important that this individual be deeply involved in the project every step of the way. Advisors should be part of the process of formulating (1) the research question, (2) decisions about evidence, (3) the review and understanding of the literature, and (4) the choice of an oral defense committee. The advisor will read and comment on the various thesis components and drafts. Students should choose an individual who is willing and able to do all of these things throughout the year (e.g., avoid people who are going on leave or who are not responsive to you). Students must arrange a schedule of regular (about once a month) meetings with their advisor. *IT IS STUDENTS RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE THESE CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEIR ADVISORS.* Ignoring or avoiding one's advisor is a recipe for disaster.

The oral defense committee recommends to the Honors Council the student's level of Latin Honors, if any (of which more below).

C. Deadlines

1. Class Deadlines

September 13	Selection of faculty advisor and informal presentation
October 8	Submit <i>Research Statement</i>
November 5	Submit <i>Literature Review</i>
November 8, 15, or 29	In-class presentations of <i>Draft Draft</i>
December 6	Submit <i>Draft</i>

2. Honors College Deadlines

December 2	<i>Attached application due.</i> (Application due from students planning to graduate with Departmental and/or General Honors in Spring 2010. The thesis application must have <i>all the required signatures</i> and be submitted to THE Honors Program Office in Norlin Library, Room M400M.)
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- January 27, 3:30** *Informational meeting.* (Optional meeting for all Spring 2011 candidates graduating with Honors in the Honors Program Office located in Norlin Library, Room M400M.)
- April 5, 4PM** *Last day to submit defense copy.* (Defense copy, stapled or clipped - does not have to be bound, of the Senior Thesis for Spring 2011 candidates is due in the Honors Program Office, Norlin M400M by 4:00 p.m. Candidates are responsible for distributing the defense copy of their thesis to members of their thesis defense committee. This is the version used to determine your level of Latin honors. **NOTE THAT YOUR COMMITTEE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY REQUIRE AN EARLIER DEADLINE!!!!**)
- April 6** *Last day to defend.* (Students can, and indeed most will, defend prior to this date. Rooms are scheduled and arranged by students with the political science department.)
- April 12, noon** *File archival copy.* (The archival copy of the Senior Thesis for Spring 2011 candidates is due in the Honors Program Office by 12:00 Noon. The thesis must be Velo bound. Note that the UMC Copy Center does Velo binding for a small fee. No spiral binding. The cover page of the thesis must include the following: date, student name, department, thesis title, and the committee members and their department. Specify which committee member was the thesis advisor. **THE ARCHIVAL COPY MAY INCORPORATE CHANGES RESULTING FROM THE THESIS DEFENSE BUT THESE CHANGES WILL NOT BEAR ON THE LEVEL OF HONORS ACHIEVED.**)

SCHEDULE

August 23	<u>Course Introduction</u>
August 30	<u>Understanding Social Science</u> Required reading: Shively [Chapters 1-7]
September 6	<u>No class</u> Labor Day
September 13	<u>Understanding Social Science, continued</u> <u>Informal presentations</u> Deadline: Selection of faculty advisor and informal presentation of research question and evidence to be collected
September 20	<u>Informal presentations, continued</u>
September 27	<u>Quantitative Data and Statistics</u> Required reading: Shively [Chapters 8-10]
October 4	<u>Quantitative Data and Statistics, continued</u> Required reading: Quantitative articles (TBA) Recommended reading: Pollock Deadline on October 8, 1PM: Submit <i>Research Statement</i> to CUlearn and advisor.
October 11	<u>Quantitative Data and Statistics, continued</u> <u>Discussion of <i>Research Statements</i></u> Required Reading: <i>Research Statements</i> of your fellow group members Recommended reading: Pollock
October 18	<u>Qualitative Data and how to Write a Literature Review</u> Required Reading: Qualitative articles (TBA)
October 25	<u>Question and Answer Session</u> Professor Baker will take whatever questions students have
November 1	<u>Question and Answer session</u> Deadline on November 5, 1PM: Submit <i>Literature Reviews</i> to CUlearn and advisor

November 8	<u>Presentation of <i>Draft Drafts</i></u> 1/3 of students will make 15-minute (plus 10-minute Q&A) PowerPoint presentations
November 15	<u>Presentation of <i>Draft Drafts</i></u> 1/3 of students will make 15-minute (plus 10-minute Q&A) PowerPoint presentations
November 22	<u>No class</u> Thanksgiving
November 29	<u>Presentation of <i>Draft Drafts</i></u> 1/3 of students will make 15-minute (plus 10-minute Q&A) PowerPoint presentations Deadline on December 2: Application due to Honors Program Office, Norlin M400M
December 6	<u>No class</u> Deadline on December 6, 5PM: Submit <i>Drafts</i> to CULearn, turnitin.com , and advisor.

LATIN HONORS STANDARDS FOR PSCI

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

A degree awarded **summa cum laude** should represent outstanding work. To that end, PSCI requires the following standards:

1. The student should maintain a very high GPA (3.8 or higher) **AND**
2. The thesis must break new ground in the field; it must say something original that goes beyond the existing literature. This may or may not mean it is publishable, but this should be, with revisions, a possibility **AND**
3. In the oral defense, the student should be able to defend the work, understand and accept critiques and suggestions, and interact on a collegial level. The oral defense should also demonstrate knowledge of the subject beyond what is in the thesis itself **AND**
4. The thesis must be extremely well written, well organized, and well argued.

MAGNA CUM LAUDE

A **magna cum laude** designation should be awarded for excellent work, defined as follows:

1. The student should maintain a high GPA (3.5 or higher) **AND**
2. The thesis must demonstrate mastery of the literature in the field and say something that adds to the literature **AND**
3. In the oral defense, the student should be able to defend the work and show a command of the subject matter raised in the thesis **AND**
4. The thesis must be very well written, well organized, and make a clear argument.

CUM LAUDE

A **cum laude** designation should be awarded for good work, defined in the following way:

1. The student should maintain a good GPA (3.3 or higher) **AND**
2. The thesis must be well argued, although not necessarily original **AND**
3. In the oral defense, the student should be able to defend at least some of her or his thesis arguments and have a command of substantial portions of the subject matter **AND**
4. The thesis must present a clear argument that is well-written and well organized.

HONORS WILL NOT BE RECOMMENDED IF THE CRITERIA FOR CUM LAUDE ARE NOT MET!!!

FAQs FROM THE HONORS PROGRAM WEBSITE

1. The application calls for a brief summary of my thesis, a timeline, and a bibliography. How complete do these have to be?

These sections are required so that your advisor can see that you've given your topic some thought. We recommend that the summary be as detailed as possible. This provides both you and your advisor clarity on the direction and goal of your thesis. We recommend that the schedule include when you intend to complete primary research, dates that drafts will be completed, and times that you can discuss these drafts with your advisor. Hopefully this process will help you develop realistic deadlines for yourself and time the workload more efficiently. The bibliography doesn't need to be complete, what we require are at least a few initial sources for your research.

2. Is it possible for me to look at some past theses in my department to see what sorts of things previous Honors graduates did?

Yes. The Honors Program office keeps all theses on file forever. Since many of the theses are in storage, it's best if you call ahead so that we can find a decent selection for you, but even if you just have time to drop by we can usually find a thesis or two for you to look at.

If you are looking for a specific thesis, we need to know what semester the student graduated and their name. If all you have is a range of possible dates and a title, we may be able to find the thesis, but be forewarned that it will take much longer. We will need at least a couple days' warning to find specific theses.

3. What are the advantages to doing a General Honors thesis over a Departmental Honors thesis and vice versa?

There is an important difference between General Honors and Departmental Honors thesis. The Departmental Honors thesis is designed to demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct original creative research within boundaries of the major discipline. General Honors research is designed to demonstrate the candidate's ability to either conduct research of a broad interdisciplinary nature or to allow the candidate to conduct cross-disciplinary research beyond the bounds of the major. Which one you decide to do is entirely up to you. Some people value the experience of making connections across disciplines, and some people prefer to demonstrate their command of a particular subject area. Which type of thesis will look better on a graduate school application is debatable. You can also elect to do both a General Honors thesis and a Departmental thesis, which would demonstrate your abilities in both areas.

4. Is it really worth it to do a thesis? Will the graduate schools I apply to care?

When the Honors Program did its self-study, we learned that the process of graduating with Honors at CU-Boulder is among the most intensive in the nation among peer institutes. The thesis is modeled directly after a Master's thesis, as is the defense. The schools you apply to may not be aware of the rigor of CU-Boulder's thesis, however, so we recommend that you have your thesis advisor write a letter of recommendation for you that describes the process.

5. When should I set up my Defense Committee?

The best option is to set up your committee as soon as you start working on your thesis, so that you can get ongoing input from your committee members as well as your advisor. Your committee members should be faculty members with an interest in or knowledge of your topic, and why waste such great resources? They may not be able to put in as much time as your main advisor, but hopefully will be able to give you some guidance.

Failing that, your defense committee should be set up at least three weeks before you are set to defend. You need to have time to set up and confirm with each member a specific time and date for your defense and you need to find out how much time they will require to review your thesis before the defense. Some committee members require a copy of the thesis as much as two weeks before the defense date. Don't expect them to read your thesis the night before or the morning of your defense.

6. Who needs to be on my defense committee?

You must have at least three faculty members on your committee. One of these people must be on the Honors Council, and one of them must be from outside your department. The person you choose as your Honors Council representative may also function as the outside member (if they are indeed from another department), but you still need at least three members on your committee. After you meet this requirement, you can have any additional members you want.

If you are working on a General Honors thesis, you must have at least one member of the General Honors faculty on your committee. If you do not have a specific person in mind, the Honors Program Director will assign someone to you. This person will also function as a co-advisor, whose main job will be to make sure you are doing a clearly interdisciplinary thesis.

7. How should I go about choosing people to be on my defense committee?

The best way to start is to contact any professors you have had that have an interest in your thesis subject area. You should also talk to your thesis advisor to see if they have anyone that they can recommend. If you are having trouble finding an appropriate/willing Honors Council representative, you can contact the Honors Program office.

8. Can I graduate with Honors in the summer?

Yes, you can BUT you must finish your thesis and defense according to the Spring deadlines. The Honors Council does not meet in the summer, so if you do not defend by the Spring deadlines, they will not be able to vote on your level of Honors until the following December. Remember, it is the Honors Council that decides your level of Honors, not your committee. If you do meet the Spring deadlines but decide to graduate in the summer, let the Honors Program office know so we can make sure that your Honors designation is properly noted on the summer graduation program.

9. If I turned in an application to graduate with Honors in the spring (fall) and find out that I am not graduating until the fall (spring), should I let the Honors Program office know?

Yes. Otherwise, your application to graduate with Honors will be placed in the Abandoned Theses file with all of the other people who just never came back. This will cause both you and the Honors Program office unnecessary stress and hassle when you mysteriously reappear the following semester.

10. What are the GPA requirements for graduating Cum Laude, Magna cum Laude, and Summa cum Laude?

All students should understand that grades do not singularly determine the levels of honors you are awarded. There are, however, guidelines as follows:

- Students with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.3 are qualified to be considered for Honors, Cum Laude (with honors)
- Students with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 are qualified to be considered for Honors, Magna cum Laude (with high honors)
- Students with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.8 are qualified to be considered for Honors, Summa cum Laude (highest honors)

While the above guidelines qualify you for consideration for a given level of honors, the level you earn is based on the quality of your thesis and thesis defense. Grades do not solely determine your level of honors. If warranted by the quality of the theses and thesis defense, a committee may recommend you for an honors designation one level higher than the guidelines suggest.

11. How long are Honors theses?

Anywhere between 10 and 150 pages long – it really varies that much. What is important is the content, not the length.

12. What role should my advisor play in my thesis project?

Your advisor should help you find focus for your thesis. Use them to make sure that you are staying focused on your topic, to strengthen weak areas of your thesis, and for general advice. They should be able to help you define your goals in writing an

Honors thesis and help you to achieve that goal. Are you writing this paper to publish your research, refine your skills, demonstrate your knowledge of a particular subject, or to more deeply study a topic or concept? Your advisor should help you determine how to achieve that goal.

13. Can I graduate with Honors without doing a thesis?

No, you can't graduate with Honors without a thesis. However, you may be able to graduate with Distinction, which is based on GPA. Check with the College of Arts and Sciences for more details.

14. How are designations decided?

There are several different steps to deciding the level of Honors (if any) a candidate will receive. The first step, of course, is maintaining a good GPA (generally 3.3 or better). The second step is writing a quality Honors thesis and doing an oral defense of your thesis. While you may turn in a final copy of your thesis, with corrections, to the Honors Program office after you defend, the copy of the thesis that the committee sees on your defense day is the copy on which they will base their recommendation. After you have done your oral defense, your committee makes its recommendation to the Honors Council. The Honors Council then considers each candidate individually (strongly considering the recommendation of the defense committee, although they may grant a different designation). The Honors Council, which is made up of representatives from each department that participates in the Honors Program (in other words, all departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, plus the School of Engineering and the School of Business). **Also see question 10.**

15. What do committees look for in the oral defense?

While each committee is different, things that are often commented upon are your ability to make connections between your thesis and situations posed by committee members and the thoroughness of your grasp of your topic. Your committee will want to see you demonstrate the sort of comfort level with your topic that comes from truly understanding the concepts you set forth in your thesis. Show them that you take your subject seriously, and that you learned something.

16. If I do a thesis, am I guaranteed to graduate with Honors?

Although this rarely happens, there are the occasional candidates who write their thesis, defend it, and still do not graduate with Honors. These candidates usually fall into one of two categories: students whose GPAs were really too low for them to get Honors anyway, but were encouraged to try for the learning experience of doing a thesis; and students who had the GPA but did poorly in their defense/thesis. The decision to do a thesis is a serious one, and the thesis must be of very high quality to warrant Honors.

17. I took some Honors classes at another school – can I use them to fulfill graduation with Honors requirements?

You cannot use Honors classes taken at another school to fulfill General Honors graduation requirements. Since you only have to take four different General Honors courses to fulfill the requirements, the burden shouldn't be too great. Your major department may allow you to use transfer credits to fulfill some of their requirements. Check with your department's Honors Council representative to find out.

18. What is the required format for the Honors thesis?

The Honors Program has the following requirements for the thesis format:

- The title page should include: title, name, date, thesis advisor, committee members (If a running title is used it must be limited to 50 characters)
- A separate, one-page abstract should be included
- The thesis needs to be velo bound (not spiral). This can be done at the UMC Copy Center

Because the College of Arts and Sciences covers many departments the Honors Program does not set any other specific requirements for the thesis format. You should check with your departmental Honors Council representative for departmental format requirements.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>

Disability Services' letters for students with disabilities indicate legally mandated reasonable accommodations. The syllabus statements and answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_reliq.html

CLASS BEHAVIOR

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>