

POL 880 RESEARCH SEMINAR IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Spring Quarter 2010
Department of Political Science
University of Cincinnati

Meeting time: Wednesdays 2-4:50 pm
Location: RIEVSCHL 615A
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Office Hours: MWF 11 am – 2 pm
or by appointment
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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

POL 880 is the last of the sequence of three graduate courses in the International Relations subfield. The course is designed to discuss a variety of research methods with focus on case studies and help students professionalize in the discipline and prepare them to advance their projects (MA theses and dissertations) and pursue an independent research agenda in the future. That is why the Research Seminar will be pursued primarily as individualized research that has four specific objectives:

- 1) Develop and present a working research proposal upon the completion of the seminar that can serve as a foundation of MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal, or stand-alone research article publishable in a peer-reviewed journal;
- 2) Familiarize with academic journals and learn the venues of peer-reviewed publications;
- 3) Develop skills to provide useful feedback and potentially serve as discussants or reviewers;
- 4) Engage in a research team working on a common project.

A note on seminar sequence (emailed to the students in September 2009):

POL 880 is the last of a three-course sequence (580-780-880) and even though the students are NOT required to complete the entire sequence to do well in these classes, the three courses share similar goals/objectives:

- 1) Familiarize with the IR literature – concepts, authors, theories, debates. Be able to compare and critically analyze and evaluate theories/approaches.
- 2) Develop skills for teaching, critical thinking and moderation in the field (i.e. be able to serve as a successful instructor, discussant or moderator).
- 3) Advance their own research agenda: develop a research design which you can turn into a dissertation proposal or a research article.
- 4) Professionalize within the discipline, including the sources and venues of IR literature (e.g. academic journals). Learn the path to successful publications; get to know the IR/CP field.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

<i>Seminar Requirements:</i>	<u>% of final grade</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Book Review for an Academic Journal	20%	Wks 3 thru 8

Individual project presentation	12%	Wks 7 thru 9
Designated (peer-reviewed) discussant/feedback	12%	Wks 7 thru 9
Final research/ research design paper	26%	June 11 @5pm
Research contribution/ assignment to the common theme of the seminar	20%	Wks 6 thru 10
Seminar participation and discussion	10%	throughout the quarter

First, the students in 880 will need to contact the academic journals that they surveyed in 780 and ask for books available for review (weeks 1-2). Once they receive the book they have several weeks to complete the review and submit it to the journal. Upon the completion of the review, they will need to submit a copy on Blackboard and make a brief (5-7 min) oral report in class. If you have problems contacting the academic journals or selecting a book for review, feel free to contact the instructor and discuss the issue with him.

Second, the students are required to work on a research topic of their own interest. This topic may result in an MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal, but it may also be a stand alone publishable research paper that could be presented at a major professional conference. We can discuss the path and venue for conference presentations separately. For this purpose, the students will need to make a brief report in class (weeks 2-3) about their topic and the progress that they have made so far. We also need to match topics with peer reviewers (or discussants) based on their academic interests. The seminar participants will need to make a 20-25 min presentation, followed by discussant's remarks and feedback from the rest of the class. Based on the recommendations, the presenters will submit a final version of their research paper/proposal during exam week (June 11 @ 5pm). Each of the three components – the presentation, the review/feedback and the paper itself will be evaluated separately (total 50% of the grade).

Third, the students enrolled in the seminar are expected to contribute to a common research project and complete individual or group assignments related to this project. The broader topic of the common research assignment is: *Explaining Change in International Relations – theoretical foundations, historical evidence and contemporary cases*. Additional information about the project and the individual assignments will be provided in weeks 4 and 6 when we will discuss the research efforts on this topic. I reserve the right to assign additional readings related to this project (20% of the overall grade).

Fourth, as a part of the seminar efforts we will focus on two classical readings about research in the social sciences – King, Keohane and Verba's (KKV) "Designing Social Inquiry" (1994) and George and Bennett's (G&B) "Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences" (2005). In the first half of the class we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the methods in IR and the quality of recommendations offered by KKV and G&B. Each student is expected to make **at least one** specific observation on the assigned readings in class during the discussion. The assigned readings and in-class participation make up 10% of the overall grade.

Finally, please note once again that this seminar is a part of a graduate sequence – this means that students should be familiar with the literature covered in 580 and 780 or certain assignments have been completed earlier (e.g. the journal database, etc). If you have problems or concerns

with this aspect of the course, please see the instructor.

ASSIGNED READINGS:

The following books are required for purchase:

- 1) Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, & Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press, 1994, ISBN: 978-1-4008-2121-1.
- 2) Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, MIT Press, 2005, ISBN: 978-0-57222-4.
- 3) Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in *Regarding Politics: essays on political theory, stability, and change*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1992); will be posted on Blackboard.
- 3) Other readings associated with the common seminar topic which will be assigned later.

WEEKLY SEMINAR SCHEDULE:¹

	Date	
Week 1	3/31	Introduction to the seminar King, Keohane & Verba, Chapters 1-4 (pp. 3-149)
Week 2	4/7	King, Keohane & Verba, Chapters 5-6 (pp. 150-230) George and Bennett, Part I (chapters 1-2, pp. 1-60) Research topic reports
Week 3	4/14	Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in <i>Regarding Politics: essays on political theory, stability, and change</i> , Berkeley: University of California Press (1992), 117-78. George and Bennett, Part II (chapters 3-6, pp. 65-124) Research Topic Reports
Week 4	4/21	Common project discussion -- Part I Common Project Assignments Book Review Reports
Week 5	4/28	George and Bennett, Part II (chapters 7-12, pp. 125-286) Book Review reports
Week 6	5/5	Common project discussion -- Part II Common project progress reports
Week 7	5/12	Three Student Presentations and Discussion
Week 8	5/19	Three Student Presentations and Discussion
Week 9	5/26	Three Student Presentations and Discussion
Week 10	6/2	Common Research Project: final remarks Seminar concluding notes

¹ This syllabus is subject to change. I reserve the right to add supplementary readings if necessary.