

# Political Science 490: Senior Thesis

Dickinson College, Spring 2020  
Monday 9:30-11:30, Denny Hall – Room 204

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## Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This course provides space for students to pursue research on a topic of their own choosing. In addition to writing a thesis no longer than 50 pages (not inclusive of notes, appendices, or bibliography) students will engage with one another in a scholarly research community providing regular feedback to one another. They will also discuss issues relating to writing and research processes.

Within the context of the thesis itself, students should:

- Articulate their own research question/puzzle/problem
- Engage with scholarly literature on their chosen topic
- Address and answer their question/puzzle/problem using a reasonable and well-articulated methodology
- Build and sustain a logical and coherent argument
- Situate their findings in the ongoing scholarly conversation about their topic

## Course Materials

There are no required texts for the course. Students might find it necessary to print a significant amount in this class, however, especially if they prefer to read articles and book chapters relevant to their own research in hard copy.

## Requirements and Grading

While the bulk of the grade in the course will be based on the final thesis, there are other graded elements in the class. We will engage in weekly goal-setting and accountability sessions. Additionally, students will be expected to submit regular drafts for peer review and to provide substantial written comments on their peers' work. Finally, everyone will present their work at a colloquium to be held in April. Due dates

and percentages of the final grade can be found in the table below and details each component of the grade can be found below the table.

Goal-Setting, Accountability Check-ins, and Attendance and Participation	15%	
Peer Review Drafts and Comments	25% (5 @ 5% each)	February 3 (pages) February 10 (peer review) February 17 (pages) February 24 (peer review) March 16 (pages) March 23 (peer review) March 30 (pages) April 6 (peer review) April 20 (pages) April 27 (peer review)
Presentation	10%	April 20
Final Draft	50%	May 4

*Goal-setting, accountability check-ins, and attendance and participation:*

Since we only meet once per week and the class is small, your attendance and participation is important. My hope is that you find each other sources of expertise, support, and camaraderie, so please plan to attend every course meeting. If you are sick, however, use your best judgment so as not to expose the rest of us to germs. As always, but especially this semester, it is important that you sleep, eat well, drink water, go outside, exercise, and do all the other things that keep you healthy!

*Peer Review Drafts and Comments:*

These are benchmarks to help ensure you are moving forward at a reasonable pace given the total amount of writing you are expected to do throughout the semester. At each draft deadline, you should expect to submit between 10-15 pages of writing. The exact nature of each of those pieces, however, is up to you. (In other words, the pages due on February 3 do not necessarily need to be (and probably should not be) the introduction to your thesis). Peer review comments will make up the bulk of the grade for this portion of the class; we will discuss peer reviewing in-depth during the early part of the course.

*Presentation:*

The Political Science Department wants to celebrate the good work you are doing by holding a Political Science Research Colloquium in April. The exact format of the colloquium is to be determined, but you are encouraged to invite friends and family members to the event. There will be food!

*Final Draft:*

This is the whole point! Your final draft should be no more than 50 pages (not inclusive of notes, appendices, and bibliography). The very best theses will be forwarded to all political science faculty members to be considered for departmental honors.

Academic Integrity

From Dickinson College’s Community Standards... “Respect for ideas – our own and others’ – is a hallmark of academic integrity. We show respect by acknowledging when we have used another’s words

or ideas in our work. We expect others to acknowledge when they use our ideas or words in their work” ([https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20273/dean\\_of\\_students/867/community\\_standards/2](https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20273/dean_of_students/867/community_standards/2)).

We will do quite a bit of collaborative work in this class, especially reading and responding to others’ drafts. That said, your work must be your own. When you use others’ ideas, you must cite them. If something is common knowledge it does not need to be cited, but it is always better to over-cite than to under-cite. Please do not hesitate to ask questions about this at any point throughout the semester.

### Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to [www.dickinson.edu/access](http://www.dickinson.edu/access), email [access@dickinson.edu](mailto:access@dickinson.edu), call (717)245-1734, or go to ADS in Room 005 of Old West, Lower Level (aka "the OWLL").

If you’ve already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can meet soon to review your Accommodation Letter and complete your Blue Forms. If you will need test proctoring from ADS, remember that you will need to provide them with at least one week's notice.

### Technology

This is not the kind of course where I expect you will need to take a lot of notes during class, so laptops will likely be unnecessary for most class discussions. However, we will sometimes use class time to have a Writing Workshop, where it might be helpful for you to have your laptops. All this is to say that I trust you to use technology in the classroom in a way that will not be distracting to you or to your classmates.

### Outline of the Course

- Week #1 (January 20)
  - Introductions and Discussion of Community
  - Share Proposals
  - Read Together (“Shitty First Drafts,” Bird by Bird)
  - Syllabus and Work Plan Document
  - IRB, Other Questions/Issues
  - Goals for next week
- Week #2 (January 27)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Talk about Example Theses
  - Read Together (“Using Sources,” Craft of Research)
- Week #3 (February 3)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Read Together (Strategies for and Examples of Peer Review)
  - Read Together (Selections on the Fifteen Minute Rule)

- Week #4 (February 10)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Discuss Peer Review
  - Read Together (“The IMRD Paper” and “Applying Theories to Cases,” Writing in Political Science)
- Week #5 (February 17)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Read Together (“The Idea of the Paragraph,” Writing Analytically)
  - Writing Workshop
- Week #6 (February 24)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Discuss Peer Review
  - Writing Workshop
- Week #7 (March 2)
  - Accountability Check-in, Including Revised Work Plan
  - Read Together (“Style is Meaning,” Writing in Political Science)
- Week #9 (March 16)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Talk about Citations (Excerpts from “Selecting and Citing Sources,” Writing in Political Science)
  - Writing Workshop
- Week #10 (March 23)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Discuss Peer Review
  - Read Together (Selections on Presentations)
- Week #11 (March 30)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Read Together (“Introductions and Conclusions Across the Curriculum,” Writing Analytically)
  - Writing Workshop
- Week #12 (April 6)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Discuss Peer Review
  - Writing Workshop
- Week #13 (April 13)
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Questions about Colloquium
  - Writing Workshop
- Week #14 (April 20)
  - Presentation Colloquium
- Week #15 (April 27)
  - Student Evaluations
  - Accountability Check-in
  - Discuss Peer Review
  - Last-Minute Questions