

ECON 475: Senior Tutorial
Rhodes College, Fall 2009

CRN 10295

Thursday 6:00-8:30 p.m.
105 Buckman Hall

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“Without comparisons to make,
the mind does not know how to proceed.”

Alexis de Tocqueville

I hear, and I forget;
I see, and I remember;
I **do**, and I **understand**.
-- Chinese proverb

This course is designed as a tutorial for students to write a high quality, senior-level thesis paper. The importance of this task (and your final paper) should not be underestimated. As such, the task of writing requires a great deal of critical thinking, creativity, tenacity, persistence, perseverance, and attention to detail. You will spend a great deal of time on this project throughout the semester. At times, the process may frustrate or discourage you. Other times, you may find yourself very disappointed with your work. Perhaps at some point, you might even come to the realization that you are so dissatisfied with your progress that it's time to tear up what you have and start over again.

Despite the potential pitfalls that may (and probably will) arise throughout the semester, the rewards for undertaking and successfully completing such a task are potentially tremendous. Ideally, your paper will reflect your four years of learning, thinking, and writing as an Economics-International Studies interdisciplinary major at Rhodes College. Writing the senior thesis paper will allow you to contemplate what you have learned hitherto, expand on this thinking, and produce a piece of original research. One advantage to you is that the interdisciplinary nature of the undertaking will enable you to take advantage of tools used you have acquired in coursework through both the Economics and International Studies Departments. In sum, this research will represent your creative, persistent, and interdisciplinary efforts throughout the process. While you will undoubtedly receive advice along the way from your student peers and your instructors, the finished product is yours. It will have your stamp on it. Essentially, this process and the resulting paper will represent the culmination of your interdisciplinary, undergraduate experience at Rhodes.

In completing this senior tutorial, and particularly in putting the paper together, you will have many important “research design” decisions to make along the way. First, the *subject/topic* of your paper is (almost) entirely up to you. (The “almost” refers to the fact that your topic is subject to approval.) Since you will be working on this project throughout the entire semester, you are encouraged to pick a topic of great interest to you and will sustain your interest over the course of the semester. Second, the *methodological approach* used in your paper is also (almost) entirely up to you. (The same “almost” caveat applies.) Thus, you'll be able to choose the methodological

approach that best suits your interests, skill-level and substantive topic. Your methodological approach might involve a single-case case study, a “small-*n*” case study, a “large-*n*” study, or something entirely different. Third, the “*data*” that you compile, examine, and use for drawing inferences and conclusions in your study may be qualitative, quantitative, or both. As you’ll soon see, depending on your topic, you’ll have several potential sources of data to consider, including primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, elite interviews or survey data that you collect yourself, or other types of data – of any type – that have been previously collected by others and made available to you. While these are just a small inkling of the types of decisions you will be asked to contemplate – and make – throughout this process, it should be noted that these decisions should be considered carefully. Again, the accumulation of such decisions will reflect a finished product that truly has your stamp on it.

Three Elements of the Senior Tutorial

This senior tutorial will require you to focus on three important aspects of your senior thesis. The first and most important aspect, of course, lies in the *process of conducting social science research* and utilizing the appropriate research techniques. These techniques involve identifying an interesting and relevant research puzzle, translating that puzzle into a suitable research question, constructing a feasible research design, and then actually collecting and evaluating the empirical evidence needed to write the paper. In essence, this tutorial will expose students to the methods of conducting social science research. While the process is methodical, deliberate, and time-consuming, the process itself is critical. Essentially, you will engage in the same process of conducting social science research used by professional social scientists. Ultimately, the objective is to learn by doing.

The actual *writing and presentation* of the finished product is the second critical aspect of your senior tutorial. Yes, in this case, the style counts (literally). While we hesitate to specify a specific length, the standard social science research paper generally runs about 35-40 pages. While this may seem arbitrary (and it probably is), this is the length that most social science journals require. We offer this to you as a guidepost, but above all you should be much more concerned with the quality of the paper.

The written presentation of your final paper will require you to maintain a consistency in style throughout the paper and necessitate careful attention to detail. Your paper should correspond to the Chicago Manual of Style, which is generally considered the standard for most refereed social science articles. Related style necessities include the use of page numbers (centered at the bottom of each page), a left justification of the text and appropriate section headings. Margins should be 1” on all sides, except the bottom, which should be 1.5”. A standard 11-point Times New Roman font is also preferred. A complete works cited section is a necessity and appropriate care should be given to the proper citation of references and quotations. We will provide detailed and specific style information later in the semester. At the same time, you are highly encouraged to acquire your own style guide if you do not already own one. One style guide to consider is *Instant Access: The Pocket Handbook for Writers* by Michael Keene and Katherine

Adams. This accessible style guide will be a handy reference not only for the writing of the senior paper, but also should be a trusted companion for any writer.

In addition to the written presentation, you will share the results of your research in an oral presentation to your peers. The oral presentation will enable you to articulate the content of your paper in a relatively limited time period. In doing so, you will be required to synthesize information and “think on your feet” as you respond to the inquiries of your peers. Specific guidelines to assist in the preparation of your oral presentation will be distributed at an appropriate time.

The third aspect of your senior tutorial experience entails the *interaction* that arises from working with your instructors and a small group of your peers. We will provide guidance on the process of conducting social research during class and through individual meetings. Given the format of the ECON 475 tutorial, students will meet *collectively* with Professor Ceccoli on Thursday evenings in seminar-style. Students will also meet individually with Professor Beckham Gramm on a weekly basis in her office. Both Professor Ceccoli and Professor Beckham Gramm will provide a regular evaluation of your written work and feedback on your progress as necessary. In short, we will attempt to collectively steer you through this process. (Keep in mind, however, that you as the author bear the ultimate responsibility.) You will also be sharing your ideas with your colleagues throughout the semester and there will be times when you will be asked to provide constructive feedback on the work of your peers. It is our expectation that this interaction will provide a mutually beneficial learning experience. The culmination of this interaction will take place during the final class periods when you make an oral presentation of your research.

Due to the weekly class schedule, your attendance and participation at every meeting (both collectively and individually) is required. Since the research process is methodical, a missed class or individual office appointment will likely set you back considerably, and possibly irrecoverably. If you are going to miss a class meeting for a reason beyond your control, please notify Professor Ceccoli in advance of the scheduled class meeting so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. The same is expected for individual sessions with Professor Beckham Gramm.

Course Readings

The assigned reading material will play a prominent role in accompanying you to complete the research process this semester. It is very important that you keep up with the reading assignments throughout the semester. The one required text for the course, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2nd ed., is available in the campus bookstore. This text provides a useful introduction to the process of conducting social science research. We will read and discuss parts of this text as a class. Other parts of the text will serve as useful reference points for students depending on the nature of the individual project. In addition to the required text, other readings have been placed on a two-hour reserve at the circulation desk of the Paul Barret Library. Finally, please see either one of us if you are interested in other supplementary materials or if you are having difficulty keeping up

with the reading. We likely have a number of supplemental sources that may be of great assistance to you throughout this research process.

Required Text

- Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland Lutz, Wyn Grant, and Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Second Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Grading

As mentioned, your work in this tutorial will be methodical in nature. You will be required to submit written work on a regular basis and it is very important that such work is submitted in a timely fashion. The failure to do so will have an adverse impact on your grade for the course, and potentially jeopardize the entire endeavor. Specifically, the individual component (of your paper) and the corresponding due dates are listed on the schedule on the following page. **Individual assignments should be completed and placed in the box outside Professor Ceccoli's office door by 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday prior to the due date.** (This will give us a chance to review your work prior to class if necessary.) **When noted, the same materials should be also placed in the box outside Professor Beckham Gramm's office.** Failure to submit the appropriate material on time will result in a 2% reduction of your final course grade for each late or missed assignment. Failure to submit a completed first or second draft on the scheduled dates (November 11th and November 24th) will each result in a 5% reduction of your final course grade.

A single hard copy of the final version of your paper will be due on Friday, December 11th at 5:00p.m. At the same time, an identical electronic version of your paper is to be submitted to both Professor Beckham Gramm and Professor Ceccoli's inboxes on the College fileserver located at:

\\Fileserver1\acad_dept_pgm\Econ_Bus\Beckham_Teresa\InBox
\\fileserver1\Acad_Dept_Pgm\Intl_Stu\Ceccoli_Stephen\InBox

Due to the timing of the end of the semester, late papers will not be accepted.

Extensions will not be granted and the failure to submit a paper on December 11th will result in a failing grade for the course. Your completed paper will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of your original research, the clarity of its presentation, the progress demonstrated at each iteration, and our interpretation of your effort throughout the process.

Your final grade for this tutorial will be determined as follows:

- Prof. Ceccoli's Evaluation of Paper: 30%
- Prof. Beckham Gramm's Evaluation of Paper: 30%
- Attendance and Class Participation: 10%
- Preparedness and Participation in Individual Sessions: 10%
- Prof. Ceccoli's Evaluation of Presentation: 10%
- Prof. Beckham Gramm's Evaluation of Presentation: 10%

Feel free to contact either Professor Ceccoli or Beckham Gramm at any time if you have questions or would like to discuss particular issues or strategies.

Course Schedule*

* Note: Individual, weekly meeting sessions with Professor Beckham Gramm should be scheduled directly with Professor Beckham Gramm.

Aug. 27	Course Introduction; View Part I of <i>All the President's Men</i>
Sept. 3	The research process; Elements of a research paper; View Part II of <i>AtPM</i> Burnham, et. al. – Skim Introduction & Chapter 1 Burnham, et. al. – Read pp. 19-30 and Chapter 2 First-cut, Thought Piece Due
Sept. 10	Variables and relationships; Formulating hypotheses Burnham, et. al. – Read Chapter 3 Preliminary Topic Selection and Potential Research Question(s) Due
Sept. 17	Developing a theory / Adapting a theoretical framework D. Studlar – Theories of Tobacco-Control Policy Across Time and Space P. Pierson – Path Dependence, Increasing Returns, and the Study of Politics
Sept. 24	Discussion of library reserve articles C. Hemmer and P. Katzenstein – Why is There No NATO in Asia? D. Drezner – Ideas, Bureaucratic Politics, and the Crafting of Foreign Policy Hypotheses Due
Oct. 1	Gathering data Burnham, et. al. – pp. 187-200, 259-264 (Content Analysis) Burnham, et. al. – pp. 231-245 (Interviewing) Burnham, et. al. – pp. 96-128 (Survey Analysis) (Note: students will be assigned to read/discuss one of the above selections) Preliminary Bibliography, Revised Research Question, & Hypotheses Due
Oct. 8	Making Inferences; Analysis of Data; Testing hypotheses Burnham, et. al. – Chapters 5 & 6 Research Design Due; Preliminary Literature Review Due
Oct. 15	Discussion of research design; Discussion of library reserve articles C. Rudolph – Security and the Political Economy of Int'l Migration M. Baum – Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public Introduction Paragraph and Theory Section Due
Oct. 22	Discussion of evidence; practice talks
Oct. 29	No class meeting; Individual appointments during week if necessary Evidence Section Due

Nov. 5	Discussion of preliminary conclusions; progress and problems Bibliography Due Submission of Tables, Graphs, Charts, etc. Due (If applicable)
Nov. 12	Discussion of first drafts; Presenting social science research First Draft Due
Nov. 19	Class presentations
Nov. 24 TBA	Class presentations Second Draft Due Nov. 24
Dec. 3	Class presentations
Dec. 11	Final Paper Due at 5:00 p.m. (in both hard copy and electronic format as specified above)