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INTS 475-02, Senior Seminar, Fall 2009

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**Senior Seminar
INTS 475-2 CRN 10332**

Rhodes College, Fall 2009

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What do political scientists call a bunch of anecdotes? Data.
– Unknown critic who never took senior seminar.

Course Description

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. Our objective is for you to prepare a journal quality paper, as well as an academic conference quality oral presentation.

Despite the 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 International Studies (or International Studies-related 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. This research will represent your creative and persistent efforts throughout the process. While you will undoubtedly receive advice along the way from your student peers and your instructor(s), 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 undergraduate experience at Rhodes.

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. Your paper should be at least 30 pages, and no more than 40. While this may seem arbitrary (and it probably is), this is the length that most social science journals require. I 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 12-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. Please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* <http://www.libs.uga.edu/ref/chicago.html> for guidelines on footnote and bibliography styles – please use footnotes as per the “documentary-note” style (make sure to include page numbers in each footnote) and use only this style consistently throughout your paper.

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 instructor and a small group of your peers. I will provide guidance on the process of conducting social research during class and through individual meetings. I will also provide a regular evaluation of your written work and feedback on your progress as necessary. In short, I will attempt to 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 my 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.

We will meet collectively on a weekly basis. Due to the weekly class schedule, your attendance and participation at every meeting is required. Since the research process is methodical, a missed class 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 me in advance of the scheduled class meeting so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Required Texts:

None. All readings will be available via JSTOR or in my faculty public folder, 1 week prior to that reading's assignment. Please note that although the assigned reading load for this course is light, you should budget time *every week* for the large amount of outside reading needed to write a solid paper.

Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation --	10%
Miscellaneous Assignments –	20%
Oral Presentation --	20%
Research Paper --	50%

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 components of your paper and the corresponding due dates are listed on the schedule on the following page. Late assignments will suffer a penalty of 10%, and assignments turned in more than 3 days after the due date (due dates are on Tuesdays for this course – therefore this means assignments turned in after 4 p.m. Friday) will receive a zero.

Your completed paper will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of research, clarity of presentation, originality (in terms of your research puzzle, methods or findings) and strength of argumentation.

Feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions or would like to discuss particular issues or strategies.

During our final class meetings of the semester, you will also share your research findings and field questions and comments. Guidelines for these 15-minute presentations will be given in class. Constructive criticisms and helpful questions from your peers during these presentations will help you improve your paper before submission, and improve your class participation mark (if you're the one with the good questions for the presenter).

Other Course Requirements

Academic Integrity: All provisions of the *Rhodes Honor Code* will be vigorously enforced. Definitions of *plagiarism* will be reviewed in class, and any students having additional questions

(such as proper citation practice in essays) are encouraged to see me during office hours or by appointment.

Classroom Etiquette: Active student participation is essential and greatly encouraged. At the same time, everyone (including the course's professor) must try to remain humble about their opinions, courteous to their fellows, curious, and eager to engage in polite debate. Uncivil discourse, personal attacks, or disruptions to the classroom atmosphere (cell phones, consistent tardiness or leaving early, etc.) will not be tolerated.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory unless you have cleared your absence with me prior to class.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a disability recognized by Rhodes College, I encourage you to register with Student Disability Services (843-3994) to help me accommodate your needs as well as possible.

This syllabus and schedule are subject to modification.

Schedule Tuesdays 18:30 – 21:00 Buckman 105

9/1 Introduction to the course, discussion of student interests.

Readings due: None

Assignments due: None

9/8 Overview of the research process, fallacies and the scientific method.

Readings due: 1) Buttolph Johnson and Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods* (2005), p. 27-35.
2) Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, 6th ed. (2004), p. 4-10; 13-20; 24-31.

Assignments due: Provide **3 examples** of what you believe to be common fallacies produced in the study of international or comparative politics. You may find a list of common fallacies at: <http://www.nizkor.org/features/fallacies/> Print for every member of the class a sheet of paper listing 1) The type of fallacy (with explanation from the above website) and 2) An example from academia or the media of this fallacy committed in relation to world politics or comparative politics.

9/15 Research design

Readings due: 1) Buttolph Johnson and Reynolds, p. 103-119; 84-88.
2) Shively, p. 32-45; 57-66.

Assignments due: Topics/ideas assignment.

9/22 Research design (cont'd)

Readings due: 1) Shively, p. 74-88; 94-109.
2) Lim, *Doing Comparative Politics* (2006), p. 74-90.

Assignments due: Research design (copies for everyone).

9/29 Research design (cont'd) and literature review/theory

Readings due: 1) Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2003), p. 76-83.
2) Appendix from Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (1997), p. 123-128.
3) Knopf, "Doing a Literature Review" *PS* (January 2006), p. 127-132.
4) Chaim Kaufman, "When all else fails: Ethnic population transfers and partitions in the 20th century," *International Security* 23:2, Autumn 1998, pp. 120-125 (the literature review of the article – pay attention to the style of the literature review).

Assignments due: Bibliography (1-2 pages), revised design template.

10/6 Evidence: Data issues and logical inference

Readings due 1) Rothman, "Understanding Data Quality through Reliability: A Comparison of Data Reliability Assessment in Three International Relations Datasets," *International Studies Review*, 9:3 (Fall 2007).
2) Lim, p. 3-63.

Assignments due: Literature review.

10/13 Examples from the literature

Readings due: 1) Representative journal articles, TBA.

Assignments due: Theory section of your paper (copies for professor and your partner).

10/20 No class (Fall Recess)

10/27 Theory issues, Presentation guidelines

Readings: 1) Your partner's theory section.

Assignments due: Comments on your partner's theory sections (copies for professor and your partner).

11/3 Class Presentations.

Readings: None

Assignments due: Data/evidence section of your paper (copy for professor).

11/10 Class Presentations

Readings: None

Assignments due: None.

11/17 Class Presentations

Readings: None

Assignments due: None

11/24 Class Presentations

Readings: None.

Assignments due: **E-mailed version and hard copy of the rough draft of your entire paper due in my office by 4 p.m., e-mailed copies to your partners.**

This should be a rough draft in terms of content, not spelling, grammar, typos or syntax...

Thanksgiving Recess begins Nov. 25 10 p.m. until Dec.1 8 a.m.

12/1 Feedback

Readings: Your partner's paper.

Assignments due: Come prepared with comments for each of your peers' work.

12/8 *Last class – Essay due at beginning of class (hard copy – also e-mailed copy to romanod@rhodes.edu due 30 minutes before class – both e-mailed and hard copies must be received for the paper to be considered “on time”). **Essays not turned in at the beginning of class suffer a 10% penalty, and no essays will be accepted after December 9, 4 p.m.. Failure to submit an essay by this date will result in a failing grade for the course.** Celebration meal :-)*