

**Government and Politics 808C**  
**Selected Topics in Functional Problems in International Relations:**  
**Prospectus Seminar in International Relations & Comparative Politics**  
**Spring 2013**

**Time and Location:** Mondays 3:30-6:15 in Tydings 1136.

<b>Instructors</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>e-mail:</b>
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**About the course:**

Developing a coherent and viable plan for a dissertation (the prospectus) is essential for successful completion of the Ph.D. The aim of this course is to assist students in this process. Students will identify a clear, workable research question, develop a plausible theoretical answer, and lay out an empirical strategy to conduct this research.

**Course Requirements:**

This is a seminar focused on development of a successful dissertation prospectus. The first objective of the course is for each student to have a workable draft of their prospectus by the end of the semester. A second objective is to present the dissertation idea in the form of National Science Foundation Dissertation Award application. The assignments reflect these objectives in that readings are focused on student research topics and research design. Much of the value in the seminar will come from an open and engaged discussion of student ideas by all present, and full participation is essential for this. The requirements are as follows:

- 1) Seminar attendance and active participation in discussion throughout the semester is required (20% of grade). Students are expected to be on time, have completed the assigned readings and absences should be cleared beforehand with the professors.
- 2) Each student is expected to complete the assignments on time. The assignments include written components of the prospectus (as well as an oral discussion of each component). Due dates vary for each student, see the schedule below (this can be adjusted in the first week of class if necessary).
- 3) The final products of the course will be a prospectus draft and a draft NSF Dissertation Award proposal. This will be evaluated for the remaining 80% of the course grade.

Evaluation will reflect both the quality of the components in the project and the degree to which each student has responded to criticisms and recommendations given throughout the semester.

### **Academic conduct:**

It is assumed that all students are familiar with and adhere to the University Code of Academic Integrity. (See: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/index.html>)

### **Readings:**

We will be utilizing *A Model Discipline: Political Science and the Logic of Representations* by Kevin A. Clarke and David M. Primo. You should read this throughout the beginning of the class.

Additional readings will include prospectuses and dissertation from successful political scientists, and a reading selected by each student. On the day that you present your research question, you will need to specify one article that you think is the seminal piece relevant to your proposed research. For example, if you plan to study war duration, you should indicate an article that you believe is a good jumping off point for your work related to duration.

The articles/chapters are available online through ELMS.

### **Dates**

**Week 1 (January 27<sup>th</sup>): Introductions**

**Week 2 (February 3<sup>th</sup>): What is a dissertation prospectus.**

Susan Hyde Prospectus

Idean Salehyan Prospectus

Daniel Biggers Prospectus

James Curry Prospectus

Antonio Rodriguez Prospectus

Kyle Beardsley Prospectus

### **Assignment:**

Part 1: Write down your assessment of each prospectus. Answer the following:  
What is the best thing about this prospectus? What is the biggest weakness of this prospectus?

Part 2: Turn in the name of your article for the upcoming week's research question presentations (see next week).

### **Weeks 3 and 4 (February 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>): Presentation of research questions**

Each student must be able to identify a specific question that can be asked in 1 to 2 sentences. Along with this, you need to specify the dependent variable (i.e. what you want to explain) and demonstrate that there is variation in this. Demonstrating variation can be done with data or by case comparisons. Finally, you need to explain why this question is compelling (i.e. why are you asking this).

Readings: Student selected articles.

Assignment: Write up for the questions, variation on the dependent variable and explanation of why you are asking this question. Due the week of your presentation.

**February 10 presenters: Kishi, Creed, Mirzaei, Mugglestone, Lund**

**February 17 presenters: Arves, Binetti, Sawyer, Nunez, Leaderman**

### **Weeks 5 - 10 (February 24<sup>th</sup>, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>, April 7<sup>th</sup>): Theory development**

These 6 weeks will be used to help develop a plausible theory for your prospectus. Each student will present twice. Your first presentation and assignment will be a rough sketch of your intuition about how to answer your research question. This will form the basis of in-seminar discussion. The second presentation and assignment builds upon the first and is a more formal presentation of a theory, which should include explicitly what your assumptions are, who the actors are, and what are the theoretical mechanisms at work.

Readings: You should be reading what is relevant to your research topic.

Assignment: At first presentation: sketch of theoretical intuition. At second presentation: write up of the theory with all elements included.

**February 24/March 24 presenters: Binetti, Lund, Kishi**

**March 3/March 31 presenters: Arves, Sawyer, Mirzaei, Leaderman**

**March 10/April 7 presenters: Mugglestone, Creed, Nunez**

### **Weeks 11 – 12 (April 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>): Data and Methods**

These two weeks are devoted to the development of a detailed plan for executing the research project. The plan should include the identification of the key variables, data sources and/or plans for data coding or case studies, a plan for analysis (i.e. what method is most appropriate and why), and likely challenges for the empirical part of the project.

Readings: Review Clarke and Primo text.

Assignment: Write up of data and analysis plan due on presentation date.

**April 14 presenters: Kishi, Creed, Mirzaei, Mugglestone, Lund**

**April 21 presenters: Arves, Binetti, Sawyer, Nunez, Leaderman**

**Week 13 (April 28<sup>th</sup>): Grants and time management**

This week will focus on how to turn your proposal into a grant application and on how to manage your time while writing your dissertation.

Assignment: Begin to write your draft NSF proposal (due at the end of term)

**Week 14 -15: (May 5<sup>th</sup> and May 12<sup>th</sup>): Prospectus presentations**

Readings: Selection of competed dissertations

Assignment: Final prospectus draft and NSF proposal draft due on presentation day.

**May 5 presenters: Arves, Binetti, Sawyer, Nunez, Leaderman**

**May 12 presenters: Kishi, Creed, Mirzaei, Mugglestone, Lund**