**Government and Politics 808C**: **Prospectus Seminar**

**Spring 2022**

**Time and Location:**

Tuesdays 12:30 – 3:15

Jimenez 0120

Zoom alternative: Meeting ID: 929 6289 4609; Passcode: 675076

**Instructors**

Kathleen Cunningham

Chincoteague 3117D

Office hrs: by appointment

**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. More broadly, students will learn to develop and structure a large research project and to work effectively with their mentors.

**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 secondary objective for some student will be to develop the dissertation idea in the form of National Science Foundation Dissertation Award application or similar grant 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.

1. 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).

1. The final products of the course will be a research proposal draft. 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.

**Campus Policies**

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland’s policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

* Academic integrity
* Student and instructor conduct
* Accessibility and accommodations
* Attendance and excused absences
* Grades and appeals
* Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit <https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/policies/academic-record/> for a full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Students with disabilities: I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide us with documentation or have not had that documentation reviewed by DSS early in the semester cannot be accommodated.

**Readings:**

Readings will include prospectuses 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.

**Week 1 (January 25): Introductions**

Components of a research project

Parts of the process

Reading for research

Work style

Collaboration – peer and mentor

Engaging existing work

**Week 2 (February 1): What is a dissertation prospectus.**

Susan Hyde Prospectus

Idean Salehyan Prospectus

Daniel Biggers Prospectus

Antonio Rodriguez Prospectus

Kyle Beardsley Prospectus

Chris Meserole Prospectus

James Curry Prospectus

Assignment:

Part 1: Pick 4 of these, and write down your assessment of each prospectus. Answer the following:

* What is the central question(s)?
* What is the main argument in 1 – 2 sentences?
* 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 8 and 15): Presentation and discussion 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 8 presenters: Youngjoon, Madie, Taylor, Tori***

***February 15 presenters: Florian, Lizzie, Oja, John***

**Weeks 5 - 10 (February 22, March 1, March 8, March 15, March 29, April 5): Theory development**

These 6 weeks will be used to refine your question and 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 will all elements included.

***February 22/March 15 presenters: Youngjoon, Florian [MARCH 15 - visitor Kris Miller]***

***March 1/March 29 presenters: Madie, Oja, Tori***

***March 8/April 5 presenters: Lizzie, Taylor, John [APRIL 5 - visitor Marcus Johnson]***

**Weeks 11 – 12 (April 12, April 19): 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.

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

***April 12 presenters: Youngjoon, Madie, Tori, John***

***April 19 presenters: Florian, Lizzie, Taylor, Oja***

**Week 13 (April 26): 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 optional draft grant proposal (due at the end of term)

**Week 14: (May 3): Prospectus presentations: *Youngjoon, Madie, John, Tori***

**Week 15 (May 10): Prospectus presentations: Florian, Lizzie, Taylor, Oja**

Assignment: Final prospectus due at final time.