Instructor:

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Office Hours: Monday 2:00-4:00 and by appointment

Course Description

This course is the second course in the required four-semester (12 required credit hours) honors program sequence. In this course, students will continue to develop the thesis topic identified in the previous semester and prepare to write and defend the honors thesis. This will include finalizing the choice of thesis topic, conducting a thorough literature review on the chosen topic, identifying a specific research question within the topic, locating data that can be used to answer the research question, and developing a detailed outline for the thesis document.

Specific activities for spring semester will include:

• Write statement of topic, preliminary research question, and list of references. This list of references should be a revised version of the reading list that you created in the fall.
• Read and take notes on all readings. Add readings as they are identified. Refine research question on the basis of the reading. You will be required to submit an annotated bibliography in pieces throughout the semester.
• Iterative process of refining research question:
  • Locate data that can be used to answer the question.
  • Refine research question based on data availability.
  • Refine reading list based on revised research question.
  • Refine research question based on new readings
  • And so on until final question that is important to answer and can be answered is identified
• Revise written topic/justification for the research project. Why is it important?
• Develop detailed outline for thesis document (Booth pages 173-186). Outline includes all major points to be included in each section
• Learn about applying to graduate school and law school.
Honors Thesis

This will be a research proposal, and will include a full literature review that provides a persuasive case that the chosen research question has not yet been answered in rigorous research and is worthy of empirical attention. The proposal then describes the data and methods that will be used to answer the question. You may propose to collect “primary” data, in which case you will explain and justify a sampling strategy, data collection method, and measures. You may also propose to use “secondary” data, in which case you will identify the data set, justify that it is appropriate, and argue how the fundamental concepts are captured by measures in the data set. Then you must explain how the data will be analyzed and how this analysis will answer the question. Finally, the thesis ends with a critical consideration of the likely implications of the research, limitations of their proposal, and directions for future work (about 30 pages).

Text

There will be no new text required. However, we will be making use of the same text we used last semester:


Class Format

This class operates as an independent study. Students will submit various documents demonstrating progress and meet with me periodically to discuss progress and resolve problems. Students are expected to make continuous progress towards the thesis.

If you are participating in a study abroad during the spring semester, you will still be responsible for meeting all deadlines and handing in assignments.

Additionally, we will be meeting as a group several times during the semester for certain specific topics. More information will be provided on this at a later date.

Grading Policy

Grades will be based on the written justification for the research project including a statement of its significance and an outline for the thesis.

Disability Support

I will make every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form, updated for the current semester. Students requiring special accommodations must inform me and provide the required DSS form within the first two weeks of class.
Assignments

There will be three main milestones for this course: annotated bibliography, identification of a data source, and a final outline. You will be required to hand in parts of these items along the way so as to ensure you are making proper progress. All assignments are to be handed in (either via email or hardcopy) by 4:00 p.m. of the due date.

Annotated Bibliography

The first third of the course will focus on primarily on reading the sources that you uncovered in the fall on your reading list. Sources should be added along the way, and ones that you find do not fit with your research question may be deleted. Thus, your reading list is fluid, and you should be thinking about how to update it and make it more relevant.

I expect you to read and take notes on each of the readings on your list. I will require that you submit an annotated bibliography in two stages that covers at least 16 articles that you’ve found on your topic. For each reading, you should be able to effectively summarize the scope and findings of the article (i.e., answering the four questions we stressed last semester) in a succinct way. This summary need not be very long (2-3 paragraphs is fine), but should be very specific (e.g., which measures did the author(s) use, what were the specific findings, etc.). Do not simply get this information from the abstract, which is often very general and not completely informative.

Though you will only be required to hand in annotation for 16 sources, I expect that you have given this level of detail to each of the readings on your list.

Location of a Data Source

You will be required to locate a data source which is appropriate to answer your research questions, specifically it should be capable of testing the hypotheses that you propose.

More information of this will be given later in the semester.

Final Outline

You final outline will cornerstone of your final thesis. You should consult Booth (pp. 173-186) for guidance. This will be the main deliverable for this course. Several milestone assignments are required to ensure you are making good progress on your outline. The more effort you put into the intermediate mile stone assignments in the course, the better (and easier) your final product will be.

This will be due the final week of the course.

I will hand out examples of final outlines later on in the semester.
Tentative Schedule (Weeks where we meet as a class are listed as meeting)

Week 1 (26 Jan; Meeting): Course Overview

Week 2 (2 Feb):
Due: Preliminary statement of topic, preliminary research question, and list of references

This should be a more developed version of the question that you settled on in the fall. Specifically, I want you to develop a) what is the problem (i.e., the specific question that you are studying), and b) why is it important?

You may take 2-3 pages to do this.

Read: Booth chapter 6 on engaging sources.

Week 3 (9 Feb):
Due: Nothing; Individual meetings as necessary

Week 4 (16 Feb):
Due: 1\textsuperscript{st} part of annotated bibliography (8 sources)

Week 5 (23 Feb):
Due: 2\textsuperscript{nd} part of annotated bibliography (8 sources)

Week 6 (2 Mar):
Due: Statement of topic, revised research question, refined list of references (should include all references, not just those annotated)

Week 7 (9 Mar; Meeting): Locating Data
Due: Statement of hypothesis, constructs

Complete: ICPSR tutorial at \url{http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/shared/ICPSR/help/newuser}

Week 8 (16 Mar): Spring Break
Due: Nothing

Week 9 (23 Mar):
Due: Nothing; Individual meetings as necessary
Week 10 (30 Mar):
Due: Potential Data Source Identified

Week 11 (6 Apr):
Due: Nothing; Individual meetings as necessary

Week 12 (13 Apr):
Due: Final statement of thesis topic, research question, and list of references due

Week 13 (20 Apr):
Read: Booth chapter 10 and pages 173-186

Week 14 (27 Apr):
Work on Preparing Final Outline
Due: Nothing; Individual meetings as necessary

Week 15 (4 May):
Work on Preparing Final Outline
Due: Nothing; Individual meetings as necessary

Week 16 (11 May):
Due: Final outline due