
INTL 6000
International Relations Master's Capstone
Dr. Kyle Haynes

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Office: HSPC 105
Office Hours: Mon. 10 am - 12:00 pm & by appt.

Fall 2012
Classroom: HSPC 102
Thurs: 5:30 - 9:30 pm

Description

Catalog Description: Various contemporary theories of international relations are examined. The relationship of theory to the practice of international relations is considered. This course presents an overview for students who are completing a major in international relations. Prerequisite: completion of at least 30 credits toward major.

My Description: This course is designed to guide students through the process of writing a rigorous scholarly research paper, in lieu of writing an MA Thesis. We will discuss how to develop interesting and important research questions, create valid research designs, write academic literature reviews, and outline, write, and present research papers. The content of the research itself will be determined entirely by the student.

Class Policies

- *Missing Class:* Attendance is required. Missing even a single class will significantly affect your grade in the course. Absences will only be excused in cases of medical or family emergencies. Documentation must be provided for an absence to be excused.
- *Cheating and Academic Dishonesty:* I take academic integrity *very* seriously. A student found cheating on an exam or assignment will be given a chance to explain the situation. In the event I find the explanation unsatisfactory, the student will be given absolutely no credit for the assignment. Depending on the magnitude of the assignment, this could be enough to guarantee an *F* in the course.
- *Grade Appeals:* I will accept grade appeals no sooner than 48 hours and no later than 5 days after students receive their graded assignments. I provide detailed comments on graded assignments. Please take the time to read and consider these comments before lodging an appeal. Grade appeals must include a written statement that addresses my comments on the assignment and indicates specifically why the student feels the

grade is inappropriate. If a grade appeal is made, I reserve the right to adjust the grade either upward or downward, so I strongly recommend that you not lodge grade appeals frivolously.

- *Special Needs:* I rely on the Academic Resource Center (Loretto Hall, Room 6, 314-246-7620) to document and coordinate the appropriate action for students requiring special accommodations as a result of a disability. If you have special needs, please come speak with me so we can determine the appropriate accommodations.

Requirements

In order to achieve both the course's learning outcomes and the MA program's broader objectives, students must remain actively engaged in this course throughout the 9 weeks. This will require careful commitment to the requirements established in the syllabus.

Learning Outcomes

- Design and develop a scholarly research project applying international relations theory.
- Write a scholarly research paper that conforms to the conventions of the discipline.

Assignments and Evaluation

This course revolves entirely around the development of a scholarly research paper. The finished paper will account for 50% of students' overall course grade. The remainder of the grade will be determined by various assignments completed working up to the final paper.

- **Research Design:** (10%) Due April 11
- **Draft of introduction and literature review:** (10%) Due April 18
- **Paper Outline:** (10%) Due May 2
- **Paper Presentation:** (10%) In class on May 9
- **Participation:** (10%) Determined by quality of feedback you provide for your classmates throughout the course!
- **Final Paper:** (50%) This paper will mark the culmination of your development in this program. It's important....

Course Structure and Weekly Assignments

March 21: Research Questions and Introduction to the Tools of Research

This week we will discuss some of the basics of social scientific research and how they can be incorporated into your projects. We will discuss how to develop and frame your “research question” so as to maximize the impact of your project. After all, the first step toward providing interesting and useful answers is to ask the right questions. Students should come prepared to discuss potential topics for their paper. We will also discuss some of the basic tools that can be used to find and manage valuable resources throughout your research. Class will include a brief trip to Emerson Library to learn about some of the resources available at Webster.

- **Readings:** White: *Developing Research Questions* - Chs 2-3.
- **Project Assignment:** Come to class having put serious thought into potential topics for your paper.

March 28: Research Design and Causal Inference

This week we will delve into different types of empirical social scientific research, the strengths and weaknesses of each, and the types of questions for which these approaches may be suitable. Quantitative, qualitative and experimental designs will be discussed. We will also discuss the idea of inference, how we can use the limited data we have to learn, or *infer* things about cases or time periods for which we do not have data.

- **Readings:** King, Keohane and Verba - Ch 1
Also read **three articles OR one book** related to your topic.
- **Project Assignment:** Develop a research question. Additionally, search the footnotes and bibliography of the articles you read to compile a preliminary list of additional readings and sources.

April 4: No Class

Work your way through the reading list you developed last week. Try to read one article per day (i.e. 14 articles) before class on April 11.

April 11: Literature Reviews and Tools of Research

This week we will learn how to organize and write an academic literature review. Included in this will be a discussion of how to effectively frame your particular research question within the broader literature, highlighting both the scholarly and policy implications of the project.

- **Readings:** Continued from last week. Just keep reading!
- **Project Assignment:** Turn in a **one page**, single-spaced statement describing your research design. This should include your final research question, and a detailed statement of how you intend to answer this question. Will you use qualitative or quantitative methods? What cases will you examine? How will your study yield conclusions and lessons that can apply beyond your project? **This assignment will constitute 10% of your final grade in the course!**

April 18: Data Collection

This week we will explore the different sources and types of data that can be utilized in your research. This will, of course, depend heavily on your chosen research question and methodology.

- **Readings:** Begin to transition into empirical research. Create a preliminary list of data sources and begin working your way through them.
- **Project Assignment:** Turn in a rough draft of your introduction and literature review, as well as a brief summary of either your own theoretical framework, or the theory you will be assessing in your paper. **This assignment will constitute 10% of your final grade in the course!**

April 25: Outlining and Argumentation

This week we will discuss how to structure your paper, combining theory and evidence to formulate an effective argument. We will also go over how to *outline* a paper, organizing discrete thoughts and pieces of evidence into a coherent argument. Outlining is an essential part of the writing process that, if done correctly, will make the actual writing virtually painless.

- **Readings:** You're on your own at this point....
- **Project Assignment:** Keep collecting data. Again, try to read one article per day, or a book every three days. If you're using quantitative methods, you should have your data nailed down by now.

May 2: Presentation, Writing, and Formatting

This week we will shift our focus to the stylistic portion of the research process. We will cover writing style in great detail, and also discuss how to format the paper to make it look sharp.

- **Readings:** Handouts (Gerring, Yesnowitz, Bird)

- **Project Assignment:** Turn in a detailed outline for your entire paper. **This assignment will constitute 10% of your final grade in the course!**

May 9: Proofreading and Editing

You will spend this week completing a rough draft of your paper. In class, we will briefly recap

- **Project Assignment:** Complete a rough draft of your paper and bring **two (2)** copies with you to class. I will distribute these at random to your classmates, and you will spend the class period reading and editing each other's work.

May 16: Presenting the Results

Students give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class. Your classmates and I will give you critical feedback. You must defend your work, thinking on your feet and speaking clearly in support of your work. **This presentation will constitute 10% of your final grade in the course!**

- **Project Assignment:** Finish the paper!! Final papers are due, **by email**, at the start of class!!!