



Directed Reading Seminar

Syllabus Tailored by: Dr Ruchi Anand

*Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing
your temper or your self-confidence.*

Robert Frost

*Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the
first four sharpening the axe.*

Abraham Lincoln

*Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell
you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising, which
tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out
a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction

A directed reading seminar is a course tailored for students writing their thesis proposal and who wish to defend their thesis the following semester. Typically, students attending this seminar will be entering their third semester. Ideally, you should have decided on a thesis topic and an Advisor (with the help of the academic dean or committee) to work with before you enroll for this course. Your chosen Advisor should have approved working with you and your thesis topic, which you should have intimated to an AGS administrative staff. Students interested in this seminar should be well on their way to finishing up a thesis proposal which the Advisor will approve by the end of the directed reading seminar. Although this seminar has no additional pre-requisites, students are expected to have done a good deal of background reading to prepare them for their thesis research.

While your Advisor will have expertise in your chosen area of study, remember, it is your thesis and your Advisor 'can help you only as far as you help yourself!' YOU are responsible for doing the work – research, readings and writing - under the skilled guidance of a Advisor who is not responsible for spoon-feeding you. It is a graduate level seminar that will equip you with the quality tools to bring your thesis to a successful conclusion.

During the course of this seminar, a student is expected to complete a thesis proposal that is advanced enough to be defended. It is assumed that a graduate student at this stage of the program has a solid mastery of the theoretical, methodological, ideological and analytical tools covered in previous coursework. Your success (or failure) in this seminar will depend on the work and energy you are prepared to invest towards the completion of your thesis.

The format of the directed readings seminar will depend on the professor and the number of advisees that your Advisor may have at any given time. Depending on the teaching style of each Professor, classes can be held on a weekly or bi-monthly basis. Attendance at each session is mandatory and the student is expected to have completed any work allocated by the Advisor.



It is your responsibility to identify and raise specific issues of interest and usefulness to you, i.e. which issues do you need help on, which topics you need additional readings for. The clearer you are regarding your own thesis agenda, the more productive your meetings with your Advisor will be. Learning how to make your directed reading meetings fruitful is an undeniably critical aspect of your thesis project. Additionally, managing your thesis, assessing your needs, identifying an audience, evaluating the job market and assessing the usefulness of your research are useful steps towards managing future projects on your own. One final tip is to never leave a meeting without setting a tentative date for your next meeting with your Advisor.

Course Objectives

At the end of the Directed Reading seminar, each student is expected to:

1. Have decided a thesis area and topic;
2. Have chosen an advisor to chair the thesis;
3. Have a well-developed proposal with a thesis statement, central argument or/& hypothesis and be able to answer the following questions, in written and oral form:
 - What is your thesis question?
 - Why is this an important question to address?
 - What are the existing answers to the question you are asking?
 - How does your answer differ from/add to/contribute to the existing literature in the field?
 - How are you going to conduct this research to get answers to your question?
 - Having found the answers to your question, what's interesting about the answers – Why should anyone care?
4. Have developed an agenda for writing and defending the thesis and set graduation time times;
5. Have started considering conferences and journals to send completed chapters for presentations and publication;
6. Have started exploring the job market and chalking out future plans.

Course Requirements

Course requirements will vary from one Professor to another but may typically include written and oral assignments based on research and analytical reasoning. All of these assignments will be geared to helping a student complete their thesis. You may be required to print and bring these assignments to class meetings or be asked to send these to your Professor via email. Again, it depends on what sort of arrangement your Professor and you work out in the first few class sessions.

Some written assignments that can be expected in a directed reading course are:

1. A 4-page paper stating a *falsifiable hypothesis* and a synopsis of one published work supporting the hypothesis and one opposing it. Explain why your hypothesis is important, for what and to whom.



2. A 20-25 item *annotated bibliography* for the thesis. Write your hypothesis statement at the top of the annotated bibliography and for each entry (50-70 words), clarify its relation to your hypothesis. Make sure to include sources that oppose your hypothesis (at least ¼ of your entries should oppose your hypothesis).
3. A 10-page (or more) literature review for the thesis. Summarize recent literature supporting your hypothesis (about 8 pages). Summarize opposing positions (2 pages).
4. A 5-6-page method statement for the thesis. Summarize your method and justify why it is more appropriate for your thesis research than other methods, giving an example of its application to relevant data. In this paper, you may be required to identify input data, methodological transformation, and output data structures, in order to support your hypothesis, i.e. how output data structures verify your hypothesis and oppose a published rival hypothesis.
5. A 10-page theory and data analysis for the thesis. Write latest version of hypothesis in the form of a theoretical statement. Present some contrary theory. Present arguments or data confirming your theory to be superior to the contrary theory. This paper may require you to ask several sub-questions to support your theoretical premise.

As mentioned earlier, these assignments will strictly depend on your Advisor and his/her choice of projects to direct your thesis.

Grading system

This course is worth 3 credits, which will be awarded for achieving the objectives of the course. Your directed readings Advisor will give you the specifics for his/her course. At the end of this course, your Advisor will give you a Satisfactory (*Distinction, Above Average, Average*) or Unsatisfactory (*Below Average and Poor*) grade which will then determine how soon you can successfully defend your thesis.

Preliminary (Recommended) Resources

1. *How to Write a Thesis* For B.A. and M.A. Students (and maybe Ph.D. students, too) by Charles Lipson University of Chicago, <http://www.charleslipson.com/How-to-write-a-thesis.htm>
2. *Why Honesty Matters for Your Education*, (a talk for students), <http://www.charleslipson.com/speechtopics/Honesty-talk-for-students.htm>
3. *Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation*, Joseph Levine, Ph.D. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan USA, <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>
4. Students should review leading journals over the past few years, focusing on important articles and debates.

Resources on Methodology (Source: <http://library.wichita.edu/socsci/reseabib.htm>)

Your Directed Reading Advisor may recommend one or more of the following books or/and additional texts depending on the needs of your thesis.

Bausell, R.B. (1991). Advanced research methodology: an annotated guide to sources. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.

- Bell, J. (1993). Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science (2nd ed.). Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Berg, B.L. (1995). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Berry, W.D., & Lewis-Beck, M.S. (Eds.). (1986). New tools for social scientists: advances and applications in research methods. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Making sense of qualitative data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gubrium, J.F., & Holstein, J.A. (1997). The New language of qualitative method. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hult, C.A. (1996). Researching and writing in the social sciences. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- King, G., Keohane, R.O., & Verba, S. (1994). Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1995). Designing qualitative research (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mason, J. (1996). Qualitative reasoning. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nachmias, C., & Nachmias, D. (1992). Research methods in the social sciences (4th ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Robson, C. (1993). Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers. Oxford; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Spoull, N.L. (1995). Handbook of research methods: a guide for practitioners and students in the social sciences. (2nd ed.). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Stern, P.C., & Kalof, L. (1996). Evaluating social science research. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tesch, R. (1990). Qualitative research: analysis types and software tools. New York: Falmer Press.
- Feagin, H.R., Orum, A.M., & Sjoberg, G. (1991). A Case for the case study. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Yin, R.K. (1994). Case study research: design and methods (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.



- Bohrnstedt, G.W., & Knoke, D. (1988). Statistics for social data analysis (2nd ed.). Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers.
- Brown, S.R., & Melamed, L.E. (1990). Experimental design and analysis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Reid, S. (1987). Working with statistics: an introduction to quantitative methods for social scientists. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wilcox, R.R. (1987). New statistical procedures for the social sciences: modern solutions to basic problems. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum.
- Braverman, M.T., and Slater, J.K. (Eds.). (1996). Advances in survey research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brenner, M., Brown, J., & Canter, D. (Eds.). (1985). The research interview, uses and approaches. London: Academic Press.
- DeVaus, D.A. (1995). Surveys in social research (4th ed.). St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Fowler, F.J. (1995). Improving survey questions: design and evaluation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mischler, E.G. (1986). Research interviewing: context and narrative. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weisberg, H.F., Krosnick, J.A., & Bowen, B.D. (1996). An Introduction to survey research, polling, and data analysis (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bositis, D.A. (1990). Research designs for political science: contrivance and demonstration in theory and practice. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Goel, M.L. (1988). Political science research: a methods handbook. Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- Johnson, J.B., & Joslyn, R.A. (1995). Political science research methods (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Additional Bibliographies for International Relations, International Political Economy, International Security Studies, Diplomacy and International Organizations can be easily found on the Internet. For example, see <http://www.charleslipson.com/>

A Directed Reading Course may be as useful or useless – Depends on YOU!



Food for (More) Thought!

The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.

Aristotle

Education is learning what you didn't even know you didn't know.

Daniel J. Boorstin

Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.

Mahatma Gandhi

Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is for you.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.

Albert Einstein
