

Department.: Political Science

Course number: POLS 288W

Course title: Senior Thesis

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Associate Professor

Catalog Copy : POLS 288. Senior Thesis. Either semester. Three credits. Hours by arrangement. Prerequisite: POLS 289; ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250. Open only with consent of instructor and Department Head. All honors and distinction students writing an honors or distinction thesis must register for this class in their last semester.

Describe the Specific Criteria for W Courses :

POLS 288W is designed for students completing an honors thesis or distinction project in political science. It is part of a year-long process that culminates with each student writing and presenting an oral defense of an honors thesis in the Spring semester in order to receive a degree with Honors. Honors students in the major are required to take POLS288W in the Fall semester, so that they will have a structured framework for approaching a project of significant length. The course is designed to assist students in completing their thesis in a timely fashion.

The class breaks the thesis writing process into several distinct phases. For POLS288W, students are expected to submit a final paper of 30 pages in length. This paper is the product of earlier drafts of 2 pages, 7 pages, and 10 pages in length. Students are required to revise each of these parts in order to produce a first draft of their Honors thesis, which will connect the separate products written in POLS288 and during their Spring semester into a coherent whole. The final paper in POLS288W must represent significant progress toward completion of the thesis. It must consist of a clear statement of the student's research question, a solid foundation of the literature review, and a well-developed statement of the research design or approach. The final grade is based on a combination of grades on the drafts, an

annotated bibliography, and the student's presentation, and students who fail the writing component fail the course.

The course includes in-class evaluation of articles and papers that represent works similar to those students are expected to produce. Particular class sessions are devoted to the discussion of citation formats, plagiarism, using library resources, the process of revision, and other writing issues. Students are expected to present their research questions and methodology to the class and instructor for comment, and to revise the final draft of the paper in response to those comments. Each student must also work closely with an Honors thesis adviser, who provides suggestions and feedback on the student's research and writing.

Students are expected to submit drafts of each section of their final paper, which is the product of earlier drafts of 2 pages, 7 pages, and 15 pages in length. The total number of draft pages the student is required to produce and revise by the end of the semester must be at least 15 pages, and more typically the student produces a draft that is 25 pages in length or more. Each of these drafts receives written comments from the instructor which must be incorporated into the student's final paper. Students also receive feedback and suggestions from their Honors thesis advisers and from their fellow classmates in response to their presentations.

Role of Grad Students: The department has not relied on graduate students to teach W courses or sections in the past, and the instructor for POLS288W is always the Department's Honor Adviser.