

**Political Science 214B**  
**Political Research Seminar**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Wednesdays 12:10-3pm in Kerr 593**

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Information on my Office Hours can be found at:

<http://polisci.ucdavis.edu/people/scheiner/escheiner/office-hours.html>

**Course Summary:**

The aim of this two-quarter course is to assist second year students in the completion of a (near-) publishable article-length manuscript, which most students defend by the end of their third academic year, in fulfillment of the requirements for Ph.D. candidacy status. If nothing else, we must achieve this aim over the two quarters.

The idea here is that you prepare yourself for the qualifying exam, while giving you practice in the “art” of research – and also give you a chance to see if you like doing it!

Please note that your first aim should not be to do a project that produces publishable results. Put differently, results that support the null hypothesis are ok! **Your job is to put together a compelling research question that you address in a convincing way with a careful research design. Most important, you should focus on being *intellectually careful and honest*.** You are being evaluated on your ability to compose a professional-style paper with a professional research design.

## Assignments

### Meetings with faculty advisors:

- Again, the aim of the course is to help you develop a high-quality paper. To this end, it is essential that you get regular feedback from faculty advisors. I will schedule 2 meetings for you, your advisor, and me.
- By morning of Friday, June 12, I need your advisor to let me know what grade (s)he assigns to your Final Paper. Please ask your advisor ASAP by what date you need to turn in your paper in order for her/him to meet the 6/12 deadline.

### Written Assignment Format:

- All written assignments must be double-spaced and typed, have 1-inch margins (not the MS Word default). Please proofread carefully. (I have little patience for typos/missing words/poorly constructed sentences, nouns-pronouns that don't match, etc.)
- Use page numbers whenever you submit something longer than one page. (Papers without page numbers drive me insane.)

**Final Paper:** Due by 9am on Tuesday, June 9 by email, but due to your advisor by whatever deadline (s)he sets.

- 15-20 pages (double-spaced) of text (not including professional cover page / tables / figures / appendices / bibliography, all of which should also be in the paper)
- Again, please note: The most important task here is NOT that you provide convincing evidence for your model. Rather, your job is to put together a compelling research question that you address in a convincing way with a careful research design. You want to be intellectually careful and honest. In essence, **you are being evaluated on your ability to compose a professional-style paper with a professional research design**. So, of course null results are fine!

### Short Reports & Memos:

- You will have regular short essay assignments to help you develop your project. Please see the assignment listed under each week.
- On a case-by-case basis, I will change the written assignments based on your situation.

### Power Point Presentations

- In some class sessions, you will present your work via Power Point-style presentations. Please follow “best practices” that we discussed in 214A.

### Grades:

- Participation, in-class presentations, written memos & reports: 25%
- Final Presentation: 25%
- Final paper (grade on this will be the average of the grade I give the paper and the grade your advisor gives the paper): 50%

## General Course Policies and Advice

### No Laptops/Tablets/etc. in Class

- Electronic devices – laptops, tablets, phones – appear to be distracting in a seminar environment. Thus, I ask that you resort to old-school paper copies of journal articles and old-school pen-and-paper note taking. In other words, please do NOT use your laptop (or tablet or smartphone or any other electronic reading device) in class. If you have a particular learning style that is particularly benefitted by looking at articles on a screen or typing your notes, please feel free to talk with me and I will be happy to consider an exception. And please silence your phones.

### General Advice

- Do not take critiques personally: The aim of the entire faculty is to help you constantly improve your work and create the best research that you can. To this end, we will repeatedly – and, at times, very bluntly – criticize your work. When confronted with these critiques, some students feel hurt and, at times, angry and defensive. I urge you not to fall into that camp. Critiques are part of being in academia, and are designed to make you a better researcher!
- Work together: Too often, I am seeing a lack of collaboration – and, recently, a lack of collegiality – among graduate students. Graduate school is not a competition! And the more you all help each other, the more everyone's work will improve.
- Please let me and/or your advisors know when you have problems: The most common characteristic I have noticed among students who are not doing well in graduate school is lack of communication. If you need/plan to turn in something late for my class, that is fine. Just please just let me know so I'm not wondering if I've missed it. And if you are having problems with the program or with class, please come talk with me. There is no shame in any of that!

## Class Dates, Topics, and Assignments

\*\*\*Warning: The class schedule is likely to change without much notice this quarter\*\*\*

**1. April 1: No class – work on your projects**

**2. April 8: One-on-one meetings with me – we will each meet to discuss your projects (and will focus on the below writing assignment)**

### Schedule

12:00 - 12:20: Fiona

12:30 - 12:50: Fan

1:00 - 1:20: Ariel

1:30 - 1:50: Michael

2:00 - 2:20: Keith

2:30 - 2:50: Roi

3:00 - 3:20: Carlos

### ***Written Assignment - due by 4/6 (M), 9am by email only:***

4-5 page assignment linking question, theory, and empirics. You should include your paper title every time you turn in assignments from now on. Details:

- 1 page (at most): State your research question and your theory.
- 1 page (at most): State your hypotheses. These should be clear observable implications of your theory.
- 1 page (at most): Clearly & succinctly explain your data, model, and most important variables. **Bullet point form would be fine here (possibly even advisable).**
- Remainder: Expectations
  - Indicate what you expect to find from your hypothesis tests (or, alternatively, explain what results you could get that would tell you that you were wrong).
  - For example, make clear what sign you expect to see on your independent variables' coefficients.
  - Explain what different results would mean for your theory.
    - Would certain results offer evidence in support of your theory?
    - What would a null result look like in your data analysis? (And what would it suggest about your theory?)
    - What results would suggest that your theory is wrong?
    - Would certain results be indeterminate in terms of evaluating the accuracy of your theory?
  - Might alternative theories explain each of these results as well?
- **If you have (not just preliminary) results already, feel free to add 1 more page on them (not including the table/figure that shows them – definitely, please add that too) and which of your expectations they match up with.**

**3. April 15: No class & no pre-set meetings – but I’ll be available in my office most of the afternoon (1-3 & 3:30-5:30pm).**

***Written Assignment: - due by 4/16 (Th), 9am by email only:***

1. Update the 4-5 page assignment from Week 2 based on any changes/new work you have done on your project since your Report last week.
  - Please note that I will share this memo, along with my own written comments on it, with your advisor to help guide our meeting next week.
2. 10-15 page, complete draft of your paper, now including data analysis.
  - I don’t want you to have to scramble at the end of the quarter to finish your paper. This draft should be the next iteration of what you turned in at the end of POL214A, but should include whatever data analysis you have done, thus far.

**4. April 22: No Class so you can work on your projects & to create time for meetings for you, your advisor, and me**

*Meetings this week between you, your advisor, & me. We will discuss your 4-5 page memo, your project, and how to proceed from here. Also, we need to ask your advisor by what date you need to turn in your Final Paper in order to have his/her grade for you turned in to me by morning of Friday, June 12 (at latest!).*

**Assignment for 214 participants: Determine when each participant will do a practice presentation in class on 5/6, 13, & 20.**

**Please use the following guidelines:**

- Each participant will do two practice presentations. Up to 5 people per day.
- Please follow all the best presentation practices that we discussed in 214A.
- Just as will be the case in the “real” presentations, you will each have a 40-minute period allotted to you each time.
- You should plan on spending no more than 20 minutes on your presentation. We will spend the remainder of the 40 minutes critiquing the project/presentation. (In the “real” presentations, the time after the completion of your presentation will be devoted to Q&A. It is to your advantage to maximize that time, since it will be an opportunity for you to receive valuable feedback.)
- For each day, please schedule people for the below time periods (and please fill up the earlier time periods before scheduling anyone for the 2:50-3:30 slot). If we end up ending early with any given presentation, we will turn immediately (even before the scheduled time) to the next presenter.

**Time slots:**

12-12:40:  
12:40-1:20:  
1:30-2:10:  
2:10-2:50:  
2:50-3:30:

**5. April 29: One-on-one meetings with me – we will each meet to discuss your projects (and will focus on the below writing assignment)**

**Assignments for Scheiner:**

1. Send out Doodle Poll to faculty & 214 participants to get their availability for the week of 5/26-29 for our final presentations.
2. Make sure we have use of a room for the full time period in which we will be doing the practice presentations. Ideally, reserve 693 for them.
3. Set up meeting times with participants & advisors for week of 5/11.

***Please meet with a second faculty advisor this week:***

- This week, you should meet with a second faculty advisor (not your official 214 advisor, and not me) to discuss your project.
- You should include the results of that meeting in the Report that you submit to me next week.

***Meeting Schedule with me this week (but feel free to trade with one another to change the order) – meetings will be based on the below writing assignment:***

12:00 - 12:20: Fiona

12:30 - 12:50: Fan

1:00 - 1:20: Ariel

1:30 - 1:50: Michael

2:00 - 2:20: Keith

2:30 - 2:50: Roi

3:00 - 3:20: Carlos

***Written Assignment – 5 pages, due by 4/27 (M), 9am by email only:***

5 page assignment linking question, theory, and empirics. You should include your paper title every time you turn in assignments from now on. Details:

- **Please present in bullet point form**
- 1 page (total): Research question, theory, hypotheses
- 1 page (at most): Clearly & succinctly explain your data, model, most important variables, and expected results.
  - On expected results, be very specific: E.g., make clear what sign you expect to see on your independent variables' coefficients.
- Roughly 2 pages: Highlight your key findings and whether they are consistent with expectations.
- Remainder: What do your findings suggest about your theory?
- In addition, please include appropriate tables & figures.

**6. May 6: Practice Presentation Session I – please email slides to me by 10am today.**

**Assignments for Scheiner:**

1. Finalize final presentation schedule.
2. Reserve Kerr 693 for the presentations.

**Written Assignment: - due by 5/7 (Th), NOON by email only:**

1. Update last week's 5-page Report based on any changes/new work you have done on your project.
  - o Please note that I will share this memo, along with my own written comments on it, with your advisor to help guide our meeting next week.
2. 10-15 page, complete draft of your paper.

**7. May 13: Practice Presentation Session II – please email slides to me by 10am today.**

Meetings this week between you, your advisor, & me. We will discuss your 5 page Report (which was due 5/7), your project, and how to proceed from here. Also, we need to ask your advisor by what date you need to turn in your Final Paper in order to have his/her grade for you turned in to me by morning of Friday, June 12 (at latest!).

**8. May 20: Practice Presentation Session III – please email slides to me by 10am today.**

**Written Assignment: - due by 5/21 (Th), 9am by email only:**

- Update previous 5-page Report based on meeting with advisor and me in Week 7.

**9. May 26-29: Final Presentations – dates/times TBD**

**10. June 3: No Class – revise your papers. I will be available most of the day 10am-5:30 on 6/3.**

**Written Assignment: - due by 6/1 (M), 9am by email only:**

- Short write-up of all critiques and useful suggestions you have received at your presentation (and in meetings growing out of your presentation & how you intend to incorporate them.

**Final Paper**

Due to me by 9am on Tuesday, June 9 by email.

But due to your advisor by whatever deadline (s)he sets. Again, I need a grade on your paper from your advisor by morning of Friday, June 12 (at latest!).