

## NINT 5950 CRN 1961/7043 Thesis Workshop

GPIA at The New School  
Fall 2010, Wednesday/Thursday 4-5.50pm  
Room 609

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(66 West 12<sup>th</sup> St, Room 603; Office Hours: Thursday 2-3.30)  
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### Course description

If you are taking this course you have chosen to write a Master's Thesis as a final project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's degree. The thesis is more than a paper—it is a major independent project that requires the best application of your analytical, writing, and research skills. The successful completion of a thesis signals that you have learnt how to do scholarly research, can synthesize complex information, can write clearly and creatively, and can convince others of the power of your ideas through argument and not demagoguery.

This course will help you clearly formulate your research design, plan the writing of your thesis, and allow you to learn from your colleagues. The course is *mostly* interactive—we will work primarily with materials provided by you, the students. Using secondary texts and your own work we will cover issues such as formulating a research problem, defining your concepts, situating yourself in the literature, finding, using and presenting data, and the writing process. If you follow the course carefully, by the end of the semester you should find it a breeze to write and complete your thesis.

### Course Requirements

1. Students **must have a primary thesis advisor** (full time GPIA Professor), who prior to their attending a thesis workshop, has already approved of their thesis topic.
2. **Worksheets and Weekly Assignments (20%)** based on worksheets given by the instructor the week before either in class or online.
3. **Statement of Research Problem (including presentation) (20%)**
4. **Research Strategy (including presentation) (20%)**
5. **Draft Prospectus (including outline and presentation) (30%)**
6. **Discussant Role (20%)**. All students must participate in class, engage in constructive critiques of colleagues' work, and attend class regularly and on time.
7. Please note, this is a letter-grade course.

### Readings

Please purchase (or have access to) the following books, on Amazon.com or elsewhere. Also, there are plentiful used copies in circulation (use the correct edition as noted). Please note, I will not be quizzing you on the assigned readings. It is your responsibility to know

the material.

- **Maxwell, Joseph A. 2005.** *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach.* Sage.
- **Veit, Richard. 2004.** *Research: The Student's Guide to Writing Research Papers.* Allyn & Bacon.
- **Dees, Robert. 1993.** *Writing the Modern Research Paper.* Allyn & Bacon.
- **Kate L. Turabian. 2007.** *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Please be certain to buy the right edition.)
- **Anthony Weston. 2000.** *A Rulebook for Arguments.* Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Co.
- **William Strunk Jr., E.B. White and Maira Kalman. 2007.** *The Elements of Style Illustrated.* New York: Penguin. You may also use the non-illustrated editions (any one will do, but the 4<sup>th</sup> is the most recent).

- **Recommended: Howard S. Becker. 2007.** *Writing for Social Scientists.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Earlier edition is fine too.) You may also consult Summary Notes for Becker, Howard S., *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article* (<http://www.brint.com/papers/writing.htm>)
- The *Chicago Manual of Style* (15<sup>th</sup> Edition) is recommended for all as a standard reference work. It is available at considerable discount at Amazon and in all libraries.

There may be the occasional handout.

### Outline of Work for the Semester

The semester's work progresses in cumulative fashion. In addition to worksheets and some weekly assignments, students will write, present their ideas, read and critique each other's work. The main assignments are as follows:

**(1) Statement of Research Problem:** Students will specify the significant questions, problems or puzzles that the thesis plans to address. What will you and the reader know that you didn't when you started the process? Why should anyone care? The written assignment consists of a 1-2 page concise statement of a research problem. This statement should be followed by a list of key concepts that are clearly defined in the statement of the research problem.

**(2) Research Strategy:** Having identified the focus of the thesis, we now proceed to formulating a strategy for tackling it. Your strategy will restate your research problem and contain an analytical summary of the materials and methods you will use and how they will contribute to your argument. This includes but is more than a bibliography—you will describe what sources of data and observations you will draw upon (e.g. interviews, fieldwork, quantitative data, etc.) and how you will use them. If there are major gaps (i.e. data whose source is not yet known) these should be addressed in a separate section of the strategy. You must also assess the feasibility of gathering your data in time to complete the thesis. Depending on your approach your strategy will likely be a 12-15 page document. Please note, there is *no* worksheet for this assignment.

**(3) Prospectus:** The ultimate product of the course is a full thesis prospectus that builds logically upon the previous assignments. For those who are anticipating that they will finish in December or the following semester, the prospectus will be a full plan of the thesis, including a statement of the problem, situating the thesis in the relevant field with reference to existing literature, a statement of the data and methodology used, and conclusions, presented in a coherent, elegant form. (For those who are well advanced, this may take the form of a thesis draft).

**(4) Note on submission:** For the December 2010 graduation the final draft thesis should be submitted to your advisor no later than December 1 (unless otherwise specified). All final revisions should be completed by December 10. The final copy of your Master's Thesis should be delivered to Philip J. Akre's office (Rm. 606) no later than December 20, 2010.

### Expectations

- **Participation:** Oral comments should be concise, clear, and constructive. Providing careful and helpful feedback is a basic responsibility to fellow participants, and an exercise that will help you tremendously in your own work. Please take it seriously. The lack of involvement and participation will negatively affect your grade.
- **Your own work:** Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade and be automatically referred to the Dean's office. Plagiarism on a Masters Thesis is grounds for dismissal from the university. You are solely responsible for being familiar with relevant definitions and policies.
- **Style:** All written work (other than worksheets) *must* be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in 12 point Times New Roman Font and use proper citation.
- **Late Assignments:** Late assignments are accepted only with prior arrangements and a valid reason. Late assignments without prior authorization will not receive credit.
- **Incompletes:** Note that **no incompletes** will be given for this class, since there is no way to satisfactorily complete the work after the end of the semester.
- **Attendance:** It is expected that you attend class regularly. Missed classes will negatively affect your grade.

### Logistics

We will use either the New School "blackboard" or [gpia.info](http://www.gpia.info) website (<http://www.gpia.info>) as our basic form of communication. Assignments and responses will be posted in the "discussion" area. Separate thread should be created for each of the three assignments. Please note:

- *Work* to be discussed in any given session should be posted no later than on **Monday** prior to the session. When you post work, please create a new thread within the relevant forum that is labeled "(your name's) (name of assignment)" and **attach** your work to the thread as a Word or PDF document. Don't forget to put your name on top of the document too. Also when posting please be sure to title your document, for example, SmithResearchWSheet.doc or SmithResearchWSheet.pdf.
- Any written *comments* on work should be posted on the day the work is to be

discussed in class. Please post them as “replies” to the thread that corresponds to the document. Comments should be made either on the original Word document using “track changes” or on a separate Word document.

- I will moderate discussion in the workshop. I may invite individuals to comment on a non-voluntary basis, so you must be prepared to comment on other’s work or on assigned readings in every session.

### Class Schedule

- **Class 1, Sep 1/2. Why a Thesis?** Types (analytical, expository, argumentative), purpose, components, rules, timeline. A very short oral statement of your research problem.

**\*\* SEPTEMBER 8/9 NO CLASS ROSH HASHONAH \*\***

- **Class 2, Sep 15/16. The Research Problem.** What matters to whom, why and how do you know?

--**Read for class:** Turabian, chapters 1-2; Recommended: Becker, chapters 3 and 6.

--**Prepare for class:** The Research Problem Worksheet (**upload by Monday Sep 13**) and a five-minute oral statement of your research problem.

**\*\* SEPTEMBER 22/23 NO CLASS \*\***

- **Class 3, Sep 29/30. The State of the Field.** Understanding the literature review and how to avoid reinventing the wheel.

--**Read for class:** Turabian, chapters 3-4; Becker, chapter 8 “Terrorized by the Literature”; Dees, chapter 7.

--**Prepare for class:** Literature Review Worksheet (**upload by Mon**), prepare to discuss the state of the field for your topic.

- **Class 4, Oct 6/7. Argument and Conceptualization.** What an argument is, and is not, including common fallacies and how to avoid them.

--**Read for class:** Turabian, chapter 5; Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments* entire book; Dees, chapter 9.

--**Prepare for class:** 1. A concise statement of your concepts and assumptions (**upload by Mon**). 2. Self-quizzes on LogicTutor at

[www.norton.com/college/phil/logic3/cb6/index.htm](http://www.norton.com/college/phil/logic3/cb6/index.htm)

- **Class 5, Oct 13/14. Data and Method.** What counts, why, and how do you find it?

--**Read for class:** Veit, chapter 5.

--**Prepare for Class:** Methodology Worksheet (**upload by Mon**).

- **Class 6, 7, 8, 9, Oct 20/21; Oct 27/28; Nov 3/4; Nov 10/11. Presentation of Research Problem and Strategy 1/2/3/4.**

--**Read for class:** Your colleague’s research problems (3-4 students at a time).

--**Prepare for class:** Each time part of the class will discuss their research problems and present their research strategy (reminder, you will present your own document, not a

worksheet). Copies should be circulated to the whole class by prior **Mon**. Those who are presenting will have 15 minutes, those not presenting will be asked to make oral comments. Non-presenting student(s) will be assigned to each presenter as discussant and will post written comments on each paper. Please note, volunteering is encouraged and first-rate note-taking will count as part of your final grade. Failure to serve as an excellent discussant will affect your final grade.

- **Class 10, Nov 17/18. Structure, Style and Your Thesis (1).** What should a thesis look like?

--**Read for class:** Turabian, chapters 6-11 and 15. Familiarize yourself with all of part II & III; Strunk and White, part V, "An Approach to Style." Familiarize yourself with parts I-IV. Recommended: \* Becker, chapter 4, Editing by Ear. Read your colleagues' outline.

--**Prepare for class:** The first group will **present a draft Outline of your thesis, including one fully developed chapter.** 20-25 minutes each, with one or two discussants per presentation. The outlines of those presenting should be circulated to the rest of the class by **Monday**.

**\*\* NOVEMBER 24/25 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING \*\***

- **Class 11, Dec 1/2. Structure, Style and Your Thesis (2).** Same as above.

- **Class 12, Dec 8/9. Structure, Style and Your Thesis (3).** Same as above.

- **Class 13, Dec 15/16. Structure, Style and Your Thesis (4).** Same as above.

**FINAL DRAFT OF PROSPECTUS DUE WED DEC 22/23 BY EMAIL or IN HARD COPY (in my mailbox).**