

PS/GCS 470: Seminar for Majors

Birmingham-Southern College

Wednesday, 3:30-5:20 pm

Fall 2022

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:00-1:00pm, and by appointment

Welcome! This course is the first part of what is designed to be the culmination of your undergraduate work in political science or global and comparative studies. As such, the focus of our time will be centered around the *process* of research and writing. What this means is that most of our gatherings will be spent both examining the steps and discussing challenges involved in producing good, original political science(PS)/global and comparative studies (GCS) research and then applying that knowledge. We will, for instance, review the steps for drafting an abstract, annotated bibliography, literature review, and research agenda. We will devote time also to revisiting, in brief, PS/GCS research methods and metrics for determining what methodological approaches to conducting research makes most sense for you to employ.

This class also takes seriously the importance and value of both giving and receiving feedback and doing so in ways that is rooted in an ethics of care. You will therefore be expected, at all stages of the writing/research process, to present and defend your work, and provide thoughtful, constructive, generous written and verbal feedback on the work of your peers.

In the final analysis, the point of this course is to help structure your time toward the completion of your senior capstone project. What I have learned (and, it took me some time to arrive at this understanding) is that writing can be abundant, enjoyable, and even perhaps revitalizing when we give ourselves the time to move slowly, revisit, and meditate over our ideas and work. This type of project is not meant to be developed in, say, 3-weeks to a month; you need time and space for your ideas to unfold and mature. This course is designed with that sentiment in mind. My aim, then, is to help establish the conditions for you to be able to produce something meaningful and of which you can genuinely be proud.

Course Objectives:

1. Identify and examine the steps involved in producing cogent, original scholarship in political science and global and comparative studies .
2. Generate a testable research question on a topic of your choosing.
3. Sharpen skills used in providing feedback on other's scholarship.

Course Materials:

1. Both, Wayne C. et. al. (2016). *The Craft of Research* (4th Edition)-referred hereafter as “TCOR”
2. All other materials will be posted to our class' Moodle site.

Course Evaluation

1. Attendance and participation: You are expected to attend each class session and be an active agent of the conversation when present. I take seriously that intellectual labor is difficult work, so I ask that each student come prepared to reciprocally share in the project of engaging ideas and producing knowledge. With that in mind, assuming the disposition of a “sponge,” the “I just like to listen” approach to class discussion, is not acceptable. “Just listening” means that the burden of generating discussion and engaging ideas is placed on your classmates while you benefit from their intellectual heavy-lifting. Let’s all aim to distribute this labor among us; we will undoubtedly be made better scholars through these commitments. (20% of final course grade)
2. Class assignments:
 - Research topic statement (10%): You are required to produce a 2-3 page topic statement. At the preliminary stages of your research, this assignment is intended to function as a guide by establishing a set of (mutable) parameters around your project. Description and guidelines for this assignment are found in the addendum portion of the syllabus.
 - Progress statements/statement of need (10%): Roughly every 3-4 weeks, you will be prompted to submit to me a statement both detailing how you have advanced your work and mapping out the next stage(s) of your research and writing. With respect to the latter, I would also like for you to indicate what you believe you need in terms of resources and assistance to help elevate you to the next stage of your work. Ultimately, I want for us to maintain an open and ongoing dialogue about where you stand on your project and how I or others can help best support you. We will discuss your progress in our scheduled 1:1 meetings. I will provide a template and schedule for these, both of which will be made available on Moodle. Description and guidelines for this assignment are found in the addendum portion of the syllabus.
 - Annotated bibliography (15%): You are expected to construct an annotated bibliography of at least 10 scholarly sources. We will devote class and time to reviewing the steps for producing a good, effective annotated bibliography, while also exploring the virtues of using different software designed to help organize your work. Description and guidelines for this assignment are found in the addendum portion of the syllabus.
 - Literature review (20%): To demonstrate that you are aiming to develop a sound grasp on the literature in which you have situated your research question(s), you are required to submit a 5-7 page literature review surveying at least 10-15 scholarly sources. As we will discuss in class, you may construct your literature chronologically, thematically, or even organized in a way that emphasizes one or a set of methodological approaches. Finally, while the literature you deem relevant to your research will alter as your ideas come into better focus, it is beneficial to begin this step early on in the research process. A literature review template and sample reviews will be posted to Moodle.

Literature review draft is worth 5% of your final grade. The final draft is worth 15% of your final grade.

- Conference proposal (5%): In addition to working toward producing work that will be presented either at Honors Day or during the PS/GPS designated research presentations session, you will also make preparations to present your research at an academic conference. More information on this forthcoming.
- Research agenda outline (20%): To ensure you are set up well to make good, immediate progress at the start of the spring term, you are asked to submit a research agenda mapping out, in considerable detail, how you plan to proceed with your research. I will post this assignment to Moodle 3-4 weeks in advance of the deadline.

Accessibility/ADA

Students with a disability that qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and require accommodations should be registered with BSC's Accessibility Office. If you are registered for academic accommodation, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any accommodation that may be necessary. During this discussion you are not expected to disclose any details concerning your disability though you may do so at your discretion. If you have a disability but have not yet registered, please contact Dr. Sandra Foster, Assistant Director of Accessibility Services and Resources, at 205-226-7909 (x1909) or smfoster@bsc.edu, or visit Norton 228. Keep in mind that no accommodation will be made unless and until the instructor receives official notification from the College

Title IX

Birmingham-Southern College is committed to the creation and maintenance of a safe learning environment for students and the campus community. The College forbids any type of sexual or gender-based misconduct among its students, faculty, and staff. The College encourages all members of the academic community to report suspected sexual and gender-based misconduct to the appropriate authorities so that it can be investigated, remedied, and eliminated. BSC forbids retaliation against any person who has opposed, reported, or participated in an investigation concerning sexual or gender-based misconduct. See [BSC Title IX](#) for more information, including an [online report form](#). If you or a peer have experienced such misconduct, there are faculty and staff members who are trained in supporting students by answering questions and helping them navigate this process. The list of advocates can be found [here](#), among other [helpful resources](#) you will find listed on the Title IX website.

The Honor Code & Academic Conduct

You are expected to abide by the College's rules of academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Handbook for Birmingham-Southern College's Honor Code and its statement on plagiarism. When you turn in someone's else's work under your own name, and/or paraphrase, quote, or borrow ideas that are not your own without proper citation, you commit plagiarism—a serious academic offense with consequences ranging from failing the course to disciplinary action by the college. Students suspected of violating the Honor code will be referred immediately to the Honor Council.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

I support an inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized and respected. As outlined in the Birmingham-Southern mission, the College challenges students to engage in their community and the greater world, to examine diverse perspectives, and to live with integrity. That being said, in order to promote an inclusive and constructive learning environment, demeaning, marginalizing, abusive, and otherwise harmful language and behavior is not welcome in our classroom. I want for us, instead, to cultivate a community that is rooted in principles of radical care, compassion, and love.

BSC Resources for Writers and Readers

Located in Humanities 102, the BSC Writing Center offers in-person and virtual peer-to-peer tutoring and quiet, supportive lab space to work on writing assignments. The Center's tutors are students from a wide variety of majors on campus and have the range to address student writing needs with discipline specificity. Supervised and assisted by BSC Writing Center directors, the tutors provide one-on-one consultations for any student at any point in the writing process. The Writing Center is open Sunday-Thursday, 2pm-8pm. To ensure a full 30-minute tutorial time slot, students are encouraged to be mindful of assignment-heavy weeks, keep track of due dates, and visit the Writing Center at their earliest availability during open hours. Please contact Drs. Anna Williams or Laura Tolbert (writingcenter@bsc.edu) with any questions or requests for virtual appointments.

BSC 's Academic Resource Center (ARC)

The Academic Resource Center (ARC), located on the ground floor of the Library, offers drop-in tutoring and one-on-one assistance for all BSC students. They offer assistance in Accounting, Arabic, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Chinese, Economics, History, Latin, Marketing, Music Theory, Philosophy, Physics, Physiology, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, Sociology, Spanish, and Statistics. Peer tutoring is free and tutors spend an hour or more per one-on-one appointment, and there is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have. Also feel free to stop by during regular drop-in hours (Monday-Thurs, 7- 9 p.m. for assistance without an appointment). For more information or to make an appointment email arc@bsc.edu or visit the [Academic Resource Center web page](#) and submit a form. Reach out, they can help!

Course Schedule

Date	Assignment/Readings
<u>August 24</u> : Introduction	-What does it look like to conduct Political Science and Global and Comparative Studies Research? -Discuss tentative research topics
<u>August 31</u> : Formulating a Research Question	Read: chs. 3-4 from TCOR *You will return to your research question, once again, after having drafted your literature review.
<u>September 7</u> : Moving from research question to locating and engaging sources (though this is not a linear process).	Read: chs. 4-6 from TCOR *We will convene in the library for the second half of the session. **I will also pass out and discuss guidelines for writing an annotated bibliography. Research question assignment due today by the start of class, via Moodle.
<u>September 14</u> : No class (Dr. M at the <i>American Political Science Association</i> annual meeting)	Continue to work on annotated bibliography Statement of progress due by 5:00 pm, 9/14 via Moodle.
<u>September 21</u> : The annotated bibliography	-Bring with you to class your annotated bibliography. We will use that as a basis for a concept-mapping exercise. Annotated bibliography due at the start of today's (9/21) class.
<u>September 28</u> : From annotated bibliography to the literature review	Read: Sample PS undergraduate literature reviews posted to Moodle.
<u>October 5</u> : 1:1 Meetings/statement of progress discussions	-Scheduled meetings with Dr. M. Come to the meeting prepared to discuss: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress on literature review. 2. Challenges you are facing in drafting literature review. 3. What do you plan to work on during our 1st in-class writing retreat. Statement of progress due by 5:00 pm, 10/04.

<u>October 12</u> : Writing retreat	Dress comfy, bring your laptops/notepads, coffee/tea mugs, and whatever material you may need to be productive during today's writing retreat.
<u>October 19</u> : Research in GCS/PS Revisited	In-class readings (to be distributed at the start of our session).
<u>October 26</u> : The research agenda	Read: Sample research agendas posted to Moodle.
<u>November 2</u> : Literature review peer review day and	<p>-Bring 1 hardcopy of your literature review with you to class for peer review.</p> <p>-Come prepared also to give a brief summary to the class of your findings. Center your remarks around addressing the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are some of the central debates animating my area of research? 2. Who seem to be critical figures within the debate(s)? 3. How has my understanding of this research been enhanced? 4. Am I seeing clearly what my intervention into this literature ought to be? If so, does this insight call for me to reformulate my research question? 5. What areas of this literature do I need to invest more time studying? Do I need to engage a different literature? <p>You are becoming the expert in this area. This is your opportunity to do a bit of teaching!</p> <p>First draft of literature review due today, (11/02) by the start of class.</p>
<u>November 9</u> : In-class writing retreat	Repeat same set up/structure as 1 st writing retreat.
<u>November 16</u> : 1:1 meetings/statement of progress discussions	<p>1:1 Meetings</p> <p>Statement of progress due by 5:00 pm, 11/15.</p>

<u>November 23</u> : Thanksgiving break; no class	No assignments due.
<u>November 30</u> : Final class session	End of term reflections and mapping out the spring term.
<u>December 6</u> : Final exam period, 6:00 pm	Research agenda roundtable (over dinner?) Literature Reviews due 12/06, by 3:00 pm via Moodle.

ADDENDUM

Assignment descriptions with due dates:

1. Research topic statement: This assignment is intended to help set your research project in motion. I understand that each one of you will arrive at this class having different levels of clarity around and knowledge about a given research topic. *That is okay*. If you are feeling completely at a loss for what you may want to study, begin first by asking yourself: “During my time in classes, what topics/concepts/ideas piqued my interest.” Or: “What have I wanted to learn more about?” Or: “What is happening in the world now that I want to spend time analyzing/theorizing?” Knowing that you may have not yet determined what you will study, try your best to write a research topic statement that is clear, precise, and as feasible as possible. Ultimately, this assignment is intended to get your ideas percolating and onto paper.

Your research topic statement is to be 2-3 double-spaced pages in length and should include the following elements:

- A description of the topic.
- A statement about how you plan to study it (I.e. Will you be employing case studies? Is there archival material you will need to mine?).
- What literatures will likely frame your topic? (E.g. Democratization, state-building, revolutions, the Black radical tradition, etc.)
- If writing in political science, in what subfield will you situate your work? If in GCS, at what intersections will you situate your work?

(Oh! This is also a good moment for you to begin compiling a preliminary bibliography of pertinent work.)

Due: September 7, by 3:30 pm via Moodle submission portal

2. Statement of progress: I am interested in your becoming curious about your writing process. I therefore encourage you to be in discovery around what the ideal conditions are for you to produce good work and do so at a level that is sustainable. I also hope that, through this process, you recognize that producing scholarship is not a solipsistic endeavor. As writers and researchers, we often gain and our work is enhanced when we share it with others, and ask that they help hold us accountable and perhaps envision new terrains for where our ideas might land.

This is really all this statement of progress is: an opportunity for you to reflect on (and I hope celebrate!) the work you have done and an invitation for you to seek out help when/where you think it is needed. I want you to always be honest with yourself about where you are with your research and challenges you may be facing. That is really how you will move your work forward. We will use your statement as a basis for conversation during our 1:1 meetings.

Your statement of progress should be at least 2 double-spaced pages in length and include the following:

- A summary of the work you have accomplished up the point of your submission. Be as specific as possible (e.g. How many pages did you write? What more did you learn about your topic? If at all, how has your research question transformed?)
- A statement on whether or not you met the goals you set for yourself. If yes, what contributed to your being able to make steady progress? If no, what impinged on capacity to do so?
- What do you aim to accomplish in the next 3-4 weeks? Again, be specific.
- How can I (Dr. M) support you? What additional direction do you need at this stage?
- How are you feeling about your work?

Due: 9/14, 10/4, and 11/15, each by 5:00 pm, submitted via the Moodle designated portal.

3. Annotated bibliography: To help sharpen your note-taking practice as well as to hone your ability to succinctly summarize works (and do so in a way that highlights their importance relevant to your research), you are required to submit an annotated bibliography of at least 10 scholarly sources. Just so you are clear about what constitutes a scholarly source within your field(s) of study, we will spend time with the campus librarians who will review how and where to locate reputable scholarly sources.

In addition to its being a helpful recall device (that is, remembering the central arguments of a source, etc.) if done correctly, it also gets you into the practice of accounting for your citations. Let me tell you: it is incredibly annoying to have to track down an important piece of literature you've read months ago, but have no record of it. So, be sure to spend the time, on the front end, properly citing and keeping good account of all the works you survey.

Annotated bibliography format:

- Citation
- Summary/annotation (1-2 short paragraphs)

What ought you include in your annotation?

- Summary of the work
- Outline the main argument
- Its strengths and weaknesses
- Relevance to your research
- Assessment of methodological approach (if applicable)
- Relevance to your field
- Overall impression

Final draft due: 9/21 at the start of class, submitted via Moodle. Please also bring a hardcopy with you to class.

4. Literature Review: Guidelines and literature view templates will be posted to our Moodle page.

First draft due: October 19, by 3:30 pm
Final draft due: November 2, by 11:59 pm

5. Research agenda: I will post a full template of this to our Moodle page.

Due: December 6, by 3:00 pm