

**SENIOR THESIS
SOAN 400**

SPRING 2012

Professor Bruce Podobnik

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed/Fri, 3-4pm (consult my online calendar for other meeting options)

Course Overview

The focus of the senior seminar is conceptualizing, researching, drafting, and revising the senior thesis. Your thesis **must** be completed by the end of the term (no incompletes are offered). Every polished study is created through an extensive revision process in which numerous people read your work and provide suggestions for strengthening it. I will require each of you to read and comment on drafts written by your fellow students in our class context. Please also consult others whom you trust (friends, other faculty, knowledgeable members of the LC community and beyond, etc.) for their feedback on your work. By combining your unique, individual insights with this general, social research process, you can each construct a study that is a novel and fascinating analysis of our complex world.

Recommended Books

I recommend you browse through each of the following books early on in the semester, so that you know where to look for guidance on specific issues as they arise.

Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Staines, Gail. 2000. *Social Sciences Research: Writing Strategies for Students*. Lanham, Md. : Scarecrow Press.

Formatting and Citation Instructions

I prefer that students use the APA citation format. Before asking me about formatting, citation, or grammatical questions, please consult the following books: Harris. *The Writer's FAQs: A Pocket Handbook*. Williams. *Style: Basics of Clarity and Grace*.

Contacting Me

During this semester, I will make students in this course my highest priority. Feel free to check my online calendar to see when I'm available. Please don't hesitate to come talk to me as often as you need!

Major Deadlines

Friday, January 20: Initial thesis proposal due.

This initial thesis description should be as detailed and specific as possible. You should identify areas where you are uncertain or anticipate running into difficulties.

Friday, January 27: Revised thesis proposal due.

Your revised proposal must provide preliminary descriptions of the methodologies, modes of analysis, types of data, and theoretical frameworks you will be using.

Friday, February 3: Detailed descriptions of methods, modes of analysis, and data due.

This description must clearly identify the methodologies, modes of analysis, and sources of data you will be using (including deadlines for doing field research/data collection).

Friday, February 10: Detailed descriptions of theorists and modes of analysis due.

This description must clearly identify all the major theorists and modes of analysis you will be using.

Friday, February 17: Initial annotated bibliography due.

The annotated bibliography should serve to make you think more critically about the materials you have initially selected for reference.

Friday, February 24: Comprehensive thesis outline due.

This outline must provide a clear overview of every section you plan to include in your thesis, as well as brief descriptions about what you intend to accomplish in each section.

Friday, March 2: A minimum of 10 written pages due.

Friday, March 9: Another minimum of 10 written pages due.

Friday, March 16: Another minimum of 10 written pages due.

Friday, March 23: First draft of thesis due.

This draft must contain extensive written text in each of the sections of your thesis, including the conclusion. Please print out one copy for me and one for the peer reviewer. If you do not turn in your first draft on this day, there is virtually no way you will get higher than a B+ in the course. Every thesis needs to be extensively revised, and you must have sufficient time to do that. Students who are trying for honors must ensure that this draft is very strong!

Spring Break: March 24-April 1

Friday, April 6: Peer reviewed drafts due.

Friday, April 13: Second draft of thesis and final bibliography due.

This draft must essentially be the final version of the thesis, with every section present and edited.

Wednesday, April 25: Final version of thesis due.

This version must be complete and error-free.

Student thesis presentations will occur at the end of the semester.

College as a Professional Occupation

I expect all of your class-related behavior to be professional in nature. Work must be turned in on time, appointments must be kept, discussions must be respectful of everyone, etc.

On the Use of Email

My email tends to get crazy, and plus it is usually best to talk in person. So, let's talk instead of emailing whenever possible. Check my online calendar to see when I'm available and to sign up for a time to talk in person or via the phone. Thanks!

Getting Assistance and/or Special Accommodation During the Course

I encourage you to contact me if you are having difficulties with the course material or assignments. Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything I can do to make your experience in this course more positive for you. I am also very happy to work with students who are in need of special accommodations. If you anticipate needing special accommodations, contact the Student Support Services Office to discuss your situation. That office will then contact me, and we can take appropriate action to make sure all your needs are accommodated.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are very serious infractions, and are dealt with severely in this course! I expect you to understand and abide by the College's Academic Integrity Policy, which may be found in the Pathfinder (www.lclark.edu/~stlife). This policy prohibits any form of cheating on exams or written assignments. It also prohibits plagiarism, so be certain to properly cite all information that you use in your thesis. If you haven't already done so, take the tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism available here:

<http://library.lclark.edu/reference/plagiarism/index.htm>

Grading Scale

On all assignments turned in for my courses, student are given percentage grades that are—at the very end of the semester—combined to generate a final course percentage grade. The following percentage scores, along with some comments, describe my grading system.

Percent Range	Grade	Comments
100 - 95	A	Given for work that not only meets all expectations, but also contains an impressive level of insight and effort.
94 - 90	A-	Given for work that not only meets all expectations, but also contains some unique elements of insight and effort. <i>You will have to work very hard, and go beyond the stated requirements of the assignment, to receive an A-.</i>
89 - 87	B+	Given for very good work that meets all expectations.
86 - 84	B	Given for work that meets most expectations, but contains problems.
83 - 80	B-	Given for work that meets expectations, but contains some problems.
79 - 77	C+	Given for work that is passing, yet somewhat problematic.
76 - 74	C	Given for work that is passing, yet quite problematic.
73 - 70	C-	Given for work that is passing, yet extremely problematic.
69 - 0	D/F	Given for unsatisfactory work.

Keep Multiple Copies of all Your Work

No credit can be given for any course work that is lost (by you or me) or rendered un-retrievable because of computer problems. Always keep a duplicate copy of your thesis or any other course work in a safe place (such as Webdisk). Keep extra copies of all your assignments until after the semester ends and you have received your official grades from the Registrar's Office.

Keeping Track of Your Thesis for Letters of Recommendation

I am often asked to write letters of recommendation for students. I am able to write a more useful, detailed letter, if you can provide me with the titles and a brief summary of the thesis you wrote in my class.

Requirements for Written Work

- 1) Always put your name, my name, and the course title on the first page of your thesis.
- 2) Do not insert double-returns between paragraphs.
- 3) Unless I request it, do not turn assignments in with report covers.
- 4) Use 1 inch margins, a normal font size, and double-spacing on each page.
- 5) Do not use small fonts or single spacing, as this makes it hard to insert comments.
- 6) To save paper, please use double-sided printing if you can.
- 7) Print out your thesis yourself. I only accept emailed drafts in limited cases.

Suggestions for Written Work

- 1) Give your thesis an interesting, dynamic title.
- 2) Begin your thesis with an engaging introductory paragraph. Make the reader really want to read your thesis.
- 3) In the second or third paragraph of your thesis, insert an overview statement that clearly describes what your thesis is about and gives the reader a sense of what is coming.
- 4) In general, use normal language in your thesis. Avoid the use of overly-complicated phrases or jargon.
- 5) Make sure that every sentence in your thesis is very straight-forward and clear. Avoid run-on sentences.
- 6) Organize your ideas carefully. Make sure that every sentence flows smoothly from the previous one.
- 7) Carefully construct your paragraphs. Make certain all sentences in a paragraph are connected to one another.
- 8) In general, do not begin or end paragraphs with quotations from sources.
- 9) Avoid relying on over-generalizations. Whenever possible, refer to specific cases and evidence to build your arguments. Acknowledge circumstances that do not fit overall generalizations.
- 10) End your thesis with a strong conclusion. Leave the reader with something intriguing to think about.

The "Three Error" Rule

I will allow up to three basic grammatical or style errors to slide without penalizing you. However, I will deduct one percentage point from your final thesis grade for every subsequent basic error of grammar or style. In other words, if I was going to give you a 90 percent on your thesis, but I identified thirteen basic grammatical/style errors, you will receive an 80 percent (which is obviously a severe blow to the grade). Basic grammatical errors include: incorrect spelling; incorrect punctuation; incorrect verb agreement; sloppy paragraph construction; run-on sentences; convoluted sentences; passive constructions; and other errors.

*"The road to truth is a difficult one...
You must work hard to walk on it!"
—Bodhidharma*

