

GOV 679A: Political Theory Honors Tutorial

Fall 2012

Unique # 38865

Mondays 3:30-6:15

Location: Mezes 1.104

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Office Hours:
Wednesdays 1-4

Welcome to the Political Theory Honors Tutorial. The Honors Tutorial is designed to facilitate the successful completion of a thesis in political theory. The goals of the tutorial are three: first, to provide students with supervision and advice in the development of their ideas for theses, and in the crafting of a thesis itself; second, to provide structure (read: deadlines!) in the completion of work that is primarily self-directed and independent in nature; and third, to provide a forum for students to develop their ideas, test out theories, and present their work to one another in a collegial setting.

Requirements and Expectations

The Honors Tutorial is part of the year-long Honors Thesis Program. By the end of the academic year, students are expected to complete a thesis under the supervision of the Honors Advisor (Fall) and their individual thesis advisor (Spring). There are only a few required readings in the Honors Tutorial. But bear in mind that this is because a tremendous amount of outside reading and writing relating to your individual thesis projects is required. In the Honors Tutorial, students will be expected to complete all required readings before class, read extensively in their research areas, participate in all class discussions and other in-class activities, such as reading and commenting on other students' research, meet regularly with their individual thesis advisors, and hand in all assignments on time. By the end of the Tutorial, students are required to have completed a 10-15 page proposal, including an outline of their thesis in its entirety, and the first chapter of their thesis. Students making sufficient progress at the close of the fall semester will be admitted to the spring semester of the Honors Tutorial (GOV679B).

About The Honors Thesis Program

The Honors Thesis Program is intended to provide outstanding students with an opportunity to undertake a high-level independent research project of their own devising; to analyze a topic and conduct original research in his or her area of interest; and to give students an opportunity to engage in scholarly exchange with peers undertaking similar projects of their own. At the end of the year, students will give presentations of their work to an assemblage of their peers and advisors. Completion of the Honors Tutorial and the submission of an Honors Thesis makes a student eligible to graduate with "Special Honors in Government." The Honors Advisor and each student's individual advisor will evaluate the quality of the thesis to determine whether it merits

this distinction. In addition, students must meet college and departmental semester hour and minimum grade-point average requirements. Theses will be evaluated in terms of their mastery of the most prominent literature in the field related to their topic; the original contribution they make to scholarly understanding, either in terms of interpretation or in terms of an advancement of knowledge; and the quality of their written presentation of their material.

Grading

Students will earn a grade in the fall semester of the Honors Tutorial on the basis of the following factors: quality and rate of progress on the thesis project, particularly the first chapter submitted in the last three weeks of the course; quality of participation in class activities, including in-class presentations, class discussions, and assessments of peers' work; and their ability to meet deadlines. Attendance does not comprise a part of the grade *per se*. But it is expected that students doing work at this level will be dedicated participants in the tutorial and will attend every class. Any absences should be explained in advance, and repeated lack of attendance will prompt re-evaluation of your participation in the program.

A student who misses an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day will be given the opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, provided that he or she has properly notified the instructor. It is the policy of UT that student must notify the instructor at least 14 days prior to the classes scheduled on dates that he or she will be absent to observe a holy day.

*For obvious reasons, this course carries the Writing Flag.

Course Outline

In the first few weeks of the course, we will spend our classroom time on the craft of writing. We will read texts designed to help you brush up on the basics, such as grammar and punctuation, and to aid you in the process of formulating arguments and communicating them effectively, by means of clear and elegant prose. *Outside* the classroom, you should be very busy zeroing-in on the basic idea for your thesis and establishing and solidifying a good working relationship with your individual thesis supervisor. You should be working on a revised thesis proposal, due September 21st, reading up on your topic, and working out a plan of action for the semester. If you do not have a thesis advisor by now, you need to secure one as soon as possible.

Beginning October 8th, class time will be spent exclusively discussing students' progress. Some weeks we will discuss preliminary written work; other weeks we will hear progress reports, in which students will explain the progress they are making in terms of the development of their thinking, the writing they have completed, and the reading they are doing. In the second half of the semester, students will give presentations of their thesis proposals in various stages of completion. **Students will be required to make three oral presentations over the course of the semester:** first of their

preliminary thesis proposal (15 minutes), then of their revised proposal (20 minutes), and finally of their first chapter (20 minutes).

Required Texts

The Elements of Style. By William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. 50th Anniv. Ed. Longman, 2008.

Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing. By John R. Trimble. 2nd Ed. Prentice Hall, 2000.

Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. If the office certifies your needs, I will work with you to make the appropriate arrangements.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to know and to adhere to University of Texas policies regarding academic honesty and integrity. This is especially important in the context of writing an honors thesis. Please familiarize yourself with the University's definition of and policies regarding plagiarism: Plagiarism "occurs if you represent as your own work any material that was obtained from another source, regardless of how or where you acquired it." Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the course. I will refer the matter to the Dean of Students with a strong recommendation that you be expelled from the university. To avoid plagiarism, cite the work of others. If you need advice about how to do this, see me or your individual thesis advisor. You should make every effort to adhere to academic conventions in your methods of citation, but what is most important is that you attribute work to its sources in a clear and unmistakable way.

Course Schedule and Deadlines

September 10	Introduction Due: A one-paragraph (max. 1 page) explanation of your working idea for your thesis, and a preliminary outline of its chapters.
September 17	Discussion of Ideas; Writing I: <i>The Elements of Style</i>

September 24	Discussion of Ideas; Writing II: <i>Writing with Style</i> Due: A revised two-page thesis proposal and bibliography. This brief proposal is a statement of research intent: what question, puzzle, or problem are you planning to investigate or examine in your thesis? It should provide a rough summary of your thinking based on early investigation of your topic and include 5-10 citations of the relevant literature. To be circulated among the members of the class.
October 1	Writing III: "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell (to be distributed); Other Writing Handouts
October 8	Progress Reports, Discussion of proposals, Group 1
October 15	Progress Reports, Discussion of proposals, Group 2
October 22	Due: A draft thesis proposal and preliminary bibliography. The proposal should be 5-7 typed double-spaced pages. Proposals should identify the research topic/question to be addressed in the thesis, explain its importance, indicate the main lines of argument, outline a research strategy, and provide a preliminary outline of the thesis, indicating the number and subject matter of the envisioned chapters. Presentation of proposals (15 min. each)
October 29	Progress Reports (Everybody)
November 5	New Revised Proposals Due (10-15 pages); presentation of proposals (20 min. each, Group 1)
November 12	New Revised Proposals Due (10-15 pages); presentation of proposals (20 min. each, Group 2)
November 19	Progress Reports (Everybody)
November 26	Chapter 1 due, presentations (20 min. each, Group 1)
December 3	Chapter 1 due, presentations (20 min. each, Group 2)