

**SENIOR CAPSTONE SEMINAR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE  
NYUAD, AY 2016-17**

Instructor: <b>Leonid Peisakhin</b>	Time: Sun, 1:30-4pm
Assistant Professor of Political Science	Location: A5-175
<a href="mailto:leonid.peisakhin@nyu.edu">leonid.peisakhin@nyu.edu</a>	Course Number: POLSC-AD 400
Office: 149, Social Sciences Building, A5	Credit Units: 4
Office Hours: Mondays, 4:30-6:30pm	Prerequisites: Mandatory for seniors in PS

**Course Description:**

The purpose of this class is to assist you as you design, execute, and write your capstone project. As such, this class will help you to select a topic, structure your research and the narrative, select most appropriate methods for analyzing your data, and manage your time in such a way that you are able to complete and submit your project on time.

Initially, we will meet as a group to discuss topic selection, consider examples of successful past capstones and go over issues relating to research design. You will have an opportunity to examine work by others and multiple opportunities to present your ideas and updates on your progress as the class proceeds over the course of the academic year.

Crucially, the capstone project is your *individual* work. You will be spending much of the time in the fall, and even more so in the spring, working on the capstone independently. During these periods it will be important that you meet with your capstone mentor and myself on a regular basis. A good working relationship with your capstone mentor will be crucial to your success. Be sure to maintain regular contact with your mentor and do not hesitate to ask for help with substantive and methodological issues when you need it. This class also has a teaching assistant (Jeffrey Marshall: [jbm376@nyu.edu](mailto:jbm376@nyu.edu)), who is available to assist you with more mundane methodological problems.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the fall semester students will learn how to formulate a research question, draft a research proposal and critically evaluate shortcomings in existing research. Students will also learn how to structure a standard-length research paper and how to go about collecting original data.

By the end of the spring semester students will produce an original research project along the way learning how to analyze empirical data and develop iterative strategies for testing theories against data.

**Teaching and Learning Methodologies:**

There will be no conventional lecturing in this class. Your interests and needs will shape the direction of our discussions, and it is important to come to class with ideas and questions and having done the reading. I encourage you to engage as much as possible with your colleagues' research ideas; you will be able learn a great deal through intellectual interactions with your peers, especially those working on related research topics.

## Readings:

There is one required book for this class:

- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

All other mandatory readings will be posted on the Classes server.

Here are a few suggestions with regards to guides to research design that you might want to purchase in addition to the two required texts. Which specific research guide will be most useful to you will depend on the nature of your project, and this is something that will become clear by early November.

### General:

- Brady, Henry and David Collier, eds. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

### Statistics:

- Yang, Keming. 2010. *Making Sense of Statistical Methods in Social Research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Berry, William and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

### Case studies:

- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

### Experiments:

- Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Science: A Design-Based Approach*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerber, Alan and Donald Green. 2012. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

## Statistical software:

You need not use statistical methods in your thesis, but, in practice, many of you will choose to do so. You have the choice of using either STATA or R. STATA is considerably easier to use; R is more complicated but it is free and has superior mapping tools. STATA is available at NYUAD computer labs. You can also purchase STATA (STATA/IC) for use on your home computers [here](#). R is available for free [here](#).

## Course requirements:

### Fall 2015:

The primary requirement in the fall will be a research proposal where you will describe your research idea, situate it in the existing literature, formulate testable hypotheses, and present your research design. The *first draft* of this 8-10 page essay (double-spaced) will be due on December 4. You will then have a chance to present your research idea in class and to revise the research proposal; final draft of the proposal is due on December 15. By

the end of the semester you will also need to demonstrate that you have amassed all the empirical data (dataset, historical information, case-study materials, etc.) and have made the necessary administrative arrangements (experimental protocols/surveys written) necessary to write your capstone.

*Spring 2015:*

A mandatory refresher course in statistics will be offered over the course of the first three weeks of the spring semester. The course will meet twice weekly on a schedule that will be advertised by Jeffrey Marshall. You can be exempted from this refresher course by the capstone seminar leader in the event that the material is irrelevant to your research project or if you are deemed to already possess sufficient proficiency in statistics. You will have several opportunities to present your results as they take shape over the course of the semester. Capstone projects, 30-50 pages in length (double-spaced), will be due on May 1.

**Deadlines:**

*Fall 2015:*

October 8: 1-2 page (double-spaced) outline of research idea due

December 4: first draft of research proposal due (8-10 pages; double-spaced)

December 15: final draft of research proposal due (8-10 pages; double-spaced)

December 15: Due date for dataset/descriptive statistics or equivalent for non-statistical projects. Survey instruments and experimental protocols, if applicable, are also due.

[By January 1: IRB application submitted for research involving human subjects.]

*Spring 2016:*

February 18: Due date for descriptive statics or equivalent for non-statistical projects

March 4: Due date for simple data analyses or equivalent for non-statistical projects

March 26: Due date for sophisticated data analyses or equivalent for non-statistical projects

April 9: First draft of capstone paper due

May 1: Capstone paper submitted (30-50 pages; double spaced)

**Course grade:**

*Fall 2015:*

Participation (comments on fellow students' projects and engagement in the general flow of class discussion): 20%

Small group presentation of past theses: 5%

1-2 page outline of research idea: 5%

First presentation of research idea: 5%

First draft of research proposal: 10%

Second presentation of research idea: 5%

Presentation at the Capstone Festival: 5%

Final draft of research proposal: 15%

Submission of dataset/data file: 10%

Capstone mentor's assessment of student progress: 20%

*Spring 2015:*

Spring semester grade is the same as the overall capstone paper grade. The capstone grade is assigned by the capstone mentor and an external reader. In cases where the discrepancy between the two grades is half-a-grade point (e.g. A and A-), the higher of two grades stands. If the discrepancy is greater than half-a-grade point then the seminar leader facilitates a conciliation process on the basis of which a final grade is assigned.

### **Course Schedule:**

**Sunday, August 28:** Introduction—Preliminary Discussion of Research Interests

- Hempel, Carl. 1966. "Philosophy of Natural Science". Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp. 3-32.

**Sunday, September 25:** Group Presentations of Past Capstone Projects

- Tanigawa-Lau, Cole. 2016. "When the Hurlyburly's Done: The Effect of Disaster Relief on Campaign Contributions." Senior Capstone, NYU Abu Dhabi.
- Toth, Aliz. 2016. "Fight or Flight: Remittances and Conflict in the Nepali Civil War." Senior Capstone, NYU Abu Dhabi.
- Bicalho, Clara. 2016. "The Effect of Social Ties and Recruitment Agencies on Wages: A Case Study of Ugandan Migrants in the United Arab Emirates." Senior Capstone, NYU Abu Dhabi.

\*\*\*October 8, by noon: 1-2 page summary of research idea due via email\*\*\*

**Sunday, October 9:** Individual Presentations of Research Ideas

- Your colleagues' research ideas. These will be circulated on October 6.

**Sunday, October 30:** Basics of Research Design I

- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, chapter 3: pp. 75-114.

**Sunday, November 6:** Basics of Research Design II

- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, chapter 4: pp. 115-149.
- Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" in *American Political Science Review* 98: 341-354.

**Sunday, November 20:** How to Write a Research Paper I

- Gerring, John and Dino Christenson. 2014. "Advice on Writing." An excerpt.

\*\*\* December 4, by noon: first draft of 8-10 page research proposal due via email\*\*\*

**Sunday, December 4:** Individual Presentations of Research Proposals

- No readings.

\*\*\*December 11: Capstone Festival\*\*\*

\*\*\* December 15, by noon: final draft of 8-10 page research proposal due via email\*\*\*

\*\*\* December 15, by noon: dataset/data file due via email\*\*\*

WINTER BREAK

STATISTICS REFRESHER COURSE: First three weeks of the Spring semester, bi-weekly (on a schedule advertised by Jeff Marshall). Attendance is mandatory unless I have given you an exemption.

**Sunday, January 29:** Progress reports

- No readings

\*\*\* February 18, by noon: descriptive statistics due via email\*\*\*

**Sunday, February 19:** Presentations of Descriptive Statistics

- No readings.

\*\*\* March 4, by noon: simple data analyses due via email\*\*\*

**Sunday, March 5:** Presentations of Simple Data Analyses

- No readings.

\*\*\* March 26, by noon: sophisticated data analyses due via email\*\*\*

**Sunday, March 26:** Presentations of Sophisticated Data Analyses

- No readings.

**Sunday, April 3:** How to Write a Research Paper II

- No readings.

\*\*\*April 9: First draft of Capstone paper due\*\*\*

\*\*\* May 1: Capstone Project due\*\*\*

**Wednesday, May 4:** Practice Capstone Presentations and Debrief

- No readings.

\*\*\* May 7: Capstone Festival (full day)\*\*\*