

Political Science Honors Thesis Courses

POSC H395, POSC H396

Fall 2009

Honors Coordinator: Jeff Fine

Introduction: POSC H395 and POSC H396 comprise a two-semester sequence leading up to the senior honors thesis. POSC H395 involves the completion of a junior honors paper. POSC H396 involves the completion of a prospectus for the senior honors thesis. Successful completion of H396 (defined as achieving a grade of B or higher in the course) is a prerequisite to enrollment in POSC H490 and H491, which involve the research and writing of the Senior Honors Thesis. The Junior Honors Research Paper and the Prospectus for the Senior Honors Thesis are to be written under the guidance and direction of one or more members of the political science faculty. In appropriate cases, and with the approval of the honors coordinator, the junior honors advisor or co-advisor may be a faculty member from outside the Department of Political Science.

Requirements for H395: The paper for the political science thesis involves the examination of a narrowly focused but interesting question within the field of political science. POSC H395 requires the completion of a well-developed literature review for the honors paper. The purpose of a literature review is to summarize and evaluate the existing research on a particular topic, identifying “gaps” in the literature. Although the H395 paper should place the issues presented within the context of the political science literature, it should not merely report on the work of others. The appropriate length of the paper varies, but all papers should be typed, double-spaced, and written using a reasonable font (**Note:** Courier New is **not** considered “reasonable”). The junior paper will be due on *December 4th, 2009*.

Requirements for H396: The prospectus for the senior thesis constitutes the primary requirement for POSC H396. The prospectus must be completed by *December 4th, 2009*. In developing and completing the prospectus, it is your responsibility to find a faculty advisor, who will work with you throughout the fall and spring semesters. In many cases, the faculty advisor will be the honors coordinator. The prospectus should consist of (a) a statement of the question to be examined and why it is important, (b) a proposed method for approaching and answering this question, (c) a comprehensive review of the relevant books and articles in the political science literature, and (d) a discussion of what you expect to find once you carry out the senior thesis. Students should submit one copy to their advisor and one to the honors coordinator, who may refer it to an outside reader. The grade for H396 will be assigned by the honors coordinator in consultation with the faculty advisor. Late papers result in the assignment of an incomplete grade, and may jeopardize your eligibility to continue in the departmental honors program.

It is strongly recommended that students and advisors adhere to the following guidelines:

- For H395 – by *September 14th, 2009* the student should submit to his or her advisor a preliminary proposal. The preliminary proposal should consist of (a) a one-paragraph statement of the question to be examined, (b) a proposed method for approaching and answering the question, (c) a list of the relevant books and articles in the political science literature, and (d) a detailed outline of the proposed paper.
- For H396 – by *September 14th, 2009* the student should submit to his/her advisor a preliminary prospectus. The preliminary prospectus should include an explanation and

rationale for the thesis project, clearly state the hypothesis or the research question, discuss the relevant literature and supporting theory, outline the research methodology and provide some indication of why the thesis project is significant to the field of political science.

The student's responsibilities: Although the faculty is committed to helping each student in the research and writing of his/her junior paper, it is the student's responsibility to complete the required work, to initiate and maintain contact with his/her advisor, and meet all deadlines set by the advisor, and to abide by these guidelines. Any problems should be reported immediately to either the student's advisor or to the honors coordinator, or both.

Grading Procedures: Grading procedures for the junior paper and prospectus are similar. In both cases, students should submit one copy to their advisor and one to the honors coordinator, who may refer it to an outside reader. Grades are assigned by the honors coordinator in consultation with the advisor. Late papers will result in the assignment of a grade of I or F.

Junior papers are awarded a letter grade as follows:

- A: Excellent paper – clearly written and argued, offers insight into a clearly defined problem
- A-: Very good paper with relatively minor flaws **or**
Paper with great strengths but also relatively serious weaknesses
- B+ to B-: Good paper with one or more serious flaws
- C+ to C-: Shows some effort but not up to the level expected of an honors student
- D+ to D-: A poor effort that barely qualifies for a passing grade
- F: Paper is either not completed or does not qualify for a passing grade

I have read and understand the above guidelines.

(signed)

(print name)

(date)