

Professional Development in Political Science
Political Science 511 – Spring 2007

Tuesday 4:15-5:45 p.m.
236 Pond

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Office Hours: W 1-4 p.m.,
Or by appointment

The Purpose.

This course is the first of two courses in a required series on professional development in the graduate program in political science. The first course focuses specifically on fundamental knowledge and skills that will help you throughout graduate school but also in your later career as a scholar. The second course, to be taken in your third year in graduate school, will focus on writing and transitioning successfully through the last stages of graduate school and into the profession.

The Plan.

The topics over the course of the semester fall into three main themes: 1) understanding the norms and requirements of the profession; 2) the fundamentals of good research; and 3) an introduction to teaching. Professionalization topics include planning your graduate school years, putting together a curriculum vita, communicating with senior scholars, and writing the MA; teaching topics including planning a course and recitation sections, preparing lectures or discussion classes, as well as documenting your teaching; and research fundamentals that we will discuss include defining problems, crafting arguments, outlining and revising manuscripts.

Requirements.

You will need to read assigned readings before class each class period. In addition, in weeks that we devote class time to research papers, I will ask you to bring in and work with some piece of a research paper that you are writing for another seminar or for your MA essay. We will use the papers as the basis for in class assignments that will grow out of the readings. This should in turn help you to receive better grades on final papers in your other class!

A word on the teaching topics. When we discuss teaching topics, we'll do so with a two point perspective. You'll be teaching your own courses at some point—sooner than you think—but first you'll be teaching assistants. Learning about the process of preparing/planning an entire course is useful, but emphasis on issues associated with discussion sections and your duties as TAs are most helpful to you now. To that end we'll talk about preparing a course, but with an emphasis on planning the discussion sessions themselves. We'll talk about how to make lectures more effective or discussion sections more effective, as that's how most TAs conduct the recitation sections. But know that most of the issues we discuss will be relevant throughout your career as a teacher.

Evaluation.

The course is pass/fail. Enthusiastic and active participation are key to success in graduate school and beyond and hence also key to passing the course. Completion of all written assignments is also required. The assignments in this seminar are substantially different than those in your other classes. The goal of the course is to help you learn the skills you will need to succeed in graduate school and an academic career. Therefore, most of the writing assignments are designed to develop skills that will help you in other classes, or to have you reflect on professional norms and fundamentals. You will also be asked to produce a curriculum vita and a backward calendar and to attend a recitation section conducted by one of the current semester teaching assistants in political science.

REQUIRED READINGS.

Readings will be drawn from:

Booth, Wayne C.; Joseph M. Williams, and Gregory Colomb. 2003. *The Craft of Research* 2nd edition (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing and Publishing) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boice, Robert. 2000. Advise for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus. Allyn and Bacon.

McKeachie, Wilbert. 1999. Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University Teachers. 10th edition. Houghton Mifflin (Trade).

Arrangements will be made for the distribution of other readings.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Below is a tentative schedule of weekly topics and assignments. Additional changes in both topics and assignments may occur throughout the semester. You are responsible for any additions and changes. A bit of advice: You may want to look ahead at the next week's topics/assignments. Given that the topics are often linked, you may find it beneficial to read or work ahead.

Week 1**1/16****Where should I be when I graduate**

Assignment: The purpose of this class is to talk about what new PhD's look like. What do you need to accomplish by the end of your stint as a graduate student. We will look at the C.V.'s of various new PhD's. To prepare for this class, please do the following:

- ⇒ Write a short paragraph indicating the type of job you hope to have when you finish. Be as specific about the type of institution you would like to work at as possible.
- ⇒ What sorts of questions do you – as an incoming student – have about the career options available to you or about graduate school more generally? On a separate sheet with no name on it write down up to 5 questions about graduate school or future career paths that you would like to have answered.

Week 2**1/23 The Backwards Calendar**

Readings: <http://polisci.la.psu.edu/faculty/Baumgartner/CALENDAR-2000.htm>

Assignment: Create two backwards calendars for yourself. The first should map out your time at Penn State. Include such things as when you plan to take comps, finish your M.A. essay, present at a conference. In the second backwards calendar, map out your current semester. Be sure to take consider not only your classes and TA/RA assignments but also your long term goals.

Keeping your self on track is one important. We will talk about how to monitor your own progress through the profession and also about how to make the best use of your summers here.

Week 3**1/30 Approaching your research: managing your time.**

Readings:

1. Boice, pp. 103-196
2. Ackelsberg, Martha et al. 2004. "Remembering the 'Life' in Academic Life: Finding a Balance between Work and Personal Responsibilities in the Academy." PS (October): 879-883. Accessible on-line at:
<http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/RememberingtheLife-Ackelsberg.pdf>

In this section, we will discuss practical survival types for how to get it all done. How do you best combine teaching, research, and personal life. How do you figure out what needs to be done when.

Week 4 2/6 Presenting yourself professionally I: C.V.'s and web pages

Reading: Chapter 10 "Vitas" in Heiberger, Mary Morris, and Julia Miller Vick. 1996. 2nd edition. The Academic Job Search Handbook. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Assignment: Due in class: Write a preliminary copy of your C.V. and bring it to the class. We will look at different forms of C.V.s and webpages and exchange C.V.s for comments.

Week 5 2/13 The Research Process: Finding Great Research Questions

Readings: Introduction to Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, and 4, Booth, Colomb, and Williams.

Today we will talk about the importance of formulating research questions in their strongest form and how to turn interesting research problems into questions that excite the academic community. We'll also talk about the importance of correctly identifying and targeting our audience.

We will generate research problems based on the ideas fermenting in all the minds in the classroom and turn these into questions following the framework Booth and coauthors identify in chapter 4 (with our own twist). We'll then discuss audience and the implications for how we proceed with the research project.

Week 6 2/20 Pulling together your argument.

Readings: Booth, Colomb, and Williams, Part III intro/prologue and chapters 7-10 (skip 11).

In this section of their text, Booth and coauthors discuss how to effectively make your argument, both by appealing to logic and to evidence (data). Much of this portion of the text is about the tone of your writing and the anticipation of reader response. We'll talk about how to use evidence in conjunction with reasons to make arguments. Oftentimes authors think that the evidence speaks for itself, but strong writing is explicit, providing the reasons that the evidence supports the authors' claim. We'll also talk about when and how to discuss the shortcomings of your analyses, to poke holes in your own findings.

Week 7 2/27 Presenting Yourself Professionally II: Proposing Papers,

Readings: Gupta, Devashree and Israel Waismel-Manor. 2006."Network in Progress: A Conference Primer for Graduate Students: PS (July):pp. 485-490. Available on-line at: <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/PSJul06GuptaWaismelManor.pdf>

This week will continue to talk about presenting yourself to the profession, but with a focus on questions like when do I start proposing papers for conferences? How do I write a conference proposal? What should a research presentation at a conference look like? A poster presentation? We'll talk about how to give a good presentation and put together a

poster. We'll also talk about co-authorship. The pluses, minuses, and ideas for establishing ground rules.

Week 8 3/6 Preparing to draft and revise your research paper.

Readings: Booth, Colomb, and Williams, chapters 12-16.

These chapters offer very helpful and general tips for writing introductions and thinking about the structure of your paper. Chapters 13 and 14 are especially helpful here. Chapter 16 provides some great advice for thinking about revising in helpful way (really). Bring in the current introduction to a paper you are writing for another seminar (or a blank piece of paper or laptop). After we talk about the material, I'll ask each of you to start plunking away, revising the introduction. We'll then share with a friendly peer and discuss progress. Sometime before next week's class, you'll turn in your new introduction for my eyes.

Week 9 3/20 Presenting Yourself Professionally III: Communicating with scholars inside and outside the Department.

Review: Gupta, Devashree and Israel Waismel-Manor. 2006."Network in Progress: A Conference Primer for Graduate Students: PS (July):pp. 489-490.

This week will talk about how best to communicate with and get advice from more senior scholars. How can you get the most out of meeting with your advisor (both formally and informally) and the evaluations you receive? When is it appropriate to ask senior scholars to read your work.

Week 10 3/27 Approaching teaching and T.A.'ing in the context of an academic career.

Readings:

1. "Teaching Assistants and Section Leaders." The Penn State Teacher II, ed. by Diane M. Enerson, R. Neill Johnson, Susannah Milner and Kathryn Plank. pp. 98-107.
2. Marilla Svinicki on "The Teaching Assistantship: A Preparation for Multiple Roles"
3. Boice, pp. 11-101

In this session we will talk about the role of the Teaching Assistants in the learning process for undergraduate students. We will also talk about how professors manage their time in balancing teaching and research more generally.

Week 11 **4/3** **Designing Classes and Class Sessions**

Readings:

1. McKeachie's Teaching Tips, Part 1
2. Penn State Teacher II, Introduction and Chapter 1

Assignment: Visit a discussion section in an introductory class in your field. Write up a short essay about the design of the session. Be prepared to talk about what you thought was effective and what was less effective.

Week 12 **4/10** **Documenting your teaching**

Readings:

3. McKeachie's Teaching Tips, Chapter 23
4. Penn State Teacher II, Appendix E

Week 13 **4/17** **Lecturing vs. Discussion Section: Effective Teaching**

Readings:

1. McKeachie's Teaching Tips, Chapt. 4,5 and chapter 6 section "Helping Students become Testwise" page 81-83, and "After the Test" up until "Grading 'on the curve': Don't do it" page 84-87.13-17
2. Penn State Teacher II, Chapter 2

What are lectures good for? How can I use discussions effectively? We'll discuss the kinds of problems associated with each option, how to minimize them, and play to their strengths. What did you see the TAs you visited doing? Was it effective? How could you tell?

Week 14 **4/24** **Writing the M.A. thesis**

Assignment: Write down what you consider to be the five most important elements of a good Master's thesis. Then write a backwards calendar through the next year and ½ focusing on when you will need to finish specific steps on your M.A. thesis (e.g. choose a topic, find an advisor, do the research, etc.). Use the five elements of a good essay to determine how much time should be spent on each step. Be sure to look up and include any specific deadlines you face (e.g. when a completed MA thesis must be in the graduate office).

Week 15 **5/1** **Open week; Bring your concerns to the class**

Other Resources:

Becker, Howard. 1986. Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article.

Caplan, Paula J. 1995. Lifting a Ton of Feathers: A Woman's Guide to Surviving in the Academic World. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hume, Kathryn. 2005. Surviving Your Academic Job Hunt: Advice for Humanities PhDs. Palgrave.

Morris, Mary; Julia Heilberger and Vick Miller. 2000. The Academic Job Search Handbook. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Toth, Emily. 1997. Ms. Mentor's Impeccable Advice for Women in Academia. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Rudestam, Kjell Erik and Rae R. Newton. 2001. Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process, 2nd edition. Sage Publications.

Whitely, Sandra. 1994. The Essential Writer's Companion: A Concise Guide to Writing Effectively for School, Home, or Office. Houghton Mifflin.

Schoenfeld, A. Clay and Robert Magnan. 1994. Mentor in a Manual. 2nd edition. Madison, WI: Magna Publications.