

Graduate Practicum
PSCI 6940.001 (6 credit hrs.)
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W, 6:30–9:20 p.m.

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to guide the political science graduate student to completion of the dissertation prospectus by the conclusion of the semester, with the aim of the student defending the document before its committee by late May. This goal is intended to impose some degree of structure, efficiency and expedience that historically was unnecessarily prolonged, often lasting a year or more and, as a result, delaying the student's completion of the dissertation as well as the program. This delay historically was chiefly the result of two conditions. First, the sudden and often alien demand on the student to communicate and problem solve with its dissertation chair and committee on a regular basis. Second, the temptation to pursue the perfect prospectus, or to consider the prospectus process as commencing the writing of the dissertation. In this course we seek to regularize the student's interaction with its dissertation chair (and committee), as well as producing a provisional but sufficient plan for completing the dissertation. To achieve these two goals, the prospectus task is divided into two phases: (1) the *proposal*; and (2) the *prospectus*.¹

The *proposal* identifies the research questions/puzzles of central interest to the dissertation; the state of the field on said questions/puzzles; the value of undertaking such an inquiry; and speculation about a general strategy for addressing the questions/puzzles at hand. To do so, the proposal stage is designed to get the student communicating with its dissertation committee on a regular basis (particularly the dissertation chair), as well as establishing a well thought out general trajectory for the dissertation project *before* a single keystroke is struck in the name of research design, data, measurement, and so forth. We will aim to complete the proposal phase, which we will accomplish incrementally, by Spring Break. At this time the student's Advisory Committee will have the opportunity to approve the proposal in an informal manner. In short, we need a green light on the general project before a specific plan to execute the study of the proposed idea can be crafted to any useful effect.

The prospectus, or "plan," is the detailed roadmap for executing the inquiry into the question/puzzles set out in the proposal. The prospectus identifies the shape or structure of

¹I note that the completed document that is defended by the student before its Advisory Committee is referred to collectively by the Dept. of Political Science and Toulouse Graduate School as the "Prospectus." I use the terms "proposal" and "prospectus" separately to isolate tasks requiring completion before the penultimate document, the "Prospectus," is completed and defended.

the dissertation (i.e., traditional or “three-article” format); the flow of the dissertation (i.e., the order and purpose of each chapter); and specifies the components of each chapter (i.e., specific question/puzzle to be addressed, theory employed, research design, and so forth.) An important quality of the prospectus is that it provides sufficient detail to serve as a guide for moving forward, but enough generality to accommodate adjustments in the course of the project given new information revealed as the dissertation is written, the formulation one’s ideas, actual theorizing that might take one in directions heretofore unanticipated, and so forth.² We will aim to complete the prospectus, again doing so incrementally, by the final week of the semester at which time the student will seek approval, i.e., *defend*, the prospectus before its Advisory Committee, doing so before June 1.

Student Responsibilities During Seminar

Teaching Component

It is well known that teaching and research form a symbiosis of sorts, with each informing the other. Although elements of teaching are taken up in the department’s professionalization seminars, it is worth reinforcing, as well expanding upon, these elements of teaching this semester. Additionally, a foundational assumption of this course is that interaction with your dissertation chair, whether it concerns research or teaching, is fortifying generally for your dissertation experience. Thus, each seminar student is asked to do the following:

1. Syllabus Creation. Meet with your dissertation advisor during the first or second week of the semester and discuss one of your advisor’s undergraduate syllabi. You might consider the syllabus’s overall design as well as the elements therein and query your professor accordingly. For example, how did your advisor arrive at the type and amount of weekly reading? How does your advisor plan the calendar of due dates, such as exams and papers? How and why (or, why not) does your advisor introduce various media into the classroom? What lessons did your advisor learn from prior experiences in the course? What about policies for the mundane and misc. therein (e.g., makeup exams, attendance, extra credit, grading participation, plagiarism)?
2. Exam creation & Grading. When your advisor plans the midterm examination in the course, meet with them and gain some insight into the exam’s construction by meeting with your advisor and discussing the exam. Why does your advisor select a particular exam format (e.g., written, objective, a mix)? How does your advisor select material for the exam? How does your advisor approach grading of the exam (e.g., performance that constitutes different grades)? What lessons in exam crafting has your professor learned over the years?
3. Lecture. During the semester sit in on one of your advisor’s lectures. Consider how your advisor conveys information during the lecture. Note your advisor’s demeanor, rapport

²Think Framers and the American Constitution: You need structure, but not so much structure as to be inflexible given that new ideas and information may be discovered, a process that is nearly impossible to anticipate.

with students, and so forth. How does your advisor interact with students? Discuss with your advisor how s/he prepares for lecture. What is your advisor's mindset when s/he enters the lecture room?

Although I will be communicating with your advisors throughout the semester as well as providing some remainder to seminarians regarding the teaching component, *it is the student's responsibility to execute the aforementioned during the semester*. To reiterate, the idea is not to overburden your advisor with work from 6940, but as it is the case that one of the overarching goals of 6940 is to develop and fortify your working relationship with your dissertation advisor, a few hours (office hours, even) seems reasonable.³ Also, your job here is to study teaching, which is different than serving as a TA. Make a file of your notes regarding teaching and keep it in a place to which you might easily return when you teach your first course.

Weekly Seminar Meetings

The weekly meetings are designed to facilitate discussion of some element of the proposal or prospectus upon which the students are working. The goal for each seminar student is to participate in these discussions in a constructive fashion, and in doing so assist their colleague move toward completion of the proposal or prospectus. Specifically, each week seminar participants will present briefly their progress on a component. Next, an assigned discussant (see Table 3) will identify strengths and weaknesses of the component as well as the project to date. Thereafter, the seminar group will consider the project collectively, raising questions, making suggestions, and so forth. Additionally, this "chewing over things" has two purposes. First, the process is intended to make the individual student fluent, or comfortable with, all of the components of the dissertation project, thereby providing a foundation for the ultimate purpose of the dissertation: Conveying the study's conclusion to the broader social scientific community. Second, seminar discussions are intended to expose issues, problems, weaknesses, etc., contained in the project, so that they can be addressed, or least considered, before the dissertation gets underway. The idea is to be open to considering issues, decisions, problems, etc., raised by a group of (often) non-experts on a given dissertation project and who are merely employing their basic social science instincts and skills to detect issues or problems in the project.

Weekly Meetings with Dissertation Chair/Advisor

Each seminar participant must arrange and conduct (at least) a weekly one-hour meeting with its dissertation chair.⁴ Doing so accomplishes several things. First, regular meetings begin to remove the anxiety of communicating with your chair the source of which is, in part,

³If your advisor does not agree, please let me know promptly. An alternative is to carry out this task with another member of your dissertation committee.

⁴Although virtual meetings, e.g., Zoom, are acceptable (and with Covid-19 in 2021-2, often necessary), I discourage using email as a proxy for meetings, because it eliminates the verbal and spontaneous problem solving that occurs during face-to-face meetings, and, well, emails can pile up and delay resolution of issues that must be addressed ASAP.

traced to the often infrequent nature of such meetings. The meetings establish the working relationship that is important for a productive dissertation project. Second, weekly meetings enable you and your chair to tackle various issues in your proposal and prospectus that arise during the seminar and that require your advisor's expertise and judgement (something that I will often be unable to provide.) Sometimes, said solutions take some time to arrive at, so raising the issues post haste is paramount. Last, as you will come to know, some problems are not easily answered and must be mulled over by you and your chair over more than one meeting. This process of "thinking, solving and agreeing" is designed to avoid the problems that might arise in later stages in the dissertation when key decisions are revealed and questioned, thereby jeopardizing the entire project. In sum, the weekly meetings provide a social and organizational foundation for constructing your project, one that maximizes vetting and eliminates surprises. *Given that our seminar is on Wednesday evening, it seems prudent that you schedule your meetings following each seminar (i.e., on Thursday or Friday), so that issues can be addressed in your writing for the subsequent week.*

Grading

A student's final grade in the 6 hr. seminar is based on the following three equally weighted components:

1. Regular attendance as well as active and quality verbal participation in the weekly seminars;
2. Submission & quality revision of proposal and prospectus components in a timely and quality manner each Tuesday by noon (I distribute these to the seminar participants thereafter); and
3. Evidence that the student is reading the work of the other seminar participants and making constructive and critical observations about their projects.⁵;

Instructor Office Hours

Seminar students are welcome to visit the instructor during his office hours (Wednesday, 2–5) to discuss anything related to the proposal and prospectus phases, or the seminar more generally. I am also available via email (through Canvas email, please.) Given Covid-19, I reserve the right to execute office hours via appointment on Zoom.

Communication

Email communication will be done exclusively through Canvas's email function. Save for emergencies, please avoid alternative methods of communicating electronically (e.g., private

⁵In the main, students can be too kind when considering projects by fellow seminarians, hesitating to shed kid gloves. But it is more useful in the long run for your graduate student colleagues to receive candid and sharp assessments of the dissertation.

email), as they are likely to become lost in the stream of email minutiae in Enterline's inbox.

Misc.

Document Formatting

All papers should follow the formatting guidelines (e.g., title pages, section headings, references) available in "Enterline's Graduate Paper Guide (2007) (v2.0)" available in Canvas Files/Guide. Please peruse this document. For example, when I specify that a submission requires a "title page," I mean the title page style specified in said guide (although with dissertation committee listed.) Said guide is designed for writing standard papers, so you must borrow what is applicable for the tasks at hand in this seminar.

Centralized References

If you have not already done so, it is prudent to begin creating a centralized database of your scholarly references, so that you save time, maximize efficiency and reduce error when compiling references and populating your document with parenthetical citations. There are many options (e.g., RefWorks, Mendeley, Bibtex), so I recommend researching and learning what best suits your needs and investing some time to establish your reference database in an orderly fashion and testing its integration with your word processing software. Taking up this task now while you are working on your prospectus should facilitate a speedy transition to the actual writing of your dissertation.

Dissertation Styles/Formatting

Although I ask that you follow the formatting guidelines in my "Guide," it is worthwhile to familiarize yourself with the Toulouse Graduate School's style requirements for theses and dissertations (my Guide and Toulouse's will agree on many issues.) This information is reported by Toulouse:

<https://tgs.unt.edu/thesis-manual>

As well as reported on the PSCI department website:

<https://politicalscience.unt.edu/graduate/information-current-students/tatf-handbook>

In conjunction with implementing centralized referencing, it may be useful to use said referencing in the word processing environment within which you intend to report your dissertation research and to do so within the general style required by Toulouse. For example, you intend to report your dissertation research with MS-Word and you chose RefWorks as your reference software. It is worthwhile to peruse the Toulouse guidelines, which are themselves written in a style that comports with UNT's style guidelines, "Preparation and Filing of Dissertations and Theses" (see pp. 2-4):

<https://tgs.unt.edu/sites/default/files/Vireo%20guide%20with%20new%20log%20-%20released%20Nov%202019.pdf>

Because you are working in MS-Word, you will want to consult Ch. 9, “Microsoft Word Tips and Tricks,” for formatting information. If you are working in L^AT_EX, then you will want to download the UNT style files, example chapters, etc., provided by UNT’s Jill Kleister, that are stored on the PSCI dept. website here:

<https://politicalscience.unt.edu/graduate/information-current-students/tatf-handbook>

Project Phases

Proposal (the Idea & Its Worthiness)

In the time-honored language of advertising, the proposal is your “pitch” to your dissertation committee regarding what you intend to core of your dissertation to be. The proposal consists of identifying the big questions and puzzles that you intend to focus on in the dissertation project. Because the history of graduate programs is littered with efforts to develop dissertations that can politely be termed “aft first” (i.e., data assembled and numbers crunched before a clear research question is determined, theory formulated, and so forth), the proposal is designed to encourage the student to first identify a “big purpose” to which the dissertation project will be aimed.

Doing so consists of identifying a research question/puzzle, demonstrating said question/puzzle is insufficiently addressed by current social science, speculating about a fruitful strategy for answering said questions or solving said puzzles, and making a claim regarding the value of such an inquiry for social science, humanity, and so forth. Thus, the proposal is designed to force the student and the student’s dissertation committee to agree on the acceptability of the big purpose of the proposed project, and to achieve this agreement *before* investment is made in the many details associated with the prospectus (e.g., how *Y* will be operationalized.) Often, an effort to formally identify the big purpose can lead in fruitful directions never considered by way of a more narrow approach. The proposal consists of approximately a 12-page, double-spaced document (excluding references) that addresses the following issues in sequence with section headings:

1. *Title Page*. Include tentative title for project (e.g., “Dissertation Proposal: Why Voters Vote”). The student’s dissertation committee should be listed on the title page of any document submitted to Canvas;
2. *Research Question(s)/Puzzle(s)*. What research question/puzzle(s) is of central interest to you? From where do the questions and puzzles originate? Did you arrive at said questions/puzzles by reading research, observing the empirical world, through experimentation, or some other way? Discuss the process by which you encountered your question/puzzle of interest. If there are multiple questions, how do the questions fit together? If you have a puzzle at hand (e.g., the absence of war between democracies), what questions and implications does the puzzle suggest for your subfield and beyond?

It is important to note that the discussion in this portion of the proposal is almost exclusively conceptual, devoid of proper nouns, data, design choices, and so forth. Rather, in the dissertation one is interested in explaining *some manifestation of political behavior* and this behavior is considered in their generalized form. So, too, are any explanations for said political behavior or outcomes. Even if you have already seemingly settled on an explanation for the behavior of interest (usually, the byproduct of intuitive and non-explicit reasoning), it is worth considering the behavior of interest beginning with a macro focus, then moving to the micro, or narrow, focus. For example, perhaps you are interested in the choices legislators make regarding different types of legislation once they take office. And for whatever reason you are interested in the role of the gender of legislators in this process of choice. Despite this interest in gender and legislative voting, it is worth backing things up and considering legislative choices in general before formulating the reasoning that leads you to gender. Working from macro to micro can provide insights that were heretofore left unconsidered and strengthen the overall dissertation project because you are linking your specific interest and question to larger questions.⁶

3. *Brief Assessment of Existing Research.* What does existing social science, broadly defined, tell us about your question/puzzle? Are any sciences outside of political science involved in research that is relevant to your questions/puzzles (e.g., IR scholars and anthropologists both study warfare, but rarely read each other's research.) Has any social science research tackled your question/puzzle head on? If so, why is existing research unsatisfying to you in terms of the question or puzzle? What are the strong and weak points? What is missing? In short, why is the additional effort that will be contained in your dissertation worthwhile?
4. *Value.* What is the anticipated value of your proposed inquiry for social science? How will it make an original contribution to knowledge in the relevant sub-field? Will it aid in solving larger issues under the purview of social science? If so, how? How will your inquiry contribute to the improvement of society? To the improvement of human kind?
5. *Preliminary Strategy.* What do you believe will be a fruitful strategy for answering your research questions or solving your puzzles? Are there one or more theoretical angles for doing so? What existing theories or ideas might provide a fruitful point of departure for thinking about the problem? What are the primary concepts and causal linkages upon which you intend to focus and why? Given your preliminary ideas regarding theory, what hypothesis tests do you imagine conducting? What types of information are best suited to these tests? Where might this information be found (ready for use or must you create it?)? , and
6. *References.* A standard reference list of any work cited in the draft.

⁶How one "gets" to your specific explanation is often a standard question in job interviews. That is, given the general outcome or behavior of interest in the example of choices by legislators, why the focus on gender? How is gender situated in, and relevant to, the pantheon of causes of legislator choice?

Prospectus (the Plan; or, “How I Will Do It”)

Once the proposal is crafted and approved by the student’s dissertation committee at Spring Break, the student moves to the second stage of the process, the writing of the prospectus. The text of the prospectus can be appended to the existing Proposal document (specifically, following the final section of the Proposal, but before the reference list, insert a new title page labeled “Prospectus:...” and proceed in the normal fashion.) The prospectus contains three components: (1) the structure, or format, of the dissertation; (2) the contents of the chapters; and (3) the project calendar. These components are elaborated as follows:

1. *Structure (or Format) of the Dissertation.* The structure of the dissertation is a key initial decision to be made by the student in consultation with its dissertation chair and committee. To discover the appropriate structure begin by answering the following questions with your dissertation chair:
 - (a) What structure best serves the research question(s) central to my project? Perhaps the questions have a natural order and/or division that dictate the structure;
 - (b) What structure best serves my professional goals. Perhaps you aim to teach at a specific type of institution (e.g., teaching vs. research), or the academic community with whom you wish to communicate is more amenable to one structure vs. another; and
 - (c) What structure best serves your intellectual strengths? Perhaps your mode of writing and thinking is best served by one structure as opposed to another.

Dissertations can take manifold structures and I cannot tell you a priori which is superior. That said, to provide a point of departure I offer two common dissertation structures: (1) the traditional (sometimes referred to as a “book”) structure; or (2) the “three-article” structure. I discuss these two structures, in turn.

The traditional format resembles a book in that each chapter of this dissertation takes up a distinct task in the dissertation project. For example, there is usually an introductory chapter that announces the research questions and puzzles, a chapter that covers previous research on said questions and puzzles, a chapter formulating theoretical expectations, a chapter formulating the research design, and so forth. To be frank, this format has the feel of a, well, a bulked up journal article. The prime advantage of the book format is that it provides the author with a foundation to, at some future date, publish a book. No single chapter in the traditional form stands alone such that it might undergo immediate scholarly review as an article; rather, each chapters requires consideration of the other chapters.

It should be stated that some dissertation projects have a “book-like” feel to them that naturally lends itself to the traditional format. It may be the scope of the research question or idea or some other quality of the project suggesting that the dissertation should be undertaken in the traditional fashion. It might even be that the manner in which the student wishes to think and work is better served by this format, such that forcing a three-article format actually retards the likelihood of completion and

the quality and integrity of the final product. As such, consideration of format options should be carefully considered with the dissertation advisor.

That said, some disadvantages of the book format are unavoidable. First and foremost, each chapter requires expertise that is, much like the prospectus, likely new to the graduate student. For example, crafting a 70-page theory chapter is not something that the student has likely heretofore accomplished; as such, this task is difficult and, perhaps more important, is never repeated in the dissertation. Furthermore, the book-like document that is produced is not a book that anyone (save for your dissertation committee) wants to read. Therefore, in most cases the dissertation text must be rewritten extensively to make it suitable for publication as a book; thus, publication is delayed. Last, although the eventual publication of a book may be envisioned, peer reviewed articles are usually recommended before a book during the tenure process. The book format arguably slows down the parcelling out of article-length portions for review following the dissertation defense, because elements of each chapter must be distilled into free-standing, article-length manuscripts. As such, the traditional format delays the submitting of manuscripts for review at peer-reviewed journals, something that most of us agree is important for employment prospects as well as achieving tenure.⁷

Conversely, the three-article format envisions a document that consists of three article-length chapters sandwiched between short introductory and concluding chapters. In this format, three chapters, or articles, contain thematically related, but free-standing, studies that conform to the standards of peer-reviewed articles of approximately 40-pages that are submitted to professional journals.⁸ That is, each article sets out a research question or puzzle, discusses relevant research, formulates theory and expectations, formulates a research design, executes analysis, and so forth.⁹

The advantage of the article format is that it is specifically designed to expedite the crafting of scholarly articles that are the coin of the realm in social science. Indeed, given that these articles are free-standing, they can be sent out for review prior to the completion of all three articles (i.e., the full dissertation.) Additionally, the article format affords some flexibility—e.g., as the inquiry unfolds and discoveries are made,

⁷I should underscore that these limitations are those identified by Enterline, not an assessment given from the heavens. That is, pros and cons of strategy are always debatable and subject to evaluation given myriad factors (e.g., intellectual style, the nature of the research question, career goals).

⁸I note that although a given chapter (i.e., article) in a three-article format is designed to conform to general field standard journal submission requirements, said article *in the dissertation document* will likely be longer in length, because dissertations often require lengthier explanations of various things, discussions that are eventually set aside, condensed, consigned to appendices, and so forth, before peer-review. So, one might reckon that a given chapter/article will be in the neighborhood of 60-80 pages of text/tables/figures in the dissertation. This extra material is removed (or shoved into an online appendix) when the manuscript is submitted for peer review.

⁹Given the clarification of chapter/article length in the previous footnote, it stands to reason that some efficiencies can be realized, too. For example, if the same data sample is used in two chapters, then a lengthy explanation of these data may be formulated in the first such chapter/article and a simple reference made to this explanation made in the second chapter/article, thereby eliminating some text in the second chapter/article. When the respective articles are sent out for review, the lengthier explanation of the data sample can be included in the second chapter/article with little additional effort.

the nature of subsequent chapters can be modified. These advantages notwithstanding, the paramount advantage of the three-article format is the repetition, or Fordism, of tasks in each article—i.e., the student builds experience in writing each component of the first article and this experience brings wisdom and insight to the writing of the second and third articles, thereby expediting the process and allowing for a more rapid completion of the dissertation project.

In the three-article format, the introductory chapter and concluding chapters are not free-standing articles. Rather, these two “chapters” of the dissertation support the dissertation document; that is, they enable the reader to understand how the three articles are organized, why they are organized in said fashion, as well as broader issues (e.g., import of project, future research.) That said, some elements of the introduction and conclusion can easily be imported into the articles before submission to peer-review. Specifically, the introduction chapter sets out the broader goals of the project, the rationale for chapters and their organization, while the concluding chapters sums the collective implications of the research and identifies paths for future research.

The disadvantages of the three-article format are that it eschews lengthy contemplation of the dissertation elements and therefore the student is too easily satisfied with superficial inquiries. Moreover, experience suggests that the structure of the three-article format can come to drive the dissertation. For example, knowing that it must have three chapters, the student artificially and hastily divides a project into thirds (e.g., by three operationalizations of democratic institutions.) Indeed, the student searches, often maniacally and mechanically, for “three things” to make a dissertation, as if three is the single criteria for a fruitful dissertation project. Ultimately, the three parts do not constitute three free-standing articles; rather, it is one thing artificially divided into three articles that are individually weaker from the division. Last, the package of three thematically related articles may not amount to the collective wisdom contained in a traditional traditionally formatted dissertation. Furthermore, it may be the case that a given research idea is not divisible and therefore a traditional format is more suitable.

The strengths and weakness of the two formats contemplated, the first step in the prospectus phase of the practicum is the student’s determination of the desired dissertation format. To do so, it is necessary that the graduate student meet with its dissertation committee chair and weigh the strengths and advantages of the book and three-article formats, given the student’s abilities, the nature of the project identified in the Proposal, personal preferences, professional goals, and other relevant factors.¹⁰ The rationale for choosing one format over another should be addressed in the first two pages of the prospectus component. This writing should address the following questions:

- (a) What reasoning underlies the selected format?
- (b) Why this format as opposed to the alternative(s)?

¹⁰The student might also canvas recent dissertations in the department or at other universities for exemplars of different styles.

2. Dissertation Components.¹¹

(a) Traditional Format:¹²

- Literature Review Chapter. In the literature review components of the prospectus you should identify and establish the organization of prior scholarship relevant to your research question(s). You might think of this section as an elaboration of the initial search for scholarship germane to your project that you made in the Proposal. In addition to simply locating relevant scholarship, you should discuss why a given body of scholarship is expected to be relevant to your endeavor. Furthermore, you should consider how the review of literature will be most usefully organized. For example, in reviewing prior scholarship, you are interested in cataloguing the what's been done, but you are also interested to identify what prior research concluded, how they reached said conclusions, whether the conclusions are convincing, and so forth. Clearly, you are investigating a given research question because outstanding explanations are not fully convincing. So, you are seeking to organize, at least provisionally, said literature in a way to elucidate why these explanations are not satisfying and why your dissertation is necessary;
- Theory Chapter. In the theory chapter section of the prospectus you will theorize about the problem central to your dissertation. In the prospectus you lay out the plan for this theorizing. This plan may include identifying components or pre-cursors from prior research that you plan to use as a foundation for your approach. If so, what are these pre-cursors and why/how are they of varying usefulness to your project? How do you intend to advance theory beyond these precursors? Theorizing is difficult and describing how one will theorize in the future is probably doubly difficult. But, one must seek to provide some plan of action for formulating an explanation of the behavior of interest rather than just banking on winging it when the time comes, because this chapter, in conjunction with the research design, benefits from trying to think ahead so that time, resources and acquisition of information

¹¹It is important to underscore that in writing the prospectus the student is *not writing the dissertation*. Rather, the student is *spelling out how the student expects to proceed—i.e., the strategy—for completing a given component of the dissertation*. So, the student is identifying what literature will be examined, how theorizing might proceed, what research design might be implemented, and so forth. This means, for example, that if the student will engage in theorizing in the future,

¹²Disclaimer: While three-article format dissertations are primarily employed in the fields of American Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations and rarely in Political Theory, it is clear that the traditional format may be employed for projects in any field. The traditional format is likely that the format of choice for dissertations written in Political Theory. However, it is not necessarily the case that “one size [or organization] fits all” in traditional traditional formats written in different fields. Specifically, Political Theory dissertations may require chapters of a different type and/or order than the standard (and obviously behavioral) structure consisting of literature review, theory, research design, analysis, and so forth (i.e., structure that for the most part mimics the structure of an article.) As such, Political Theory students are advised to consult with their dissertation chair regarding the appropriate arrangement and content of the dissertation chapters, making adjustments accordingly to what I write below (e.g., that there may or may not be a chapter devoted to a literature review, so this must be eliminated and replaced by something deemed more appropriate.)

can be gauged with some accuracy. For example, to theorize you may have to come to understand the intricacies of other theories;¹³ and

- Research Design/Hypothesis Testing Chapter(s). Explication of the plan for theorizing should provide basis for planning tests of hypotheses. For example if the plan for the theory naturally point to a particular level of analysis (e.g., system versus unit), one may begin to outline what information and tests are necessary for hypothesis tests. Furthermore, given an initial assessment of prior research as well as the identification of key pieces of theory, you might be able gauge spatial and temporal domains, identify how key concepts might be operationalized, and so forth. Or, it may be that the anticipated hypotheses are to be tested in more than one way (e.g., qualitatively with a small set of case studies, and then with a large-N empirical analysis.) Said ways should be pondered and some strategy settled upon. As one works in a specific field, one internalizes what is the “standard” way of doing things in terms of hypothesis testing. Over time, the choice of testing method is employed with little explanation or forethought, potentially depriving a study of a fruitful but overlooked strategy for testing an expectation. The planning in this section will allow you to entertain alternatives. Last, we theorize with concepts free of cost (aside from time and mental anguish), but empirical information can be costly to retrieve, such that a careful and early consideration of what information is necessary for the hypothesis tests can be vital, as it seeks to balance desirability with feasibility and cost.¹⁴

(b) Three-article Format:

- Article Purpose. Statement of the purpose, or goal, of the chapter. What is the chapter designed to accomplish? How does this chapter fit within the broader goal of the project? What specific questions, expectations, or causal mechanisms will be central to the chapter and why? Why is this article sufficient to constitute a freestanding article?
- Relevant Literature. With regard to the relevant literature, in this sub-section of the prospectus the student is identifying bodies of scholarship to which it expects to draw in the dissertation, rather than carrying out the review. Identification of the social scientific literature relevant to the inquiry specific to the questions/puzzles central to this article. What contributions to the extant literature are central to the inquiry carried out the chapter? In what ways will the student’s article add to this literature in terms of scientific knowledge?;

¹³Theorizing frequently receives short shrift, with the lion’s share of time and energy devoted to research design. But, theorizing is the key to the entire endeavor and it make require considerable time and energy, in addition to refinement of expertise, to theorize for your project.

¹⁴Again, it is evident that social science generally is executed by, first, identifying a research question about some political behavior, second, theorizing an explanation for said behavior, and third, testing this theoretically-derived explanation. If this is the case, it is reasonable to ask how one can specify the plan for the research design before theorizing is complete. The simple answer is that one cannot, or at least not fully. As a result, one is left sketching out the design in rather general terms that are to be refined later, as the dissertation develops.

- **Theoretical Approach.** Preliminary identification the theoretical approach and/or the beginning elements of expectations to be employed in the chapter. Specifically, the theoretical expectations (in preliminary form) are identified to the degree that one can do so at the prospectus stage. For example, the student may anticipate that given theory in a specific field or literature will serve as a fillip for the problem central to the chapter and explain why. Said theory might be outlined and its advantages discussed. It is not necessary at this point to specify detailed hypotheses, though sometimes students do so; and
- **Research Design.** Identification of the sample, units of analysis, preliminary operationalization of the dependent variable(s) and independent variables that might be necessary to test the aforementioned expectations are outlined. What is the reasoning underlying the proposed variable operationalizations? If data must be collected, what is the source and procedure for doing so? If original collection is necessary, what is the time/cost necessary to accomplish this collection? If time/cost turn out to be insurmountable for whatever reasons, what alternative, or backup, data sources are available? Last, what hypothesis testing methods will be employed? Why the proposed methods rather than alternatives?

3. *Project Calendar.* The final component of the Prospectus is the Project Calendar, one that is best formulated in discussions with your dissertation chair. Much like the “Course Calendar” contained in the Practicum syllabus, the project calendar sets out monthly targets for the dissertation project. Although it is convenient to suggest that dissertations unfold linearly, this may be not be the case for manifold reasons. For example, the student and dissertation chair may foresee that some tasks, e.g., data collection of a key variable, are necessary before any of the three articles can be finished. As such, the the key task may be scheduled at the front of the calendar. Additionally, student and chair may decide that one article takes precedence over the others, given an assessment that the student must stake claim to the idea before some other social scientist does.

Related the first point, the student may wish to submit a grant application, the due date for which is on the front end of the dissertation project (e.g., the National Science Foundation’s Political Science Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants (PS DDRIG), and time must be made for said application before embarking on the dissertation project proper. Additionally, the completion of the dissertation components should be synchronized with the student’s broader professional goals. The Project Calendar should take the form of the Course Calendar. I provide an example in Table 1. Although some advisers will subscribe to the motto of “go forth an write your project alone,” it is advisable to build into the calendar regular meetings with the dissertation chair (continuing what you started in the practicum, either in person or virtually, such that one does not lose one’s way, maintain some momentum, keep abreast of developments in the field that may be useful to the dissertation project. So, continuation of meetings is recommended.)

Table 1: Example of a Project Calendar (Three-Article Structure; One Calendar Year to Completion).

Target Date	Task
2020	
Mid/Late May–Early June	PROSPECTUS DEFENSE
June	Submit Abstract for Article #1 to ISA 2021 Mtg. (approx. Feb./Mar. following spring)
June–July 15	Develop & Submit NSF DDRIG Application
May–July	Prepare Job Market Materials
July–September	Write Article #1
August–	Begin Submitting Job Market Applications (Tenure Track Jobs)
October	Submit Abstract for MPSA 2021 Mtg.
October	Submit Article #1 for Peer Review
October–December	Write Article #2
2021	
January	Submit Article #2 for Peer Review
January	Submit Abstract for APSA in Sept. 2021
January–February	Write Article #3
January–	Continue Submitting Job Market Applications (1/2 Year Jobs; Post-docs)
February	Submit Rough Drafts of Three Articles to Full Committee for Review/Comments
March	Present Article #1 (or Theory Chapter) at ISA

Continued on next page.

Table 1 —continued from previous page.

Target Date	Task
March	Write Short Introduction & Conclusion (12-15 pages each)
March	Present at ISA
April	Prepare Dissertation for Defense
April	Present at MPSA
April	DEFEND!
May 2021	Submit Article #3 for Peer Review
Summer	Revise & Resubmit Articles
September	Present at APSA
...	
...	
...	

Final Product & Defense

Together, Phases 1 and 2 of the Practicum comprise the document that is then formally defended by the graduate student before dissertation committee. As noted above, the UNT Dept. of Political Science and the Toulouse Graduate School employ the term “Prospectus” to refer collectively to what in the Practicum we term the “proposal” and the “prospectus.” The final document, i.e., the one that is defended by the student before its advisory committee, may be refined, or restyled, to suit the student and dissertation advisor’s needs and preferences (e.g., your advisor dislike’s Enterline’s, organization, terminology, etc., so refashion it fit your advisor’s satisfaction.) But, given the content of the work done in this seminar, any restyling can be accomplished in short order, because the key elements are present. The final document should be in the 25-page range (double-spaced), and should be defended shortly after the Spring semester concludes.

Course Calendar

The components of the Proposal and Prospectus identified in the right-hand column of Table 2 are due in draft form by upload to the appropriate Turnitin dropbox in Canvas Content. For example, “Week 2 (1/22): Proposal: Questions/Puzzles” means that the student should upload a draft to of its proposal to the appropriate Canvas link by Tuesday, January 21 by noon.

Table 2: Course Calendar.

Week 1 (1/19)	Course Introduction/Treatments
Week 2 (1/26)	Proposal: Research Questions; (due 1/25 by noon)
Week 3 (2/2)	Proposal: Assessment of Existing Research on Research Questions 1; (due 2/1 by noon)
Week 4 (2/9)	Proposal: Assessment of Existing Research on Research Questions 2; (due 2/7 by noon)
Week 5 (2/16)	Proposal: Assessment of Existing Research on Research Questions 3; (due 2/15 by noon)
Week 6 (2/23)	Proposal: Value of Proposed Project; (due 2/22 by noon)
Week 7 (3/2)	Proposal: Preliminary Research Strategy 1; (due 3/1 by noon)
Week 8 (3/9)	Proposal: Preliminary Research Strategy 2/Proposal Draft Distributed to Full Committee by End of Week & Informal Approval by Chair; (due 3/8 by noon)
Week X (3/14-18)	SPRING BREAK (Get Feedback from Committee & Prepare Groundwork for Prospectus Phase)
Week 9 (3/23)	Prospectus: Article/Central Chapter #1 (due 3/22 by noon)
Week 10 (3/30)	Prospectus: Article/Central Chapter #1 (due 3/29 by noon)
Week 11 (4/6)	Prospectus: Article/Central Chapter #2 ; (due 4/5 by noon)
Week 12 (4/13)	Prospectus: Article/Central Chapter #2 ; (due 4/12 by noon)
Week 13 (4/20)	Prospectus: Article/Central Chapter #3 ; (due 4/19 by noon)
Week 14 (4/27)	Prospectus: Article/Central Chapter #3 ; (due 4/26 by noon)
Week 15 (5/4)	Prospectus: Final Revisions to Prospectus (due 5/3 by noon)
Week 16 (5/12)	Final Product (Proposal & Prospectus Phases Combined & Styled to Fit Advisor's Preferences; due 5/12 by 11:59 pm.)
Mid/Late May	PROSPECTUS DEFENSE!

Discussant Pairings

To facilitate weekly discussion, I am requesting that (at minimum) you read and prepare some comments on the weekly submission for the colleague paired in Table 3.

Table 3: Weekly Discussant Pairings.

Week	Pairing	
	Submission By	Discussion By
2	Lookabaugh, Brian	Neill, Chase
	Neill, Chase	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Wise, Stephanie
	Wise, Stephanie	Lookabaugh, Brian
3	Lookabaugh, Brian	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Neill, Chase	Wise, Stephanie
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Wise, Stephanie	Neill, Chase
4	Lookabaugh, Brian	Wise, Stephanie
	Neill, Chase	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Neill, Chase
	Wise, Stephanie	Tannehill, O'Dell
5	Lookabaugh, Brian	Neill, Chase
	Neill, Chase	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Wise, Stephanie
	Wise, Stephanie	Lookabaugh, Brian
6	Lookabaugh, Brian	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Neill, Chase	Wise, Stephanie
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Wise, Stephanie	Neill, Chase
7	Lookabaugh, Brian	Wise, Stephanie
	Neill, Chase	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Neill, Chase
	Wise, Stephanie	Tannehill, O'Dell
8	Lookabaugh, Brian	Neill, Chase
	Neill, Chase	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Wise, Stephanie
	Wise, Stephanie	Lookabaugh, Brian
9	Lookabaugh, Brian	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Neill, Chase	Wise, Stephanie
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Wise, Stephanie	Neill, Chase
10	Lookabaugh, Brian	Wise, Stephanie
	Neill, Chase	Lookabaugh, Brian

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Table 3 —continued from previous page.

Week	Pairing	
	Submission By	Discussion By
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Neill, Chase
	Wise, Stephanie	Tannehill, O'Dell
11	Lookabaugh, Brian	Neill, Chase
	Neill, Chase	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Wise, Stephanie
	Wise, Stephanie	Lookabaugh, Brian
12	Lookabaugh, Brian	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Neill, Chase	Wise, Stephanie
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Wise, Stephanie	Neill, Chase
13	Lookabaugh, Brian	Wise, Stephanie
	Neill, Chase	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Neill, Chase
	Wise, Stephanie	Tannehill, O'Dell
14	Lookabaugh, Brian	Tannehill, O'Dell
	Neill, Chase	Wise, Stephanie
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Wise, Stephanie	Neill, Chase
15	Lookabaugh, Brian	Wise, Stephanie
	Neill, Chase	Lookabaugh, Brian
	Tannehill, O'Dell	Neill, Chase
	Wise, Stephanie	Tannehill, O'Dell

To Reiterate...

The Prospectus is intended to lay the key groundwork for your dissertation. It is not intended *to be the dissertation*. Certainly, some of the elements and writing appearing in the Prospects (e.g., research questions, theoretical ideas) ultimately may appear in the dissertation; but, mostly likely in revised and elaborated form. Therefore, a document of roughly 25 pages should be sufficient to fulfill the purpose of the prospectus. If you find yourself exceeding this page length target, then be more concise with your writing. That said, in some cases the student's chair and/or committee will demand greater elaboration on certain portions of the prospectus, elaboration that results in a longer document. Under these conditions, I leave it to the student and its committee to use their discretion regarding the document's ultimate length.

Winter Weather

Given possible winter weather January–March, please monitor your Canvas and MyUNT email accounts for messages from me regarding seminar. Due to commuting hazards (me riding a motorcycle from my home in SW Fort Worth), I may request that we resort to a Zoom seminar.

Covid-related Exigencies

Given the unpredictability of the Covid-19 pandemic with respect to personal and family health and safety, we will keep Zoom seminar (or individual attendance) throughout the semester as an option for the seminar instructor and participants.