Georgia Institute of Technology

Sam Nunn School of International Affairs

Spring 2019

INTA 4500: Pro-Seminar

Class Time: M 3:00-5:45 PM

Classroom: Habersham G-17

Instructor:

Prof. Mikulas Fabry

Office location: Habersham 152

Tel.: (404) 385-6883

E-mail: mfabry@gatech.edu

Office hours: by appointment Mondays 1:00-3:00 PM

Course Description:

This is a project-based course. Its purpose is to enable you to produce a research paper based on your specific interests within international affairs. The work you put into it should help you enhance essential skills required by employers as well as graduate schools: collecting and processing relevant sources; clear and concise writing; analytical, critical and methodical thinking; public presenting; and providing constructive feedback to others. The final product may prove very useful as you prepare an application portfolio for a job or graduate school. Bearing that in mind, I assign minimum reading in this course: only a very concise textbook on writing a research paper in political science. You will spend most of the time presenting the progress you have made on your projects and commenting on those of others. Through presentations and Q&A you will demonstrate what you know, and how to think, about international affairs.

The course has two intended learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to analyze in-depth a significant problem of international concern.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to employ essential professional skills.

**Course Text**:

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (Sage, 2016)

The book is available for purchase in the GT Barnes & Noble. It will also be on reserve in the Main Library. Should there be a need, any other course material will be posted on the Canvas course page (canvas.gatech.edu).

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Students enrolled in the course have the following responsibilities: (1) to finish four written assignments and present them in class; (2) to complete a research paper of 5,000 words (excluding notes and bibliography) on a significant problem, issue or puzzle in international affairs which utilizes at least 20 academically reputable sources, including books and journal articles; (3) to present their nearly completed papers in class (with the help of Power Point) and in a poster session; (4) to actively participate in class discussions. Students can work individually or as a group of two.

The final grades will be determined as follows: four written assignments and their presentations (20%; 5% each), class attendance (10%) and participation (20%), and the final presentation, poster and paper (50%).

The written assignments are due on the day you present them to the class and their paper copies should be distributed to the students and the instructor just before your presentation. The research papers are due on Monday, **April 29** at 2:00 PM in my mailbox in Habersham 129. The papers will be graded on the basis of their originality and logic of argument, quantity and quality of supporting research, and readability and elegance of writing style.

In several classes we will discuss themes raised by the textbook so as to better understand different elements of a research project. In order to provide stimulus for those discussions, each student should prepare two questions that they were left with after reading the assigned material for the specified class. The questions should be handed in – on a typed page containing the student’s name – to the instructor at the beginning of class. These will count towards class participation.

**Penalty Policy, Academic Honesty, Class Attendance and Communications Policy:**

The four written assignments will not be accepted later than the class on which they are due. Final papers will be penalized by half a grade per day late, unless valid justification for missing the due date is provided before the due date. In all your coursework, you must adhere to Georgia Tech’s Honor Code ([www.honor.gatech.edu](http://www.honor.gatech.edu)). Class attendance is **mandatory**. Class absence is only justified for documented medical and family emergency reasons and in other cases approved by the GT Office of the Dean of Students. As GT email is the only means for the instructor to reach you outside the classroom, you are responsible for checking it **daily**.

**Outline of Classes:**

[N.B. The schedule is subject to revision; I will provide ample notice should that occur.]

**January 7: Course Introduction**

We will introduce the structure of the pro-seminar and the grading rubrics.

**January 14: Visit from the INTA Librarian Jay Forrest + Discussion of Research Questions**

Read Baglione’s chapters 1-2 and hand in two typed questions raised by them.

**January 21: MLK Day (NO CLASS)**

**January 28: Presentations of Research Questions**

Assignment: Find a research question you will investigate this semester in the pro-seminar paper. Prepare a one-page handout to be distributed and presented in class. The handout should clearly state your research question, describe the problem to be investigated, and lay out a rough plan for your research. The in-class presentation will go by the ascending alphabetical order of student surnames [5 points].

Students will present their own research questions and help others refine theirs.

**February 4: Presentations of Research Questions Continued**

**February 11: Presentation on Posters by Vince Pedicino + Discussion of Literature Review and Tentative Arguments**

Read Baglione’s chapters 3-5 and hand in two typed questions raised by them.

**February 18: Presentation of Literature Review and Tentative Arguments**

What are the existing answers to your research question? What are they missing? What explanations do you propose?

Assignment: Prepare a one-page handout to be distributed and presented in class. Describe existing scholarship and theories in regards to your research question and your own tentative theory, hypothesis or argument and be prepared to present them in class. The in-class presentation will go by descending alphabetical order of students’ surnames [5 points].

Students will present their own literature reviews and tentative arguments and comment on those of others.

**February 25: Presentation of Literature Review and Your Tentative Arguments Continued + Discussion of Research Design**

Read Baglione’s chapters 6-9 and hand in two typed questions raised by them.

**March 4: Research Design: Method, Evidence and Case Studies**

How do you design and organize your research inquiry? How do you convince others your arguments are valid and make sense? How do you pick relevant cases to make your inference valid and persuasive?

Assignment: Prepare a one-page handout explaining your approach or method of inquiry. If you are using qualitative methods, explain the case(s) you pick and implications you expect to find. If you are using quantitative methods, explain the source(s) and periods of data you will use or collect and the measurement of your variables [5 points]. The order of in-class presentations will be determined by lottery.

Students will present their research design and comment on research designs of others.

**March 11: Research Design: Method, Evidence and Case Studies Continued**

**March 18: Spring Break (NO CLASS)**

**March 25: Taking Stock of Progress**

Students will report their progress by presenting an “elevator ride” description of the project (or an “elevator pitch”). Imaging stepping into an elevator and as the doors close, you realize that the person standing next to you is a recruiter at your dream company. Could you concisely introduce your research topic in the time of a quick elevator ride—about 60 seconds or less? Your objective is to create a memorable and positive impression and open the door to further conversation.

In addition to presenting your elevator pitch, you may also raise any research issues you have encountered and seek advice from the class.

Assignment: Prepare an “elevator ride” description of your project, which is a summary of your research question, findings/arguments, and the importance of the issue in a paragraph (maximum 250 words). For example: I did a research on XXXXX (*a topic*) because I was intrigued by XXXXX (*your research question*). In order to answer the question, I did a case comparison between XXXXX (*your methods*) and found that when XX increases XX decreases (*your argument*). I thought the issue was interesting and important because XXXXX (*why it matters*). The order of in-class presentations will be determined by lottery [5 points].

**April 1: Final Presentation of Research**

The order of in-class presentations will be determined by lottery. Please email your Power Point presentation to the instructor prior to the class during which you present.

**April 8: Final Presentation of Research Continued**

**April 15: Final Presentation of Research Continued**

**April 22: Poster Day**

Students will exhibit their posters in Habersham Building and present them to the INTA community.

Assignment: Prepare a poster of your project. Illustrate clearly your research question, argument, research design/methodology, findings and implications.