

**Georgia Institute of Technology  
Sam Nunn School of International Affairs  
Spring 2021**

**INTA 4500: Pro-Seminar  
Class Time: M 5:00-7:45 PM  
Hybrid Format Classroom: Habersham 136**

**Instructor:**

Prof. Mikulas Fabry

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Virtual office hours: Tuesdays 12:00-2:00 PM (email me for a virtual appointment)

**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 four intended learning outcomes. Students will:

1. demonstrate theoretical knowledge of the discipline to address international policy issues.
2. demonstrate methodological literacy to analyze to international political phenomena.
3. use oral communication to demonstrate knowledge and to make cogent arguments in international affairs.
4. demonstrate proficiency in written communication to increase knowledge and develop cogent arguments in international affairs.

**Course Text:**

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Sage, 2020).

The book is available for purchase in the GT Barnes & Noble. The GT Library also owns a copy. All other course material will be posted on the Canvas course page ([canvas.gatech.edu](https://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, and has an empirical component; (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. Those wishing to work in pairs should let the instructor know via email by February 5<sup>th</sup>.

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 (10%), poster (10%) and paper (30%).

The written assignments are due on the day you present them to the class and their copies should be uploaded to Canvas (under Discussions) **by 3:00 PM before the class of your presentation** (should you choose to present your written assignment with the assistance of Power Point, please email the instructor a copy before the class during which you present). The research papers are due on Monday, **May 3rd** at 2:00 PM via email to the instructor. The papers will be graded based on their originality, logic and structure of argument, quantity and quality of supporting research, and clarity, readability and elegance of writing style.

In several classes we will discuss themes raised by the textbook 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 emailed to the instructor no later than 3:00 PM before the beginning of class. These will count towards class participation.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible so that I know of your learning needs.

### **Additional Student Resources:**

The Center for Academic Success ([success.gatech.edu](http://success.gatech.edu)) offers a variety of academic support services to help students succeed academically at Georgia Tech (e.g. tutoring, peer-led study groups, study skills, etc.). The Division of Student Life ([studentlife.gatech.edu](http://studentlife.gatech.edu)) in the Office of the Dean of Students offers resources and support for all students in the Tech community. The Counseling Center (<http://counseling.gatech.edu/>) offers free mental health services, as well as stress management and wellness workshops to all currently enrolled students. They are located in Smithgall, Suite 210 and are offering virtual and in-person resources.

### **Communications Policy:**

As your official GT email is the only means for the instructor to reach you outside the classroom, you are responsible for checking it **daily**. You are also asked to **turn on** to receive **all** the course-related notifications on Canvas.

### **Outline of Classes:**

[N.B. The schedule is subject to revision, including the number of in-person classes; I will provide ample notice should that occur.]

### **January 18: MLK Day (NO CLASS)**

### **January 25: Course Introduction**

We will discuss the structure of the pro-seminar, the grading rubrics and introduce the critical importance of good research question selection.

### **February 1: Presentation by INTA Librarian Jay Forrest + Discussion of Research Questions**

Read Baglione's chapters 1-2 and email the instructor two typed questions raised by them by 3:00 PM before the class. Add the research question you are planning to answer in the course.

### **February 8: 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, explain why it is important (theoretically, empirically, in terms of policy relevance, or all three), and lay out a rough plan for how you intend to go about answering it. [5 points].

Students will present their own research questions and help others refine theirs. The presentation will go by the ascending alphabetical order of student surnames.

### **February 15: Presentations of Research Questions Continued**

### **February 22: Individual Progress Consultations with the Instructor – IN-PERSON CLASS**

### **March 1: Presentation on Posters by Vince Pedicino + Discussion of Literature Review and Tentative Arguments**

Read Baglione's chapters 3-5 and email the instructor two typed questions raised by them by 3:00 PM before the class.

### **March 8: Presentations 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 regarding your research question. Be sure to explain how your project relates to the literature (e.g. Are you filling a gap or resolving a disagreement? What concepts or methods might you utilize? Are they different from what currently exists?). Then present your own tentative theory, hypothesis or argument. The presentations will go by descending alphabetical order of students' surnames. [5 points].

### **March 15: Presentations of Literature Review and Your Tentative Arguments Continued + Discussion of Research Design**

Read Baglione's chapters 6-9 and email the instructor two typed questions raised by them by 3:00 PM before the class.

### **March 22: Presentations of 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. The order of presentations TBD. [5 points].

### **March 29: Presentation of Research Design: Method, Evidence and Case Studies Continued**

### **April 5: Taking Stock of Progress**

Students will report their progress by presenting an "elevator ride" description of the project (or an "elevator pitch"). Imagine 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 presentations TBD [5 points].

### **April 12: Final Presentation of Research**

The order of presentations TBD. Please upload your Power Point presentation on Canvas by noon of the day on which you present [10 points].

### **April 19: Final Presentation of Research Continued**

### **April 26: Poster Day**

Assignment: Prepare a poster of your project. Clearly illustrate your research question, argument, research design/methodology, findings and implications [10 points].