

The American University of Central Asia
Department of Sociology
SOC 480 Senior Thesis Seminar II
SPRING 2014 Syllabus

Coordinator: Douglas Willmann
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Class meets: Wednesday, 9.25 – 10.45
Office hours: by appointment, Room 235

OVERVIEW

This course continues from the first semester. In this second semester, students present a series of work in progress reports, building up towards a mock defense. Each presentation lasts about 5 minutes, followed by critical questions and constructive comments from (other students) and instructor(s). Students will be expected to prepare five presentations/progress reports.

Importantly, students must conform to the schedule established in this syllabus. **Failure to attend and actively participate in the seminars will result in the student being dropped from the Senior Thesis Program.** *The program coordinators, students' supervisors and students' faculty departments all reserve the right to drop students from the Senior Thesis Program, if the student has failed to make sufficient progress, and is unlikely to produce a satisfactory research work.* The decision to allow the students to continue to participate in the Senior Thesis Program is made by the appropriate department in each student's case. Students should be aware that different departments might set different criteria.

There are several research books, and you are required to consult them for essential and advanced information. Note that there are other research books available in the library, and you can also consult them.

Readings/Review Materials

*Senior Thesis Seminar - Reader (continue to use)

- + Gilbert, N. (2001). Researching Social Life. (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- + Robson, C. (2002). Real World Research. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- + Bryman, A. (2001). Social Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- + Sayer, A. (1992). Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

* - essential reading

+ - supplementary reading
handouts either in class or attached to papers

Expectations of the students

A. Participate actively during class. Apart from asking questions and giving comments, students are expected to consider how their contributions affect the overall work climate in class. If a student's contributions do not have a constructive effect on the overall work and discussion climate in class, the student is expected to discuss this in a constructive way.

B. Be punctual for classes. Be aware that class begins at 9:25 a.m.

C. Show respect for and attempt to understand other people's viewpoints and experiences.

D. Submit all assignments on time and completed to the best of their abilities.

E. REMEMBER THAT THE TIME TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR GRADE IS AT THE START, NOT THE END, OF THE SEMESTER! Work hard and focus through out the semester!

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES, FIRST & FINAL DRAFTS

All assignments are to be submitted by the deadline. First Drafts will be submitted by email to: willmann_d@mail.auca.kg. If there is NO First Draft, the Final Draft will not be accepted. Final Drafts in hardcopy, in class or in my office, on the submission date. LATE ASSIGNMENTS both First & Final Drafts will be penalized **5% per day** off the Final assignment grade. NO ELECTRONIC VERSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR FINAL DRAFTS.

The Plagiarism Policy for this course is as stated in the AUCA Student Handbook.

If a paper is plagiarized, there are four (4) possible outcomes: "F" for the paper, "F" for the course, Student referred to the Academic Honesty Board, or ALL of the above. It will be you I am grading, not previously published materials. PLEASE, do your own work.

pla-gia-rism

[pley-juh-riz-uhm,]

noun

An act or instance of using or closely imitating the [language](#) and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author's work as one's own, as by not crediting the original author.

Synonyms: appropriation, infringement, piracy, counterfeiting; theft, borrowing, cribbing, passing off.

DRAFTS

Good writing is a process that requires review, editing, and revision. This is true for **all writing**, not just for that of college students. I will require you to submit drafts of major sections of your Senior Thesis, and we will meet individually to discuss these drafts. First

draft assignments are not an opportunity to put off writing a paper until the night before the final is due. The amount of effort you put into your draft will most likely determine your final grade. Ask yourself these questions before you turn in any draft:

- A. Have I followed the format for the assignment?
- B. Have I proofread my work?
- C. Have I fully answered the section I am writing on?
- D. If this were a final version, would I be happy with the grade awarded?

If the answer to any of these questions is, honestly, “No,” then neither your draft nor your tutorial will probably help you much with writing your final paper, and your grade will reflect that fact. Please see the last page of the syllabus for a key to deciphering the comments I will make on your drafts. Unless otherwise specified, drafts should be submitted electronically to me at willmann_d@mail.auca.kg.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION

Attendance at *every* session is required. *Do not arrive in class late.* After your third lateness, I will mark you absent for the session. And since this course is both lecture and discussion-based, it is especially important that you come to class having reviewed the assignments, be ready to listen actively, to “try on” new ideas and risk comments and questions in both writing and discussion. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out about and making up work for the day you missed. This course is required for graduation and will strictly follow the attendance policy in your Student Handbook. The acceptance of all doctor’s excuses are left to the discretion of the Professor. In other words, a note does not automatically erase your absence.

GRADING

WEEK

Review session based on revised research proposal Expectations and Deadlines:
Literature Review session
Writing: Research Method/Analysis Procedure/Sampling & Research
Planning/Research Questions

3&4& 5

First presentation: data gathering/data analysis – you will answer the following kinds of questions:

- How have you ensured that your research instrument addresses your key concepts/themes?
- What difficulties, if any, have you had to resolve in transcribing, translating, and working with your gathered data, and how/why?
- How are you analyzing the data that you are gathering? Is there any resistance of the field toward the concept \ theoretical frame?

Writing: WEEK 2 Submit Draft 1 of the Research Method/Analysis Procedure/Sampling & Research Planning/Research Questions

- Writing: Week 3 Theories and Models Sections, First Drafts Due Week 4

6&7&8

Second presentation: writing up your thesis - focus on the particular section that you are writing up.

- What are the major challenges that I am facing in writing up?
- How am I balancing the different sections in my paper?
- How do I justify the way I develop my arguments within and between different sections? (*especially*, conclusion)
- Have I checked that my English is comprehensible?
- Writing: Week 6: Theoretical Framework, Conceptualization sections, Methodology/Research Findings & Analysis
- Writing: Week 8: Drafts Due

Spring Break

Writing: Introduction/ Significance of Research/Ethical Issues & Limitations

9&10 *Third presentation:* writing up your thesis - your complete paper should be ready, and you should be working on revisions.

- What are the major challenges that I am facing in writing up?
- How am I balancing the different sections in my paper?
- How do I justify my different choices of section?
- How can I make sure that I can be finished by the deadline?
- How do I make sure that I am within the word limit?
- How do I justify the way I develop my arguments within and between different sections?
- Have I checked that my English is comprehensible?
- Writing: Week 9: Overall Review, Conclusion
- DRAFT DUE End of Week 10

11 Draft of Thesis (6 April) and Individual Tutorials: consultation on draft thesis

12 Individual Tutorials: consultation on draft thesis

13 *Mock Defense:* we will focus:

- How can I make sure that I can present my ideas concisely within the time limit?
- How can I make sure that I am able to respond to any questions that might emerge?
- What sort of visual aids should I have to help me in my presentation?
- How do I make sure that I am not too nervous in the defense?

- 14 Completion of Thesis: all revisions completed and thesis submitted (30 April)
- 15 Review of the course and preparation for the oral defense.

Oral Defense (TBA)

Second Semester: Assignment, Grading Structure and Guidelines

100% Thesis (10,000 - 12,000 words)

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- 6 April: First thesis draft
- 23-24 May – Mock defense
- 30 April: Finished thesis draft
- 5 May: All revisions completed
- May (TBA): Oral Defense

Grading Guidelines for the Assignment

The thesis is an original research paper in English, on a topic chosen by students in consultation with their supervisor. The thesis will be orally defended before the department at the end of the academic year. The thesis is a piece of research that shows a strong knowledge of the theoretical literature, and contains an original argument. An empirical, concrete study will be expected, requiring the students to design and undertake an original research work.

- ‘A’ – The assignment of exceptional quality, and is comprehensive and original in their insights, and written with some sense of style.
- ‘A-’ – The assignment of comprehensive and original quality, with an insightful treatment of the subject matter. It indicates a high degree of intellectual, conceptual and analytical sophistication. It is also well structured, with clear, creative themes, which is supported by clear evidence, and it astutely evaluates counter-arguments.
- ‘B+’ – The assignment is extremely thorough and thoughtful, though it lacks originality, comprehensiveness or insight. It is logical and clear, and has well-reasoned objectives and written structure.
- ‘B’ – The assignment is well reasoned and well organized, and the ideas are developed, but with little originality. It also indicates exceptional insights, but is inadequately developed.
- ‘C+’ – The assignment shows competency of the subject matter, with an adequate written structure. It contains some ideas, which demonstrate analytical skills, though overall it is not well developed.
- ‘C’ – The assignment regurgitates readings and seminar ideas and materials.
- ‘D+’ – The assignment has evidence of some thought, though it lacks analytical structure.
- ‘F’ – The assignment where none of the above applies, or is plagiarized from other sources.

Supervision

Each student will be obliged to find an American University of Central Asia (AUCA) faculty member, who is willing to supervise the thesis. Students are free to change their supervisors without penalty. Students are welcome to consult with faculty or relevant professionals outside AUCA, with the departmental approval – however, their primary supervisor should be an AUCA faculty member. Supervisors reserve the right to establish deadlines that are earlier than those listed above – it is the students' responsibility to meet those deadlines set by their supervisor and the course coordinator.

Students must conform to the schedule established in this syllabus. Failure to do so (i.e., missing deadlines or not submitting satisfactory work) will result in the student being dropped from the Senior Thesis Program.

Please note that the course coordinator in agreement with department faculty reserves the right to change the schedule of the meetings and topics as and when necessary.

Be advised that this course has been designed as “processed based writing,” therefore to receive full grade points, both First and Final drafts must be submitted.