Semester: Fall
Year: 2025
Course Prefix: CGCL
Course and Section #: 6970R-X01
Course Title: Masters Thesis Research
Credits: 3

Course Description

This course is one of two classes that equips MACGCL students with the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct scholarly research and write a comprehensive, interdisciplinary master's thesis in the topics of constitutional government, civics, and law. We meet weekly as a class for seven weeks to learn some fundamentals, after that the instruction is individual with your thesis supervisor. Course topics include research design, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis, thesis structure, and academic writing and editing.

Course Attributes

This course has the following attributes:
☐ General Education Requirements
☐ Global/Intercultural Graduation Requirements
☐ Writing Enriched Graduation Requirements
☒ Discipline Core Requirements in Program
☐ Elective Core Requirements in Program
☐ Open Elective
Other:

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Professor Savannah Eccles Johnston

Student Learning Outcomes

- Understand the components and structure of an interdisciplinary master's thesis
- Develop a research proposal
- Conduct a thorough literature review
- Select appropriate research methods and design to answer your research question
- Collect, analyze, and interpret relevant data
- Write and revise thesis chapters
- Present research findings effectively
- All additional readings will be distributed by PDF or online open-source platforms

Course Materials and Texts

- *The Craft of Research*, Wayne C. Booth, et al.
- Additional readings available on Canvas.

Suggested readings on writing:

- Strunk and White, *Elements of Style* (4th ed. or earlier)
- William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*

Course Requirements

Course Assignments, Assessments, and Grading Policy

You must complete all assignments to have a passing grade for this class.

Attendance & Participation	20%
Writing Assignments	80%

Attendance & Participation (20%): The purpose of this class is to assist you in writing your master's thesis. Readings and class attendance is not the point. Readings are aids to doing the work, but not the work. Thus, read as necessary to understand the tasks and write your thesis – you will not be tested on the readings. Similarly, classes are to review the skills and resolve specific problems students are facing with their writing. While attendance is mandatory, participation is not a large part of the grade. I hope you will skim the required readings before class so you have an idea of the topic, that you will have your camera on a majority of time during class, and that you will participate in the discussions and contribute to helping others find answers and solutions to their problems (just as they will help you).

In addition, I encourage students to use the "Discussions" feature on Canvas, where one may raise questions about the readings and lectures that are confusing and where conversations begun in class can continue outside of class. These are not graded, but they facilitate learning.

Assignments: Papers should be submitted in 12 font, Times New Roman, double-spaced with 1-inch margins. Double-sided printing is fine as long as it is clear on both sides. **Papers are due the class after they are assigned.**

"A" range papers are those which are especially creative, perceptive, and persuasive in presenting original, clear arguments backed up by both textual evidence and fluid writing. Consistent with the learning outcomes for the class, they should also anticipate and seriously grapple with counterarguments. "B" range papers are for solid, clear arguments with textual support and serviceable writing. Papers that contain one or more of the following errors--primarily summarizing, failing to meaningfully engage the prompt or texts, or lacking basic proofreading--will warrant grades C or below.

Use an established citation method to cite your sources. Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment and referral to the appropriate disciplinary boards. Ask me if you have any specific questions.

Grading Scale

A = 94-100	B - = 80-82.9	D+ = 67-69.9
A - = 90-92.9	C+ = 77-79.9	D = 63-66.9
B+ = 87-89.9	C = 73-76.9	D - = 60-62.9
B = 83-86.9	C - = 70-72.9	E = 0-59.9

Required or Recommended Reading Assignments

All required readings use chapters from the course text that align with the lectures below.

Course Outline

August 26: Introduction to Thesis Research in Political Science

- Topics:
  - Course overview and syllabus review
  - Understanding the purpose and structure of a master's thesis in political science
  - Developing a research question and hypothesis
- Readings:
  - Chapters 1-3 in *The Craft of Research* by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams
- Assignments:
  - Research Overview: In less than 2-pages, describe your research topic, including: the problem you are trying to answer, why it matters, your research question, and what you think are the main sources of research/evidence that will help you answer your research question.
  - Write a 1-paragraph summary of your research idea with research question.
- Supplemental Reading:
  - Creswell & Creswell, chapter 7: "Research Questions and Hypotheses", pp. 133-146.

September 2: Literature Review I

- Topics:
  - Identifying and accessing scholarly sources
  - Analyzing, organizing, and synthesizing literature
- Readings:
  - Creswell & Creswell, "Chapter 2: Review of the Literature"
  - Booth et al., chapters 4-6
- Assignments:
  - Annotated Bibliography: Write an annotated bibliography of 30 sources related to your research topic.
- Supplemental readings (skim for additional ideas, helps and solutions):
  - Identifying and accessing scholarly resources:
    - Galvan & Galvan, chapters 2-4, *Writing Literature Reviews*
    - Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou, "Chapter 6: Searching the Literature" in
  - Analyzing, organizing, and synthesizing literature
    - Galvin and Galvin, chapter 5 "Conduct a Deep Analysis of the Article", *Writing Literature Reviews*

September 19: Literature Review II – Map/Outline Your Sources

- Topics:
  - Organize your bibliography by mapping or outlining the relations between the sources
  - Identifying weaknesses and holes in the existing literature
- Readings:
  - Machi and McEvoy, "Stage 7: Map Your Materials" in *The Literature Review* (pp. 48-53).
  - Galvan and Galvan, chapter 4 "Organizing Yourself to Begin the Selection of Relevant Titles" and chapter 5 "Conduct a Deep Analysis of the Articles" in *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 43-64)
- Assignment
  - Map/Outline Your Bibliography: Organize your bibliography by mapping or outlining the relations between the sources you identified in you annotated bibliography, add additional relevant sources.
  - Weaknesses and Holes: Write 1-page on the weaknesses or holes in the existing literature.

September 16: Arguments (Evaluating and Making)

- Topics:
  - The components of an argument
  - What makes a good claim?
  - What qualifies as good evidence?
  - The importance of warrants to good arguments
- Readings:
  - "The Craft of Research" by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams (chapters 7-9)
- Assignment
  - Keep developing your literature review and revising your research proposal
- Supplemental Readings:
  - Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou, chapter 7 "Assessing the Evidence Base" and chapter 9 "Synthesizing and Analyzing Qualitative Studies" in *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*

September 23: Research Design & Purpose Statement

- Topics:
  - Theories and hypotheses
  - Qualitative vs. quantitative research methods
- Selecting appropriate research methods for historical and institutional analysis
- Readings:
  - Creswell & Creswell, chapter 3 "The Use of Theory", pp. 49, 61-73.
  - Creswell & Creswell, chapter 7 "Research Questions and Hypotheses" in *Research Methods: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods* (pp. 133-46).

- Assignments:
    - Research Design: In 3-pages, do the following:
        - Write one or two central questions followed by five to seven sub-questions
        - Explain why this topic is important
        - Identify two or theories that can be used to explore your topic
        - Write two or three hypotheses that would answer your central question(s).

Sep 30: Historical & Institutional Research – choose one

- Historical Topics:
    - Understanding historical context and change
    - Using primary and secondary sources
    - Archival research techniques
- Readings:
    - "Historical Research: A Guide" by W.H. McDowell (chapters 7-9)

- Institutional Topics:
    - Theories of institutionalism: Historical, Rational Choice, and Sociological
    - Analyzing political institutions and their development
    - Comparative institutional analysis
- Readings:
    - "The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis" edited by Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (Chapters 1-4)
- Assignment:
    - Identify and summarize key primary sources for your research.

October 7: One on One meetings (sign up on Canvas)

FIRST COHORT:

October 13-November 8: First Oxford Cohort work with assigned tutors at Oxford

November 18: First Oxford Cohort Review of Oxford Due
Assignment: No more than 4-page summary of your experience in Oxford with an emphasis on what you learned relevant to your thesis project, what you wish you knew before going to Oxford, and plans for completing your thesis.

December 2: First Cohort - One on One Meetings on Thesis Progress (sign up on Canvas)

SECOND COHORT:

Oct 21: Second Cohort – One on One Meetings on Thesis Progress (sign up on Canvas)

Nov 8-December 6: Second Oxford Cohort work with assigned tutors at Oxford

December 9: Second Oxford Cohort Review of Oxford due
Assignment: No more than 4-page summary of your experience in Oxford with an emphasis on what you learned relevant to your thesis project, what you wish you knew before going to Oxford, and plans for completing your thesis.

Supplementary Readings:

- "Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper" by Arlene Fink
- "Historical Research: A Guide" by W.H. McDowell
- "The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis" edited by Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio
- "Methods for Political Inquiry: The Discipline, Philosophy, and Analysis of Politics" by Stella Z. Theodoulou and Rory O'Brien
- "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook" by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana
- "Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences" by Jose L. Galvan
- "Presenting Your Findings: A Practical Guide for Creating Tables" by Adelheid A. M. Nicol and Penny M. Pexman
- "The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities" by Eric Hayot
- "The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success" by Lawrence A. Machi and Brenda T. McEvoy
- "On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction" by William Zinsser
- "The Oral Presentation: A Practical Guide" by John Wilson

Academic Integrity

Any work submitted by a student is done under the implied claim that the person who submits and signs the paper is also its author in whole and in all parts. Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the university's regulations concerning academic honesty. A copy of those policies is provided at the links after these paragraphs. Read them. Violation of these guidelines will result in a severe penalty that may include a failing grade in the course and referral to the appropriate university judicial authority.

Penalties will be imposed for *inadvertent* as well as deliberate plagiarism. Since inadvertent plagiarism is not fully intentional, you need to be aware of what it is. It is easy to cut-and-paste material from the Internet, summarizing a source's logic, evidence, reasoning or language. When you do this, you are obliged to acknowledge *in the main body of the paper* that you are doing so, and not merely with a within-text citation. You need to say something like "Smith says that…" even when you paraphrase. Putting in a citation at the end of a series of directly paraphrased sentences is NOT adequate. The same thing goes for following the order of another person's argument and evidence. Summarizing another person must be acknowledged, and close paraphrasing should be rare. When you paraphrase closely, you probably should be quoting. And merely copying the other person's footnotes is NEVER appropriate because it suggests that you did not verify the original source on your own. When you do want to do a second-degree citation like this, it should read: Jones, p. 133 as cited by Smith, p. 221.

If your paper turns out to be a series of quotes and paraphrases, and if you give all of the proper references using words of acknowledgment as well as within-text citations, then it will not be plagiarized. It will not be

considered dishonest. So far, so good – but that is still not enough to make a paper satisfactory. Compiling a series of quotes and paraphrases – even if properly acknowledged – will not be enough to do a passable job. A paper must be made up of and organized around *your* thoughts – your thesis, reasoning and evidence, phrased in your words and serving your paper's end.

If you have any questions about this while writing, it is your responsibility to ask in advance.

Generative AI

The use of Large Language Models (LLMs), like ChatGPT and other AI, to write your discussions, responses, summaries or papers, consequently, is a violation of this policy and a likely significant impairment to your learning. I use AI checkers on all papers. Violation of the AI policy will result in an automatic fail.

LLMs, like ChatGPT, can be wonderful learning aids but they have some severe weaknesses. So far, they are OK for reviewing material, and they work well for generating ideas, proofreading, improving the clarity and concision of your writing, writing bibliographies, and writing formulaic things like resumes. In other words, they function like an OK tutor who can make some egregious errors.

LLMs work well to generate ideas (though I would do this sparingly and with caution for what it produces), improve your writing (examine what it changes to see how you can improve your writing on your own), or test your knowledge.

Attendance

Even though attendance counts for only 15% of your grade, attendance in class, on time, is expected. Students who miss two or more hours of class without an appropriate excuse will be penalized significantly in their final grades. This could range from a full letter on the final grade to failing the course.

Late Assignments

All assignments are due on the date and at the time assigned. Excuses will be accepted only for an adequately documented illness or emergency. Nothing prevents the student with a known scheduling conflict from reading ahead and completing the assignment early. The due dates are on the syllabus. All assignments will be submitted electronically. Unexcused assignments will be penalized at the rate of one full letter grade (for example from B+ to C+) for each 24-hours, with the first 24-hours beginning when the assignment was due.

Remote Testing Software

☒ This course does not use remote testing software.

☐ This course uses remote testing software. Remote test-takers may choose their remote testing locations. Please note, however, that the testing software used for this may conduct a brief scan of

remote test-takers' immediate surroundings, may require use of a webcam while taking an exam, may require the microphone be on while taking an exam, or may require other practices to confirm academic honesty. Test-takers therefore shall have no expectation of privacy in their test-taking location during, or immediately preceding, remote testing. If a student strongly objects to using test-taking software, the student should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to determine whether alternative testing arrangements are feasible. Alternatives are not guaranteed.

Accommodations/Students with Disabilities
Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions may contact UVU Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at DHHservices@uvu.edu

DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

Academic Integrity
At Utah Valley University, faculty and students operate in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Maintaining an atmosphere of academic integrity allows for free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to foster an intellectual atmosphere that produces scholars of integrity and imaginative thought. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and UVU students are expected to produce their own original academic work.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at UVU. Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the university by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their rights and responsibilities. In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, assessments, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Likewise, instructors are responsible to clearly state expectations and model best practices.

Further information on what constitutes academic dishonesty is detailed in UVU Policy 541: *Student Code of Conduct*.

Equity and Title IX
Utah Valley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, citizenship, genetic information, or other basis protected by applicable law, including Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services.

Inquiries about nondiscrimination at UVU may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights or UVU's Title IX Coordinator at 801-863-7999 – TitleIX@uvu.edu – 800 W University Pkwy, Orem, 84058, Suite BA 203.

Religious Accommodation
UVU values and acknowledges the array of worldviews, faiths, and religions represented in our student body, and as such provides supportive accommodations for students. Religious belief or conscience broadly includes religious, non-religious, theistic, or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as well as participation in religious holidays, observances, or activities. Accommodations may include scheduling or due-date modifications or make-up assignments for missed class work.
To seek a religious accommodation, a student must provide written notice to the instructor and the Director of Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu. If the accommodation relates to a scheduling conflict, the notice should include the date, time, and brief description of the difficulty posed by the conflict. Such requests should be made as soon as the student is aware of the prospective scheduling conflict.

While religious expression is welcome throughout campus, UVU also has a specially dedicated space for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of religious expression.