

International Relations (INRE) 30000: Perspectives on International Relations

Autumn 2020

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Wednesdays and Mondays 5:20-6:10pm CT

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Course Description

This lecture course covers the nuts and bolts for designing an M.A. thesis project and assists students in producing a design document that will later become the M.A. thesis proposal. It decomposes what is a lengthy and complex process into its component parts. The course is divided into two parts. In part I, the instructors will deliver a series of short pre-recorded video lectures. These lectures will serve as the basis for conversation during twice-weekly Zoom sessions among members of each preceptor group. The series of lectures and discussion sections will walk students through the iterative sequence of project conception and design. Grounded in principles of transparency and equity, much of the material will cover those fundamentals of academic work that rarely receive the explicit treatment they deserve. In part II of the course, students will write up and present a first version of their M.A. thesis design document. In Winter Quarter, they will build on the design document and the feedback they receive to compose and submit an M.A. thesis proposal for approval by a faculty advisor and their preceptor.

Viewing and Reading Materials

All course materials will be made accessible via the “Modules” link on Canvas.

There are two types of course material:

1. Video clips that are *required* viewing;
2. For select video clips, supplemental resources will be posted. Students *may* consult these at their leisure.

Grading

This non-credit course will be graded Pass/Fail. To receive a grade of Pass, each student must:

1. watch the video clips posted for each session;
2. participate actively in the live discussion sections each preceptor convenes during the class times listed above;
3. compose and present a first draft of an M.A. thesis design document (600-1,200 words);
4. provide constructive feedback on the design documents of their peers.

Student Responsibilities

Asynchronous Lectures (September 30 - November 4)

Instructors will post a series of short video lectures at 9am CT on the day before each live discussion section (see the Course Schedule below). Students are expected to watch and/or listen to these lectures in advance of each discussion section.

We encourage students to download the Canvas app to their phones or tablets so they have the option of listening to the lectures on-the-go and prevent Zoom fatigue.

Please note that **the guest lecture on Wednesday, October 14 will be delivered live via Zoom.**

Live Discussion Sections on Zoom (September 30 - November 4)

Preceptors will hold live discussion sections via Zoom on Wednesdays and Mondays, 5:20-6:10pm CT. They request that students will be actively engaged and on camera while on Zoom. We ask students who are unable to be on camera to reach out to their preceptor before the first discussion section.

Students who currently reside outside the Americas and are unable to join the discussion section live due to extreme time zone differences must contact their preceptor to discuss alternative participation arrangements.

All live discussion sections on Zoom will be recorded and are subject to the University's recording and deletion policies (see below).

Written Assignment, Live Workshop Presentation and Feedback (November 9 - December 2)

During weeks 7,8, and 10 of the quarter, preceptors will convene live workshops on Zoom for which each student will write up an M.A. thesis design document on a subject of their choosing. The document must be 600-1,200 words long and provide the student's preliminary answers to the following questions:

1. What question about the world is your project asking?
2. What are the best existing answers to this question?
3. How will you engage with the best existing answers to your question?
4. How do you think your project will contribute to the best existing work on your question?

5. What do you need to know and do next?

Preceptors will assign presentation slots to their students. Students will upload their design document **no later than 9am on the day before** they are scheduled to present. To do so, students must navigate to “Discussions,” click on the name of their preceptor group, hit “Reply,” attach their file, and then click on “Post Reply.”

Students are expected to read each other’s work in preparation for each workshop session and practice how to provide constructive feedback.

All live workshops on Zoom will be recorded and are subject to the University’s recording and deletion policies (see below).

Academic Honesty

It is imperative that we all know how to distinguish between our own statements or ideas of work and those of others. As students and scholars, we are positioning ourselves in debates with other members of the worldwide community of thinkers and writers. We expect students to properly acknowledge the contributions of these members as they present their own work. In addition to the resources we will provide during our lectures and discussion sections on **October 21**, we recommend that students consult Charles Lipson’s *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008). If students have any questions or concerns about acceptable and unacceptable use of others’ intellectual property, they must reach out to their preceptor or instructor *before* submitting work.

Any violation of the University’s standards of academic honesty will trigger disciplinary action the consequences of which will be severe.

Inclusive Excellence

The University of Chicago is dedicated to creating spaces where people of different backgrounds feel valued and where their ideas and contributions can flourish. Your cohort collects students whose identities, experiences, and beliefs cannot and should not be contained by disciplinary conventions. The instructors of this course ask that we, as a learning community, improvise ways to nurture and reflect on the inevitable friction between academic protocol and complex individuality. In doing so, we practice inclusive excellence: As individuals, we each feel valued, affirmed, and safe to experiment with new ways of experiencing, ordering, and changing the world around us; and as a community, we practice academic knowledge as the respectful and rigorous exercise of disagreement.

The instructors invite suggestions for how they and the CIR program might further promote inclusive excellence both inside and outside the classroom.

Accessibility

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by Student Disability Services (SDS) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please

meet with your preceptor to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations.

Phone: (773) 702-6000

Email: disabilities@uchicago.edu

Please note that all posted video lectures and Zoom sessions will be close-captioned.

Open and Equitable Communication

In order to enable each student to flourish academically, the instructors are committed to creating equitable access to the spaces in which students are most comfortable to experiment with new ideas. These spaces are not limited to our discussion sections and workshops. They include office hours and on-line platforms such as Canvas and Discord.

We encourage every student to contact their preceptor with any problems, concerns, or questions about the course or their program of study as soon as they arise. In addition to the twice-weekly discussion sections, preceptors will hold weekly office hours by appointment; simply send your preceptor an e-mail and propose a few time slots during which you are available. Given the volume of incoming e-mail, the preceptors ask that you give them up to 48 hours to accommodate you.

Crisis Support and Self-Care

In addition to the stressors of graduate school, this year we are experiencing intensifying economic, health, and racial justice crises in our academic community and beyond. It is essential that we take care of ourselves and each other. In addition to the resources we will provide during our lectures and discussion sections on **October 26**, we want to let you know that the University offers 24/7 crisis support plus an extensive suite of student wellness programming.

- Dean-on-Call (24/7 Emergency Hotline): (773) 702-8181
- Nurse Line (24/7) for urgent medical needs: (773) 702-4156
- Student Wellness Counseling and Psychiatry Office for urgent mental health needs: (773) 702-9800 and (773) 702-3625 (after hours)
- Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support; Renae DeSautel, Director: (773) 702-0438, desautel@uchicago.edu
- The Mental Health First Aid training program is designed to teach students the skills to help friends who are experiencing a mental health crisis.
- The Student Health and Counseling Services Events Calendar makes it easy for students to lean into the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of health.
- The Academic Skills Assessment Program is designed to help students improve their academic performance by addressing a number of concerns (e.g. anxiety, perfectionism, and procrastination) that can interfere with effective learning.

For a more extensive list of support resources, go [here](#).

Recording and Deletion Policies

The Recording and Deletion Policies for the current academic year can be found in the Student Manual under Petitions, Audio & Video Recording on Campus.

- Do not record, share, or disseminate any course sessions, videos, transcripts, audio, or chats.
- Do not share links for the course to those not currently enrolled.
- Any Zoom cloud recordings will be automatically deleted 90 days after the completion of the recording.

Course Schedule

I. Lectures and Discussion Sections

1. W, September 30 : READING ACADEMIC WORK

- Choosing How to Read (*Staisch*)
- Active Reading (*Cabal*)
- How to Diagram an Argument (*Jenkins*)
- Benefits of Deep Reading (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- Critical Engagement with the Literature (*Sheng*)

2. M, October 5 : DRAFT WRITING

- Basic Rules of Academic Writing (*Sheng*)
- Iterative Design Documents (*Staisch*)
- Purposive “Literature Reviews” (*Reese*)
- How to Present Quantitative Analysis (*Cabal*)
- Comparative Case Studies (*Jenkins*)

3. W, October 7 : WHAT DATA LOOK LIKE

- How to Access and Interpret Online Datasets (*Jenkins*)
- Experimental Data (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- Archival Data (*Sheng*)
- How to Read a Regression Table (*Cabal*)
- What is a “Case”? (*Reese*)

4. M, October 12 : BUILDING YOUR CAREER I

- Why, When, and How to Apply to PhD Programs (*Reese*)
- Tracking Your Career in CIR and After (*Staisch*)

5. W, October 14 : BUILDING YOUR CAREER II ***LIVE LECTURE***

- In-House Career Development: Timeline and Essential Resources (*Guest Lecture by Shelly Robinson and Gözde Erdeniz*)

6. M, October 19 : SEARCH

- How to Find and Use Physical and Digital Archives (*Jenkins*)
- The Journal Survey Approach (*Reese*)
- How to Find and Use Review Articles (*Sheng*)
- The Glory of Google Scholar (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- Citation Counts as a Proxy for Quality: How to Navigate the Web of Science (*Staisch*)

7. W, October 21 : ACADEMIC ETHICS

- Deliberate and Inadvertent Academic Fraud (*Sheng*)
- Avoiding Plagiarism (*Cabal*)
- Using Citation Tools (*Jenkins*)
- Securing Approval from the Institutional Review Board (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- Thinking about “Policy Implications” (*Reese*)

8. M, October 26 : MENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE

- Self-Care (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- Work/Life Balance in a 1-Year Program (*Cabal*)
- What Grades Mean (*Reese*)
- Fail Better (*Staisch*)

9. W, October 28 : PUZZLE CONSTRUCTION I

- The Craft of Writing Effectively (*Guest Lecture by Larry McEnerney, Director Emeritus of UChicago’s Writing Program*)

10. M, November 2 : PUZZLE CONSTRUCTION II

- What Is the Difference Between a Research Question and a Research Puzzle? (*Sheng*)
- What Makes a Research Question Relevant? (*Cabal*)
- Why Not Every Unanswered Question Is a Puzzle (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- How to Turn an Empirical Puzzle into a Theoretical Puzzle (*Jenkins*)
- Importing a Research Question from an Alternative Literature (*Reese*)
- Research without Puzzles? (*Staisch*)

11. W, November 4 : EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

- How to Communicate with Faculty (*Staisch*)
- Tips for Selecting and Securing a Thesis Advisor (*Jenkins*)
- Knowing When and How to Ask for Help (*Campbell-Seremitis*)
- Forming Peer Reading and Writing Groups (*Sheng*)
- Making the Most of Workshops (*Cabal*)

II. Workshops

1. **M, November 9** (*Preceptors*)
2. **W, November 11** (*Preceptors*)
3. **M, November 16** (*Preceptors*)
4. **W, November 18** (*Preceptors*)
5. **M, November 30** (*Preceptors*)
6. **W, December 2** (*Preceptors*)