POLS 404 Senior Thesis  
Wednesday 1:30 – 4:00pm  
Saunders 624

Professor: Dr. Hokulani K. Aikau  
E-mail: aikau@hawaii.edu (this is the best way to contact me as I check email several times a day.)  
Office Hours: Monday 1:30 – 3:30; by appointment  
Office: 611 Saunders Hall  
Office Phone: 956-8171

Course Description:
POLS 404 is a capstone course for Political Science majors but is open to all students interested in pursuing an individual research project related to political science. This course is intended to walk students through the process of writing a senior thesis, starting with finding a topic, conducting original research, building an argument, and writing an article length original research paper. This course does not prepare students to confront methodological issues related to knowledge production, approaches to research, or ethical issues; this should have been done in POLS 390. Rather, students will work with the instructor, fellow students, as well as in conjunction with a faculty mentor on the technical steps of conceptualizing, designing and producing an original research paper.

Learning Objectives:
• Students will know how to design and execute an original research project.  
• Students will know how to construct a bibliography of primary and secondary sources.  
• Students will know how to construct an argument, use evidence to support their claim, and present their findings in written and oral formats.

Required Readings: Books can be purchased from Oliver Lee or on-line.


Faculty Mentors:
Each student is required to identify a faculty mentor who will help the student navigate the literature in their particular field. The Faculty Mentor will help the student develop a comprehensive reading list for their literature review, advise them on methods, and read and provide feedback on early drafts of the thesis. The Faculty Mentor will be asked to evaluate the student’s progress over the semester and to offer a narrative evaluation of the first draft of the thesis. Faculty Mentors will be invited to presentations at the end of the semester. Final grades will be determined by the instructor.
Course Requirements:

1. **Participation, Peer Review and Attendance: 20%**
   In many ways researching and writing a paper can be a solitary endeavor however it is also inherently collaborative. We build on the ideas and research of others, and when we write, we aim to persuade, educate, enlighten, entertain, and perhaps unsettle a specific audience. Over the course of the semester, therefore, we will devote a great deal of attention to exchanging ideas and evaluating each other’s work. In addition to attending classes regularly, you must also be prepared to either present on your research and/or being prepared to offer constructive feedback on your classmates’ work. This course is worth 6 credit hours, however only three of those hours will be filled in class once a week. **Please note: Each student is given 1 free absence; each additional absence will result in a deduction of 5% from your participation grade.** If you miss four (4) or more class sessions, you will get a zero for your participation grade. Repeated tardiness will count as an absence. Please see me if there are extenuating circumstances that prevent you from making it to class on time. During the process of discussion differences in opinion may arise so it is extremely important to be courteous and respectful of each other in all of our discussions.

2. **Weekly Blog Posts: 5%**
   Research is a process that is best done in collaboration with others. I have created a class blog, which will allow us to maintain communication when we are not in class. As a 6 credit course, the blog will also serve as additional contact hours. Each week you will be expected to post a meaningful update, question, discussion topic, etc. and comment on the posts created by your classmates. In a separate handout, I will provide you with a rubric that summarizes my expectations.

3. **Paper Proposal: 5%**
   A research proposal provides a kind of road map or itinerary for your research journey. As such, it establishes your initial expectations while also being flexible, changing as your plans change. Additionally, your proposal will provide your faculty mentor with an idea of your plans for the semester and can help guide your discussion you will have with her or him about developing a bibliography and ensuring that your methods are appropriate. Your paper proposal will be due. We will workshop them in class on Jan. and you will have an opportunity to revise it before sharing it with your faculty mentor.

4. **Master/Annotated Bibliography: 10%**
   The success of your research paper not only relies on the clarity of your argument and the quality of your prose but on the depth and sophistication of your research. After spending several weeks conducting research, your bibliography will serve as the ship’s log of your journey. In most cases, it will consist of two parts: First, an exhaustive inventory of secondary sources you have consulted related to your topic; and second, a tightly focused list of primary sources which will serve as evidence to support your claim. Your master bibliography, which will include annotations of 10 key sources, is due.

   By the time you submit your preliminary bibliography, you should have a clear understanding of what others have said about your topic (or related topics) and what theoretical and methodological approaches best suit your purposes. Most importantly, you
should have narrowed down your own research so that you are working closely with a
discrete set of primary materials—historical archives, first-hand interviews, newspaper
articles, films, images, songs, etc. Please note that your bibliography must conform to The
Chicago Manuel of style (See Turabian for guidelines).

Annotations are not summaries. Rather they should to include the following:
1) Identify the author’s main argument, including the author’s claim/thesis statement, the
reasons that support their claim, and the evidence they will use to support their reasons;
2) Offers a concise critique of the overall book/article;
3) Includes one or two sentences that evaluate the authority or background of the author,
4) Explain how this book, article, etc. intersects with your thesis/research topic.

You may also find these websites helpful:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/
http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm

5. Detailed Outline (with sample analysis of one primary source) (5 pages minimum): 10%
For some of you, this paper may be longer that you are accustomed to writing. In addition to
having an opportunity to develop a concept map of the argument of your paper, you will use
your map to develop a detailed outline. The outline will help you organize your argument in
a structured, clear way. This outline can be in any form, but must contain enough detail to be
able to communicate how the parts of your argument fit together. You will also include an
analysis of one of your chosen primary sources (2 pages – included in final page count), and
it must be located where you think it belongs in the outline. Your outline will be due.

6. Introduction: 5%
As in life, first impressions matter in scholarship. Your introduction needs to capture the
reader’s interest, have a clearly identified puzzle or problem the project engages, research
questions, a claim, reasons for asserting that claim, alternative perspectives that will be
presented, and the evidence used to support you reasons. It is also useful to include a
roadmap for the rest of the paper. These demands make introductions exceedingly difficult to
write, so go easy on yourself. Devising an introduction that finally works generally requires
several drafts. You may find you have to try out and discard various approaches, and some of
your arguments or interpretations won’t become entirely clear until you’ve completed your
rough draft. When you submit your introduction for class review, it will not be the final draft.
Nonetheless, try to make it as compelling, clear, and as complete as possible. The first draft
of your introduction will be due.

7. First Full Draft (20 pages): 20%
A first draft is just that, a draft. However, in order to be useful, you should try to submit a full
version of your paper that you regard as close to final. It should be fully referenced, concisely
and clearly written, and carefully edited. This will allow your peer editors and faculty mentor
to make the most insightful and useful suggestions possible. Drafts will be due. You will
submit your draft to your research group and your faculty mentor. Your research group will
give you electronic feedback on your draft. You should make an appointment to meet with
your faculty mentor to discuss the draft.
8. **Presentation of Research: 5%**
   You have done amazing work this semester and now it's time to show it off. You will give a public presentation that synthesizes the research you have conducted this semester. It is an opportunity to share your work with a larger audience. Your presentation will be 15 minutes and should build from your draft and give the audience a brief synopsis of what you’ve learned from doing this research. You will invite your faculty mentor to attend and will thank them for their time and mana’o this semester.

9. **Final Draft (20 pages): 20%**
   You are almost to the finish line. The completion of your final paper marks the culmination of all your effort over the course of the semester (and as a Political Science major). It should be original, tightly focused, well-researched, convincingly argued, skillfully written, logically organized, and extensively referenced. It should take into account the editorial suggestions of your peers, the professor, and mentor, and should be based on extensive revisions. Please submit the best possible paper that you can, one you can submit for publication or use for a writing sample in professional school, graduate school and job applications.

**Grading Procedures:**
Below is a general written description of how I determine grades.

- **A** Achievement **outstanding** relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- **B** Achievement **significantly above** the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- **C** Achievement **meeting the minimum course requirements**.
- **D** Achievement **worthy of credit** even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements in every respect.
- **F** Performance **failing to meet the basic course requirements**

**Grade Breakdown:** Your grade will be based on the +/- system.

- **A** 100% - 93%
- **A-** 90%
- **B+** 86.49%
- **B** 82.49%
- **B-** 80%
- **C+** 76.49%
- **C** 72.49%
- **C-** 70%
- **D+** 66.49%
- **D** 62.49%
- **D-** 60%
- **F** 59% - 0%

In-class informal presentations, workshops, and other activities:

- ✓ + (check plus) = excellent work;
- ✓ (check) = ok work;
- ✓ – (check minus) = poor work.
**Late Work:** All work should be completed on time. If students have special circumstances that prevent them from turning in an assignment on time **PRIOR** arrangements must be made. A paper is late if it is not turned in by the end of class of the assigned due date. Late papers will be marked down by 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (i.e. from an A- to a B+). After a week the paper will receive zero points.

No **incompletes** will be given for this course unless there are extenuating circumstances in which case a contract must be drawn up with a plan for completion.

**Academic Dishonesty:** It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of and in compliance with the university’s policies regarding academic dishonesty. Any academic dishonesty such as plagiarism is taken seriously (see policy below).

**Reasonable Accommodation Policy:** If you feel you need reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability, please 1) contact the KOKUA Program (V/T) at 956-7511 or 956-7612 in room 013 of QLCSS; 2) speak with me privately to discuss your specific needs. I will be happy to work with you and the KOKUA Program to meet your access needs related to your documented disability.
## Course Schedule
(subject to change)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments, Readings, Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1:</td>
<td>Introductions: Getting to know each other, and introduction to Zotero, overview of the components of a research paper</td>
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<td>* In-Class: Workshop: Topic Statements, Research Questions, Hypothesis</td>
<td>READ: Turabian Ch. 1-2</td>
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<td>Week 2: Jan 16</td>
<td>Time Management: The significance of a schedule and how to write a lot!</td>
<td>READ: Silvia—entire book</td>
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<td>* In-Class establish individual writing schedules and accountability/writing groups; Discuss research proposal</td>
<td>*Identify possible Faculty Mentor; How to Make “First Contact”</td>
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<td>Week 3: Jan 23</td>
<td>*In-Class: Workshop Research Proposal; Establish Research plan for the semester; Discuss Kinds of Sources (Primary vs. Secondary) and Managing Information.</td>
<td>READ: Research Proposals; prepare for workshop</td>
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<td>Due: Research Proposal</td>
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<td>Week 4:</td>
<td>What is a Literature Review?</td>
<td>READ: Knoff “What is a Literature Review?”</td>
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<td>*Meet with Faculty Mentor to discuss proposal and begin work on master bibliography</td>
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<td>Week 5:</td>
<td>*In-Class: Revised Schedule &amp; Individual Progress Report</td>
<td>Set goals for the Week</td>
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<td>Week 6:</td>
<td>*In-Class: Individual Progress Report on Research and Bibliography</td>
<td>Due: Master/Annotated Bibliography</td>
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<td>Week 7:</td>
<td>Planning your Argument</td>
<td>Turabian Ch. 5</td>
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<td>In-Class: Concept Map Your Argument</td>
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<td>Week 8:</td>
<td>Planning your first Draft</td>
<td>READ: Turabian Ch. 6-7, 9</td>
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<td>* In-Class: Workshop Outlines, Discuss the role of Introductions and Conclusions</td>
<td>Due: Outline</td>
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<td>Week 9:</td>
<td>* In-Class: Workshop the Introduction</td>
<td>Due: Introduction (Peer/Professor Review)</td>
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<td>Week 10:</td>
<td>*In-Class: Progress Report and Goal Setting</td>
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<td>Week 11:</td>
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<td>*Check in With Accountability Group</td>
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<td>Week 12:</td>
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<td>Due: First Full Draft (share a copy with your Faculty Mentor)</td>
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<td>Week 13:</td>
<td>*In-Class: Workshop rough drafts, tips for</td>
<td>Bring to class: Peer reviews of</td>
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<td>Week 14:</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
<td>Group 1 (Invite Faculty Mentors)</td>
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<td>Week 15:</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
<td>Group 2 (Invite Faculty Mentors)</td>
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<td>Week 16:</td>
<td>Final Papers Due</td>
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