

GENERAL RESEARCH SEMINAR
Fall Semester and Quarter 2020
Tuesdays, September 22 – December 4
11a -2p (Pacific Time)
Zoom: Link in Canvas



Instructor: Professor Diascro (she, her, hers)
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Student Support Hours: By email or by Zoom by appointment

About a Remote Class in a Pandemic with Wildfires in an Election Year

There's a lot going on and to say that every part of life is a challenge is an understatement for so many. There is enormous uncertainty everywhere, and if you feel overwhelmed, isolated, and discombobulated, you're in very good company. Together, we're going to try to manage these circumstances as best we can. In this class, we're going to take it one day and one week at a time as we acclimate to this format and to each other. We're going to be flexible and supportive of each other and with ourselves. We're going to focus on the big things (like learning important skills) and not sweat the small stuff (like Wifi connections & interruptions from family, pets, or whomever else we share our space). And you are going to let me know (if you feel comfortable, which I hope you do) if/when you are struggling so that I can support your progress in the Seminar and in the Program more generally.

Course Instructor

I am an Associate Academic Director of the University of California's Washington Program and a political scientist. I earned my BA in political science from the University of California, San Diego (1990), where I grew up. I earned my PhD in political science from the Ohio State University (1995), and was on the faculty at the University of Kentucky (1995-2002) and American University (2002-2010). In 2000-01, I was a Supreme Court Fellow at the US Sentencing Commission in Washington, DC. Most recently, I was a senior director at the American Political Science Association (2011-2015). I've authored or coauthored peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and books, on topics related to American judicial politics.

Course Description

[Stephen Colbert coined the term "truthiness"](#) to describe the tendency of people to "go with their gut" rather than facts and evidence in evaluating the world around them. We are all affected by biases that obstruct critical thinking; these biases influence how we hear and understand new information, whether we question assumptions, and how we disentangle opinion from fact. Challenging these biases is essential to making rational, evidence-based arguments and decisions

We will spend the next 11 weeks developing and using the critical thinking and writing skills necessary to examine and propose solutions to real-world problems. Students will develop work on various stages of the research process – identifying the research question or problem, putting it into intellectual and policy context, collecting evidence to support the answer or resolution, and developing a coherent argument -- related to the work of their internship organization. We will work together throughout the writing process, but students will have a lot of independent work to do too.

Learning Objectives

Goal #1: Students will develop skills to make evidence-based arguments.

Objective #1: Students will write an evidence-based argumentative research paper.

Goal #2: Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in their course.

Objective #2: Students will write an argumentative research paper related to the work of their internship organization.

Goal #3: Students will experience a cultural, historical, policy or other event in the District of Columbia that relates to their course.

Objective #3: Students will attend (virtually, of course!) and analyze at least one congressional or other government briefing, a think tank seminar or lecture, or NGO/advocacy/nonprofit event.

Goal #4: Students will be able to communicate persuasively in writing and orally.

Objective #4: Students will write at least one analytical assignment, and discuss course work in class.

Goal #5: Students will be able to critically examine competing arguments, and use empirical evidence to research and apply theory to practice.

Objective #5: Students will complete several critical thinking and writing assignments.

Course Materials and Accessibility

Canvas will be our “classroom,” in which the link to our Zoom classroom and office hours can be found, and all of our course materials will be located.

Course materials may include a combination of scholarly articles, news articles, court cases, videos, podcasts, and more. Many readings are electronic and available online; others will be available in PDF format on Canvas. Documents will be stored in Files, and our weekly materials will be easily accessible in Modules.

** I reserve the right to make changes to the course materials as the term progresses.**

Course Responsibilities and Assignments

- **Attendance:** Attendance is important for your successful progress in class, but also for class community & camaraderie. This is especially true in a remote environment. Please be sure that your internship supervisor understands that you will be in class every Tuesday, 11a-2p (Pacific Time) and attend to these rules:
 - Everyone gets ONE (1) freebie absence *without explanation*.
 - Other absences *require an explanation*, whether it be illness (of self or family member or other person in your care), rolling blackouts, tech issues, and more. I will honor your need for privacy, but I do expect a reason. Just let me know, in advance if possible, but as soon after as you can.
 - This includes internship-related absences. Sometimes a special event comes up that occurs during out class period. Let me know and I will consider excusing you.
 - I am very likely to excuse absences, but you **MUST** give me an explanation.
 - If you don't provide an explanation, I'll consider it an *unexcused* absence & will lower your final participation grade to the next grade (e.g. A- will become a B+) for each absence.
- **Participation (Synchronous and Asynchronous):** Participation is very important for this class, and everyone will be expected to contribute in a substantively meaningful way to the class discussion.
 - Be prepared to participate in one way or another, including verbally in “class,” in Zoom chat, or Canvas discussion, for participation credit.
 - Expect to use Zoom Breakout Rooms at times for small group interaction.

- Participation cannot be made up. In the event of an explained absence, you *may* be able to complete a different assignment to earn participation points.
- Reading Assignments: All the reading assigned in this syllabus and any added throughout the term is required. This means that you should read all of the material BEFORE the class meeting and be ready to use it for your graded assignments (if relevant) EVEN IF we do not discuss it in class. See the Weekly Schedule below for dates and assignments. You should have assigned readings available for reference in class.
- Briefing Analysis: You will attend (virtually) and analyze a congressional or other government hearing/briefing, a think tank seminar/lecture, or NGO/advocacy/nonprofit lecture/event in writing and report in class. Consider selecting based on the needs of your research paper. A prompt for this assignment will be forthcoming.
- Research Paper Assignments: Prompts for each assignment will be forthcoming.
 - Research Question or Problem: At the core of every research project is a question or problem.
 - Annotated Bibliography: Research builds on the work before it and seeks to fill a gap or develop a new perspective or solution.
 - Argument Fundamentals: The most compelling arguments are evidence-based.
 - Final Research Paper: Final papers are the culmination of important questions/problems, synthesis of existing and relevant scholarship and other knowledge, and the collection of evidence, crafted into a coherent and persuasive whole.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100 point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-=92-90%, B+=89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, etc. **You should understand that only excellent work will earn an A. If the work is good, it will earn a B, and satisfactory work will earn a C.** You will earn Ds and Fs if your work is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. If you fail to complete the work, you will earn a 0 for the assignment. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional circumstances.

Final course grades will be proportioned as follows:

Synchronous and Asynchronous Class Participation	15%
Briefing Analysis (1-2 pages)	10%
Research Question & Significance (1-2 pages)	10%
Annotated Bibliography (3-4 pages)	15%
Argument Fundamentals (4-5 pages)	15%
Final Research Paper (15-20* pages)	35%

*Several campuses require 20 page research papers for major or other course credit. Students should check with their campus advisors before turning in a final paper that is less than 20 pages in length.

For Semester students, the total here will account for 85% of your total course grade. The remaining 15% will be the grade you earned in the first four weeks of the term.

For Quarter students, the total here will account for 100% of your total course grade.

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0.

Course Communication Tools

I will use Canvas and email for communicating with you this term. Unless you tell me otherwise, I will be communicating with you using the email address that you included as your primary address when you enrolled for classes. You are responsible for checking these sources regularly for messages and feedback. You are responsible for letting me know if you change your email address.

Turnitin may be used for submitting and returning some writing assignments. We will discuss in class how to create an account if you don't already have one, and how to use the software.

Also: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Policy on Attendance

See Course Responsibilities and Assignments (above).

Policy on Late Assignments

Keeping up with the work in a class like this is very important. The assignments are scaffolded, which means they build on each other and rely on the completion of the one before.

Assignment deadlines are firm to keep us on track, but also to provide predictability in your schedules. Still, life happens and you may find that you miss a deadline. Been there, done that.

I encourage you to submit late assignments rather than not submit at all. While you are likely to be docked points for lateness *if you haven't provided an excuse*, I don't judge! You are much better off with some points than no points, and you're definitely better off with feedback than no feedback. So, get in your work even if you take a bit of a hit on points.

I do dock points for late assignments that are not accompanied by an excuse because deadlines are important and we want to be fair to those who meet them. **For every 24 hour period after the date and time that the assignment is due, the grade received for the assignment will be decreased by one (1) part of a grade.** The 24 hour periods include weekends. For example, if you turn in an A quality assignment on Wednesday before 11:59p, after it was due on Monday at 11:59p, then the assignment will be 2 days late and you will earn a B+ on that assignment. If you turn in a B quality assignment at that same time, you will earn a C+.

You may submit assignments early, but I don't grade assignments early.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense.

Policy on Zoom "Class" Conduct

A Zoom space is different in some important ways from in-person class, but there are similar rules:

1. It goes without saying – but I'll say it anyway – that we must treat each other with respect. We do not have to agree, but being polite and thoughtful in our interactions with each other is absolutely required.
2. Be present in class as much as possible. This means keeping your video on when you can and avoid distractions when you can. I know that this won't be possible always. That's ok. Do your best.

3. Come to class on time. Of course, there will be something that comes up at home at the last minute or technology will glitch. That’s ok. But, again, do your best to be in our Zoom session at the start time. If you are late, come in with your audio muted and ask questions about what you missed AFTER class so as not to slow our progress.
4. You may eat and drink in class. Our session runs over the lunch hour so you may need to fuel up. Be discreet so as not to interrupt or disrupt class; be sure audio is off, and turn video off too if the timing is appropriate.
5. You may excuse yourself if necessary. Turning off your video to use the restroom or to handle an issue in your home is fine, just do so as unobtrusively as possible.
6. You may NOT video or otherwise record our class sessions. Only the instructor may do so.
 - a. Any student may opt-out of a recording by turning off their video and/or muting their audio and/or using a pseudonym in place of your name. You can participate during these sessions via chat, with the whole class or just privately with me.
 - b. If I have need to record any session, I will give you advanced notice and you will have the opportunity to opt-out. Recordings will be made available to our class and our class only, via Canvas. They will be deleted when they are no longer necessary for our class purpose.

[Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Students who wish to report sexual misconduct or to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct may do so with any UCDC faculty or staff, or contact Debbie Deas, Acting Director of Student Services (debbie.deas@ucdc.edu, 202-872- 8937). ***Please note that because the University California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.***

[Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on accomdoations for students with disabilities.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.


Weekly Schedule

I reserve the right to adapt the reading assignments and discussion topics as the seminar progresses.
Life happens – and fast!

Date	Prep for Class	In Class – Synchronous	In Class – Asynchronous
<p><u>Module 1: Sept 22</u></p> <p>Biases and Assumptions: Why Does Evidence-Based Problem-Solving Matter?</p>	<p>Review syllabus and come with questions!</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Introductions</p> <p>Review Syllabus: Requirements & Expectations</p>	<p>Read Achenbach (2015) & Konnikova (2014) (in Canvas, Module 1)</p> <p><u>Prompt:</u> Thesis & Claims</p>

<p><u>Module 2: Sept 29</u></p> <p>Exploring Ideas and Asking Questions</p>	<p>Giles, Jim. 2011. "Social science lines up its biggest challenges." <i>Nature</i>, Vol. 470: 18-19. (Canvas)</p> <p>Javeline, Debra. 2014. "The Most Important Topic Political Scientists Are Not Studying: Adapting to Climate Change." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i>, Vol. 12, No. 2: 420-434. <u>Focus on Table 1.</u> (Canvas)</p> <p>Otto, Shawn. 2016. <i>The War on Science: Who's Waging It, What It Matters, What We Can Do About It</i>. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions. Chapters 1-2. (Canvas)</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Topics & Questions</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Getting to Know Internship Organizations</p>
<p><u>Module 3: October 6</u></p> <p>#ShutUpAndWrite: Research Question/ Problem & Significance</p>	<p>Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. <i>The Craft of Research</i>. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL. Chapters 3-4: pp. 35-67. (Canvas)</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Writing Questions, Providing Significance</p>	<p>Watch: Developing a Research Question (6:25)</p> <p><u>Prompt:</u> Research Questions</p> <p>DUE: Research Question/Problem and Significance Assignment: Tuesday, Oct. 13, by start of class, 11a (PST) via Canvas</p>
<p><u>Module 4: Oct 13</u></p> <p>Building Knowledge: Reviewing Literature and Building a Bibliography</p>	<p>A Guide to Annotated Bibliographies, The Writing Center, George Mason University (https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/a-guide-to-annotated-bibliographies, accessed September 17, 2019).</p> <p>Literature Reviews, The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/, accessed January 6, 2017).</p> <p>Plagiarism, The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/, accessed January 6, 2017).</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Using Databases</p> <p>Library of Congress: Virtual Tour and Scavenger Hunt</p>	<p>Watch: Creating an Annotated Bibliography (3:32)</p> <p>Explore: Purdue University OWL (Online Writing Lab) (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/,</p> <p><u>Prompt:</u> Bibliographies & Works Cited/Reference Pages</p>
<p><u>Module 5: October 20</u></p> <p>#ShutUpAndWrite: Annotated Bibliography</p>	<p>Bring to class at least three (3) articles or other sources related to your research question to analyze. TWO (2) must be peer-reviewed articles. Best if you've already read them at least once.</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Notetaking to avoid Plagiarism</p>	<p>DUE: Annotated Bibliography: Tuesday, Oct 27, by 11a (PST) via Canvas</p>

<p><u>Module 6: October 27</u></p> <p>Evidence Matters</p>	<p>Sanneh, Kelefa. 2016. "Untangling the Immigration Debate: What do we owe people in other countries who would like to come to this one?" <i>The New Yorker</i>, October 31, 2016. (From https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/31/untangling-the-immigration-debate, accessed September 18, 2019).</p> <p>Clemens, Michael. 2017. "There's no evidence that immigrants hurt any American workers." <i>Vox</i>, August 3, 2017. (From https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/6/23/15855342/immigrants-wages-trump-economics-mariel-boatlift-hispanic-cuban, accessed September 18, 2019).</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Using scholarly studies as evidence</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Connecting evidence to thesis</p>
<p><u>Module 7: November 3</u></p> <p>#ShutUpAndWrite: Argument Fundamentals</p>	<p>Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. <i>The Craft of Research</i>. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL. Chapters 7-10, pp. 108-149 (Canvas), <u>focus on text around figures on pp. 113 and 131.</u></p> <p>Shelby County v. Holder, 570 U.S. 529 (2013): Opinion of the Court, Concurrence, and Dissent https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/570/529/#tab-opinion-1970752</p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Analyzing the analysis in <i>Shelby v Holder</i></p>	<p><u>Prompt:</u> Mapping arguments</p> <p>DUE: Argument Fundamentals: Tuesday, Nov 10, by 11a (PST) via Turnitin</p>
<p><u>Module 8: November 10</u></p> <p>Evidence Matters (cont'd)</p>	<p>Enten, Harry. 2017. "Fake Polls are a Real Problem." <i>FiveThirtyEight</i>, August 22, 2017. (From https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/fake-polls-are-a-real-problem/, accessed September 18, 2017).</p> <p>Rampell, Catherine. 2017. "A chilling study shows how hostile college students are toward free speech." <i>The Washington Post</i>, Septemeber 18, 2017. (From https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-chilling-study-shows-how-hostile-college-students-are-toward-free-speech/2017/09/18/cbb1a234-9ca8-11e7-9083-fbfd6804c2_story.html, accessed September 18, 2017).</p> <p>Villasenor, John. 2017. "Views among college students regarding the First Amendment: Results from a new survey." Brookings Institution, September 18, 2017. (From https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2017/09/18/views-among-college-students-regarding-the-first-amendment-results-from-a-new-survey/, accessed September 18, 2017).</p>	<p>Virtual Tour of Pew Research Center</p> <p><u>Prompt:</u> Writing & Administering a Survey</p>	<p>DUE: Briefing Analysis: Tuesday, Nov 17, by 11a (PST) via Canvas</p>

<p><u>Module 9: November 17</u></p> <p>#ShutUpAndWrite: Final Paper</p>	<p>Present to Class: Briefing Analysis</p>	<p>Prompt: Correlation, Causality and "Proof"</p>	<p>Prompt: Creating & Organizing Sections</p>
<p><u>THANKSGIVING WEEK!</u></p> <p><u>No Class, November 24</u></p>			
<p><u>Module 10: December 1</u></p> <p><u>Writing Beginnings & Endings: Finishing Touches</u></p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Independent & group work on final papers</p> <p>Office hours</p>	<p>DUE: Final Paper Friday, Dec 4, by 11a (PST) via Turnitin</p>