

Welcome to Inst 421, the first semester of the Croft senior thesis. The thesis represents the culmination of the international studies major and the last stage of your undergraduate education. In this class, you will begin working with one professor who will serve as your mentor and another who will be your third reader. In consultation with your mentor, you will develop a compelling and manageable research question, find appropriate primary and secondary sources, choose a methodology, and begin your analysis. In order to help you achieve this, we will have you complete three specific assignments: a prospectus, a thesis writers' conference presentation, and a preliminary research product. All of these will be evaluated by your mentor and will contribute to your grade in Inst 421.

## Readers

**Mentor** • You should have already contacted a mentor and started doing exploratory research on your topic. If not, do so as soon as possible. The thesis mentor, also known as the first reader, is your primary guide through the thesis process. He or she will help you identify a workable research question, develop an appropriate methodology, find and use primary and secondary sources, and structure and format your thesis correctly. Be sure to choose someone you are comfortable working with, and let me know if you need any help identifying a potential mentor. I will put you in a section of Inst 421 with your mentor by the middle of September.

You should schedule regular meetings with your mentor. Croft mentors typically meet with their students once per week, or, at a minimum, two times a month. Let me know right away if you have difficulty scheduling meetings with your mentor.

**Second and Third Readers** • In addition to your mentor, you will also have a second and third reader, who will form your thesis committee. This semester, your second and third readers will serve as additional resources to help you develop a compelling and manageable thesis project. They will also read your thesis at the end of Inst 422, give you feedback, and determine your grade for that course. The second reader is to be an official representative of the Croft Institute who will be assigned to you. This semester, you should address all questions regarding your thesis and submissions due to the Croft Institute to me, even if I am not your official second reader.

The third reader will be a faculty person of your choosing and should be someone whose expertise complements that of your mentor. This semester, your third reader must approve your prospectus and attend the thesis writers' conference. Your mentor will help you choose your third reader, and I can also offer guidance.

## Scope of a Croft Thesis

A Croft thesis should be between 40 and 50 pages. Please refer to the Croft website (<http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/croft-thesis-format>) for details about formatting your thesis. Your mentor will advise you to use the formatting and reference standards of his or her field of study. The most important thing is for you to choose a specific style and apply it consistently. If you are in the Honors College, be sure to follow the formatting requirements for an Honors thesis, specifically in regards to the width of margins.

## Components of Inst 421

The Croft Institute has set deadlines for the three components of Inst 421 in the official schedule. Review the schedule and discuss it with your mentor. Note that the first, complete draft of your thesis will be due by the middle of the semester in which you do Inst 422. We have designed the schedule for Inst 421 to keep you on track with your research, analysis, and writing so that you will not be overwhelmed next semester.

**Prospectus** • You must submit a prospectus outlining your proposed topic to your **mentor**, the **Croft Institute**, and your **third reader** by **Monday, September 24**. You will receive feedback on your prospectus by Monday, October 1, and you must submit a **revised prospectus** by **Monday, October 8**. The prospectus should include an articulation of your **research question** and **methodology**, an identification of the **primary sources** (quantitative data or texts) you plan to use, a brief **review of the scholarly literature** relevant to your topic, and a **proposed outline of your chapters**. It is important for your research question to be specific and answerable using your proposed methodology and sources. We strongly recommend the use of sources written in the language you have been studying for Croft. If your mentor cannot help you with them, ask your third reader or Croft language advisor for help. If you plan to interview human subjects or conduct surveys, you need to speak to your mentor immediately about getting your research proposal approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

**Thesis Writers' Conference** • There will be a thesis writers' conference between **Monday, October 15** and **Friday, October 19**. During the conference, you give a ten-minute overview of your prospectus, after which the faculty and other students in attendance will ask questions. This presentation must include an audiovisual component, typically a PowerPoint presentation. I will be contacting you late in September to schedule the conference and to give you additional instructions.

**Preliminary Research Product** • You will submit your preliminary research product to your mentor by **Friday, November 30**. Your mentor will tell you exactly what he or she expects, but it is important for you to have completed **a substantial portion of your analysis** (whether qualitative or quantitative) before the end of the fall semester. You may also start writing your introduction and background material, but concentrate on doing your analysis rather than summarizing other people's work. That way, if your analysis does not turn out the way you expect, you will still have time to make adjustments. Remember, the first complete draft of your thesis is due only six weeks into the spring semester, i.e., by the middle of February.

## Grade for Inst 421

Your mentor will assign you the midterm and final grade for Inst 421. Mentors are free to determine this grade as they see fit, but typically they will take into consideration your prospectus, your presentation at the thesis writers' presentation, your preliminary research product, your faithfulness in attending meetings, your promptness in submitting your work, and your overall dedication to the thesis process. Over the course of the semester, your mentor will also submit a midterm and a final report detailing your progress on the thesis and your readiness to move on to the next stage of the project, Inst 422. A grade of C (not a C-) or higher is required for Inst 421 to count for the major and for you to continue with Inst 422.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at [wschenck@olemiss.edu](mailto:wschenck@olemiss.edu) or 915-1500. Good luck getting started on your thesis!