

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 work with one professor who serves 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, you will complete five specific assignments this semester: a preliminary bibliography, a prospectus, an analysis and writing plan, 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.

The Croft Institute has posted senior theses and thesis prospectuses on its website, available for viewing by mentors and thesis writers. These can be found at <http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/model-theses>. Note many of these theses are longer than our current target length, but are still useful for their methodology and bibliographies.

## 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 Dr. Schenck know if you need any help identifying a potential mentor. You will be put into a section of Inst 421 with your mentor early in the semester.

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 Dr. Schenck 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 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 Dr. Schenck, even if he is 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 Dr. Schenck can also offer guidance.

## Scope of a Croft Thesis

A Croft thesis should be between 40 and 50 pages. A longer thesis is not better: make your thesis as concise as possible, and focus on your analysis rather than restating information found in your sources. 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

**Topic and Research Question** • You should choose a topic that builds on what you have learned in your coursework, either on campus or during study abroad, rather than something new and unfamiliar. Your mentor will work with you to help you find a balance between your interests and what is achievable in terms of your theoretical and methodological preparation and the availability of data. You need to define an interesting, important, and feasible research question within the first two weeks of the semester at the same time as you identify data sources. This two-pronged approach is designed to help you develop a research question that can be answered by the data that is available to you.

**Library Sessions** • To help you identify appropriate primary and secondary sources, you must attend a **library session with the social science subject librarian, Cecelia Parks**, during the second week of the semester, September 2 to 6. Dr. Schenck will contact you shortly with the exact dates and times Prof. Parks is available.

**Preliminary Bibliography** • In order to reinforce the importance of identifying primary and secondary sources early in the thesis process, you must submit a preliminary bibliography to your mentor and the Croft Institute by **Monday, September 9**. This simple, unannotated bibliography will contain the primary sources the you will use to conduct your analysis and the most important works of the relevant scholarly literature. You will not necessarily have read or even acquired all of the data sources, books, and articles included in the bibliography, but the document must include an explanation of how you are going to acquire or collect any sources that you do not already have.

You should plan to use at least some sources (primary texts to analyze or scholarly articles) written in the **language you have been studying for Croft**. If your mentor cannot help you read 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**.

**Prospectus** • You must submit a prospectus outlining your plans for completing your thesis to your **mentor**, the **Croft Institute**, and your **third reader** by **Monday, September 16**. You will receive feedback on your prospectus by Monday, September 23, and you must submit a **revised prospectus** by **Monday, September 30**.

The prospectus should include an articulation of your **research question** and **methodology**, an identification of the **primary sources** (quantitative data, texts, etc.) you plan to use and the relevant **scholarly literature**, and a **proposed outline of your chapters**. We encourage you to adapt a methodology used in a previous study, or build on something you used in your methods class, and apply it to different cases or an expanded timeline.

You should begin working with your data – whatever form it takes – as soon as possible, even as you continue to develop your research question and methodology. Do not try to define your research question and methodology before you start working with your data. Your research question, methodology, and the data you use should all evolve alongside each other during the first semester as you gain new insights through your analysis.

**Analysis and Writing Plan** • You must submit a plan for your analysis and writing to your mentor and the Croft Institute on **Friday, October 4**, just after you submit your revised prospectus. It is essential for you – and your mentor – to have a clear sense of what you plan to do after the prospectus is completed. The work you do for the second part of the semester must include the application of your methodology to your data: actual analysis, not just an extended literature review or a narrative of background information.

**Thesis Writers' Conference** • We will hold a thesis writers' conference between **Monday, October 28** and **Friday, November 1**. During the conference, you give a ten-minute overview of your research so far, demonstrating what you have learned by applying your methodology to your data, including your preliminary findings, after which the faculty and other students in attendance will ask questions. This presentation must include an audiovisual component, typically a PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Schenk 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, December 6**. 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 and writing** (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. 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 preliminary bibliography, 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.

# Inst 421 Fall 2019 Schedule of Activities and Deadlines

Summer before beginning Inst 421: Choose topic, contact mentor, and do preliminary research

Week	Dates	Activity
1	August 26-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with mentor to move from topic to research question based on reading</li> <li>• Mandatory meeting on Tuesday, August 27</li> </ul>
2	September 2-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory library sessions</li> <li>• Identify data sources (primary sources) and scholarly literature (secondary sources)</li> <li>• Identify possible third readers</li> </ul>
3	September 9-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit preliminary bibliography with data sources (primary sources) and scholarly literature (secondary sources) to mentor and Croft Institute by Monday, September 9</li> <li>• Choose third reader and inform Croft Institute by Friday, September 13</li> <li>• Develop thesis prospectus in consultation with mentor, focusing on articulation of methodology informed by scholarly literature</li> </ul>
4	September 16-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit prospectus to mentor, third reader, and Croft Institute by Monday, September 16</li> </ul>
5	September 23- 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readers provide feedback on prospectus by Monday, September 23</li> <li>• Revise thesis prospectus based on feedback from readers</li> </ul>
6	September 30- October 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit revised prospectus to mentor, third reader, and Croft Institute by Monday, September 30</li> <li>• Submit concrete plan to write core chapter(s) of thesis by end of the semester to mentor and Croft Institute by Friday, October 4</li> <li>• Begin to analyze primary sources/data</li> </ul>
7	October 7-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze primary sources/data using methodology</li> </ul>
8	October 14-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze primary sources/data using methodology</li> </ul>
9	October 21-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare thesis writer's conference presentation, including preliminary findings</li> </ul>
10	October 28- November 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis Writers' Conference from Monday, October 28, to Friday, November 1</li> </ul>
11	November 4-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze primary sources/data; continue research and writing according to plan submitted in week 6</li> </ul>
12	November 11-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze primary sources/data; continue research and writing according to plan submitted in week 6</li> </ul>
13	November 18-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze primary sources/data; continue research and writing according to plan submitted in week 6</li> </ul>
14	November 25-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS</li> </ul>
15	December 2-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit preliminary research product to mentor by Friday, December 6</li> </ul>
16	December 9-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finals Week</li> <li>• Grade for Inst 421 assigned</li> </ul>