
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.

Here are a few guidelines to help you successfully meet the challenges of this project.

Mentor (1st reader)

You should have already contacted a mentor and started narrowing down your topic. You may already have done some exploratory research. If not, then you really have to concentrate and work hard over the next three weeks to get a reasonable prospectus done by **Monday, February 13**. The first reader, also known as the thesis mentor, 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.

2nd and 3rd readers

With the first reader, the second and third readers form your thesis committee, which will read, comment on, and evaluate your thesis at the end of Inst 422. As you are writing, your second and third readers serve as additional resources to help you develop and articulate a compelling thesis. The second reader will be either Dr. Schenck or Dr. Gispén and is the official representative of the Croft Institute on the committee. Dr. Schenck, who coordinates the senior thesis process, is the default second reader and all questions regarding your thesis and submissions due to your second reader should be addressed to him. The third reader is 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.

Schedule

Carefully review the schedule for Inst 421 and discuss it with your mentor. Writing a thesis is a major undertaking, but it does not have to be overly stressful. In particular, be mindful of the fact that the first, complete draft of your thesis will be due by the middle of next semester. The schedule given here is designed to keep you on track with your research and writing so that you will not be overwhelmed in the spring.

Prospectus • Note that you must turn in a prospectus outlining your proposed topic to your **mentor, second, and third reader** by **Monday, February 13**. Your mentor will tell you what is required for the prospectus, but it typically is a 5-10 page articulation of your research question and its context. It should also include a fairly detailed explanation of your methodology, that is, how you intend to answer your research question. Will you be analyzing economic, social, or political statistical data? Will you be analyzing historical, literary, or religious narrative sources? Your method should be appropriate to your question and should be something that your mentor is capable of guiding you through. If you are going to interview human subjects you should already have initiated the approval process with the Institutional Review Board.

Review of Literature • A review of literature report is due on **Monday, March 6**. Your mentor will tell you exactly what this entails. In most cases, it will be a narrative review of the literature that exists on your topic. Either way, it is an important step in outlining the relationship of your thesis to existing literature and articulating what research you still need to do.

Thesis Writers' Conference • There will be a thesis writers' conference between **Monday, March 20** and **Tuesday, March 21**. During the conference, each student will have ten minutes to present an overview of his or her thesis, after which the faculty and other students attending will ask questions. This presentation should include an audiovisual component, typically a PowerPoint presentation. I will be contacting you late in September to schedule the conference.

Preliminary Research Product • Finally, you have to submit a preliminary research product to your mentor by **Friday, May 5**. Your mentor will tell you exactly what he or she expects, but typically the research product is several chapters of the final thesis, representing one third of the total length and half of the total work. Note that it is **essential** for you to have written a **substantial portion** of your thesis before the end of the fall semester. **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 give you a midterm and a 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 literature review, your presentation at the thesis writers' presentation, your preliminary research product, and your faithfulness in attending your 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 to Croft 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, i.e. Inst 422. If your mentor feels that you have not done sufficient work, you will not be allowed to continue on with Inst 422.

Format

Please refer to the Croft website (<http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/croft-thesis-format>) for details about formatting your thesis and its required length. Your mentor may also require you to use the formatting and reference standards of your field of study. If you are also in the Honors College, be sure to follow all of the requirements for an Honors Thesis in addition to what is outlined here.

Criteria for grade for Inst 422

Your final grade for Inst 422 will be based on an evaluation by each of your three readers of both your written thesis and the oral presentation that you give at your defense. The criteria for this evaluation are as follows:

- The student has articulated a *compelling research question or hypothesis*.
- The student has *contextualized the research topic*.
- The student has used *appropriate literature and primary sources*.
- The student has employed *methods of analysis* that are both *explicit* and

appropriate for testing the hypothesis.

- The student has convincingly *demonstrated the validity of the hypothesis*.
- The note *apparatus, bibliography, and any graphs or tables* are organized and presented in a manner in keeping with the standards of the discipline.
- The thesis meets the *linguistic and stylistic standards* of the discipline.
- The student *met my deadlines and those set by the Croft Institute*.
- The student *kept the appointments we set and was respectful of my time*.
- The student's *oral presentation at the outset* of the defense was successful.
- The student's *oral defense* of the thesis was successful.

Your written thesis will count for 80% of the grade for Inst 422 and your defense for 20%. A grade of C or better is required to complete the course for credit and graduate. Please discuss these criteria with your mentor to determine what his or her expectations are for each of them.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at wschenck@olemiss.edu or 915-1500.