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 developed a 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 9**. 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, the 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. Gispen and is the official representative of the Croft Institute on the committee. 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 and third reader by **Monday, February 9**. 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 will 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 interviewing human subjects you should already have initiated the approval process with the Institutional Review Board. At the prospectus stage you should also be moving from a “topic” to a “question”.

**Review of Literature** • A review of literature report is due on **Monday, March 2**. 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 what research you still need to do.

**Thesis Writers’ Conference** • Also note that there will be a thesis writers’ conference between **Monday, March 16** and **Tuesday, March 17**. 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 February to schedule the conference.

**Preliminary Research Product** • Finally, you have to submit a preliminary research product to your mentor by **Friday, May 1**. Your mentor will tell you exactly what he or she expects, but typically the research product is a chapter or several chapters of the final thesis.

**Grade for Inst 421**
Your mentor will give you a 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, and your preliminary research product. 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 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**
As you work on your thesis this semester, it might be useful to refer to the criteria that your readers will use to grade the final draft of your thesis and your thesis defense. 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:

- A compelling research question or hypothesis.
- A contextualized research topic, which demonstrates the significance or potential significance of the research conducted.
- The use of appropriate literature and primary sources, in accordance with the standards of the discipline in question.
- Methods of analysis that are both explicit and appropriate for testing the hypothesis/examining the research question.
- A demonstration of the validity of the hypothesis or argument.
- The 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 oral presentation at the outset of the defense.
- The oral defense of the thesis.

Each of the criteria will be scored between 0 (failing) to 4 (excellent) and the final grade will be an average of these scores as assigned by each of the three readers. 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.