INTL 657 Proseminar in Proposal Writing
"You're not alone ... you're not weird or crazy ... you can do this"
(www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/DissSuppGrp.pdf)

CRN 33027; 2 credits; PASS/NO PASS only  
Spring 2015; Wed 12-1:50 pm; 348 PLC  
Office hours: Wed 2-4 or by appointment

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GOALS OF COURSE
This course will launch first-year graduate students into their MA research, via the following:

TOOLS - You'll be given some nuts and bolts tools for embarking on your thesis, such as strategies to counter writers' block, techniques for focusing and refining research questions, and bibliographic software for managing your literature search.

CONNECTIONS - Proseminar will continue to provide a forum for the first-year cohort to meet regularly, and especially to meet with grad students who are farther along in the research process.

MOMENTUM - This course will be building momentum among the first-year cohort for getting together regularly, sharing ideas, exchanging and commenting on work, asking for, and giving, support ... and, crucially, it will get you through those awkward first steps in finding your own research path.

RESOURCES - In addition to the human connections you'll be making, you'll compile a range of resources to refer back to as you progress through the program.

FINAL PRODUCT ("Deliverable") - After reading and discussing many thesis proposals and internalizing the forms and elements, you will write your own (yes, really!)

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Critical thinking: Students will be able to evaluate the form and the content of proposals; students will be able to evaluate and apply multiple perspectives on the construction of excellent academic writing

Content knowledge: Students will gain declarative and procedural knowledge of the research proposal as a genre; students will be able to understand and respond critically to current research in the field of International Studies.

Communication: Students will be able to summarize, present and defend their own research project orally and in writing; students will be able to provide substantive critical feedback to a research proposal created by a peer.

FORMAT
Every week, a different guest speaker will come to class and give a presentation on their thesis-writing process. The focus will be both on thesis content and process. That is, speakers will discuss the important research questions, methodologies, findings and significance of their work and they will speak of how they arrived at their topic, false starts and challenges along the way, and advice they have to you as you embark on your own thesis. The readings will consist of each guest speaker's own thesis proposal, along with
**READINGS (all required)**
Higson-Smith *et al.* (2006) *Writing your research proposal: a workbook for first time and inexperienced researchers* (<http://www.nrf.ac.za/methods/pdf/guide.PDF>, also on Bboard under "course documents")

Pinker, Steven (2014) *The Sense of Style: the thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century.* Available at UO Duckstore

Thesis proposals, grant proposals or theses (sometimes all three!) of guest speakers (to be available on Blackboard)

**REQUIREMENTS**
1) Participation: Judgement of appropriate participation will be based upon the requirement that students must critically read actual thesis proposals and other assigned readings and come to class prepared to critically question, discuss and answer questions about both their form and their content (30%)

2) Peer review of classmates' work: Students will be assigned the task of reviewing each others' preliminary proposal drafts and will be graded on the basis of the quality and quantity of the feedback that they provide (10%) 

5) A thesis proposal of your own, based on program guidelines and scored according to rubric attached (60%)

**BLACKBOARD SITE**
Check blackboard site regularly for announcements.
Guest speakers' materials will be posted at irregular intervals, as I receive them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Pinker Prologue; Higson-Smith 1 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Pinker 1; Higson-Smith 2,3,4 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Pinker 2; Higson-Smith 5,6,7 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>April 22</td>
<td>Pinker 3; Higson-Smith 8,9,10 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>April 29</td>
<td>Pinker 4; Higson-Smith 11,12,13 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Pinker 5; Higson-Smith 14,15,16 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Pinker 6; Higson-Smith 17,18,19 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>Higson-Smith 20,21,22,23,24 (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>May 27</td>
<td><em>Draft of thesis proposal due for peer review</em> (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>June 3</td>
<td><em>Proposal comments &amp; suggestions due</em> (guest speaker &amp; reading to be announced)</td>
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Finals Tuesday, June 9 by noon: final draft of thesis proposal due

*Note: The schedule of guest speakers will be arranged during Winter term, because it must be determined according to their schedule and availability. It will include members of the cohort of International Studies graduating MA students, as well as alumni.*
Students with Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please bring a letter from Disability Services outlining your approved accommodations.

Policy on academic honesty
Because you will be writing summaries and analyses of the reading, it is going to be very important that you summarize the main ideas in your own words, and attribute correctly any direct quotes or significant ideas from anyone else. Here is what the UO policy on academic dishonesty has to say about plagiarism on the Teaching Effectiveness Program's website:

"Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. Expectations may vary slightly across disciplines. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts.

A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:
1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials--unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of the Teaching and Learning Center (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise (for example, written work, printing, computer program, art or design work, musical composition, and choreography) prepared totally or in part by another. Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor."
(http://tep.uoregon.edu/workshops/teachertraining/learnercentered/syllabus/academicdishonesty.html)

You should know that I will report all cases of plagiarism to the Office of Student Conduct, and will assign at the very least an F for the plagiarized assignment, and more probably an F for the entire course.

Don't even think about it!
Assessment rubric for thesis proposal

Name of proposal author: _____________________________________________________

Name of reviewer: _________________________________________________________

I. CONTENT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (6 points)
Clear (not vague -- you know exactly what they plan to do and how they plan to do it)
   _____ 0=horrible; 1=bad; 2=okay; 3=good

Concise (not padded, every word in it necessary to the meaning and suggestive of methodology)
   _____ 0=horrible; 1=bad; 2=okay; 3=good

SCOPE OF PROJECT (6 points)
Feasible within one year: data collection, processing and interpretation, writing it up
   _____ 0=too fuzzy or cosmic to pull off; 1=you can picture yourself doing most everything in that time frame but you're not sure you could do it all; 2=everything is so well laid-out that you know you could do this in one year step by step

Timeline: the tasks are broken out logically and support the impression of feasibility
   _____ 0=no; 1=a timeline is included but it seems rote and not well-reasoned; 2=a timeline is included and it is logical and well-sequenced and shows the author has figured out how to manage the work flow in the thesis

Appropriate level
   _____ 0 = BA level (not ambitious enough: sounds like a one month term paper, kind of amateurish and naïve); 1 = Ph.D. level (too ambitious: would take years to prepare to do properly and carry off); 2 = MA level

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION (6 points)
Identifies a lacuna in refereed literature and possibly policy/law or social need
   _____ 0=little to no analysis of the literature in which the thesis is to be situated; 1=definitely an attempt to situate the thesis, but the analysis is a little weak or unconvincing or contrived; 2=the thesis's contribution is clearly and convincingly argued and the analysis is graceful and not forced

Indicates the importance of the problem -- it's one thing to find a gap in the literature; it's another to express the importance of that gap and your contribution
   _____ 0=the problem seems trivial or the author doesn't really bother letting people know why they should care about it; 1=importance is addressed but not convincingly shown; 2=the topic is clearly justified as important and the thesis looks like an actual contribution to it
Demonstrates mastery of the literature on the topic

0=pathetically small number of references to existing literature; 1=author has done a good job gathering prior work but the analysis is mechanical and enumerative rather than conceptual and integrative; 2=so many sources are discussed that you know your colleague did their homework, and the way they write about it all is organized and lets you see the connections among different themes in the literature.

HYPOTHESES, OBJECTIVES, OR QUESTIONS SERVING THE PURPOSE (3 points)
Clearly stated
0=no; 1=yes

Testable or answerable
0=no; 1=yes

If all of these are answered, the purpose of the thesis is automatically met (they all add up to the solution of the thesis purpose or question)
0=no; 1=yes

DATA (10 points)
Probable sources of data identified
0=no; 1=yes

Quality of best source identified above -- rate the use of each type of source below and then add the scores for each together up to a maximum of 5 total

section total

0-4 = Primary (i.e., data you collect yourself through field measurements or mapping, surveys, interviews, focus groups -- 0=none; 1=some, but kind of incidentally as in informal elite interviews; 3=quite a bit of primary data collection, but it's not the dominant source of data; 4=primary data are numerous, varied, and dominate the thesis

0-3 = Archival (e.g., Census, meteorological records, DEMs, remote sensing imagery, literature or media content analysis, tracking data collected by others and made available to you)-- 0=none; 1=one or two sources incidental to thesis; 2=one to a few sources and they are central to the thesis; 3=multiple data sources/layers separately analyzed and then integrated into the thesis and this is the core activity of the thesis

0-1 = Secondary (i.e., from someone else's published study or news sources)
Shortcomings of data addressed

_____ 0=no; 1=a little; 2=clearly enumerated

Data use justified, even in light of their limitations

_____ 0=no; 1=basically, nothing can be done about the shortcomings but there are no better data available, so the author says they have to go with it, warts and all; 2=shortcomings are discussed, along with ways around the problems or the problems are shown not to affect analysis seriously

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR COLLECTING AND PROCESSING DATA (6 points)
Probable methods and techniques for collecting and processing the data are identified

_____ 0=not really; 1=some discussion of probable methods and techniques; 2=clear and reasonable enumeration of appropriate methods and techniques

Limitations discussed

_____ 0=no; 1=a little; 2=clearly enumerated

Methods justified, even in light of their limitations

_____ 0=no; 1=basically, nothing can be done about the shortcomings but there are no better methods or techniques available; 2=shortcomings are discussed, along with ways around the problems or the problems are shown not to affect analysis seriously

OUTLINE OF THESIS/PROJECT CHAPTER STRUCTURE (3 points)
Workable structure included (5-8 chapters that form a reasonable flow)

_____ 0=no; 1=yes

Detailed outline included, which gets to four levels of organization in all necessary places (e.g., I.A.1.a

_____ 0=no; 1=yes

No I., A., 1., or a. is included without at least a II., B., 2., or b. also included at that level

_____ 0=some 1 member subsets included; 1=all sublists have at least two elements

II. WRITING MECHANICS (10 points)

Organization

_____ 0=disorganized, rambling, stream-of-consciousness; 1=organized for the most part but a little disjointed in places so that it's hard to follow the argument; 2=very well organized, never leaving the reader feeling lost

Spelling

_____ 0=wholesale spelling gaffes; 1=mostly okay but there are a few typos and misspellings; 2=perfect with no more than two typos
Grammar

_____ 0=ungrammatical (subject-verb disagreement is common); 1=always grammatical

Syntax

_____ 0=poorly structured sentences, with lots of incomplete sentences and comma splices; 1=sentences are varied and correct in structure throughout

Punctuation/capitalization

_____ 0=misuse of commas, confusing colons with semi-colons, profligate use of capitalization outside proper names and the beginnings of sentences

Non-sexist usage

_____ 0="man" is used even once to mean "people," "society," "person" (my personal favorite, from Carl Sauer, "when man lost the oestrus cycle...") or when a gendered pronoun is used with a tacit assumption about which gender usually or "should" fulfill certain rôles (a doctor in arriving at his diagnoses, a nurse in tending her patients), which can be gotten around by switching to the plural; 1=not even one occasion of suspicious usage

Graduate level vocabulary

_____ 0=no, kind of childish or unsophisticated vocabulary throughout; 1=yes, complex vocabulary used -- correctly

Stylish writing

_____ 0=no; 1=writing is not only competent and error-free but is graceful and is so good it's publishable -- perhaps 1 in 20 graduate students actually achieves this, so it's more of an extra credit point, really

III. DOCUMENTATION (10 points)

Follows a correct style (e.g., Annals of the AAG, Turabian)

_____ 0=no; 1=yes

Consistent (whichever style is chosen is used throughout)

_____ 0=no; 1=yes

All citations in reference list used in text

_____ 0=no; 1=yes

All references in text listed in references

_____ 0=no; 1=yes
Documentation thorough

_____ 0=few sources used and citations are missing in places where they are called for; 1=more sources are used, but there may be some missing citations; 2=many sources are used and all places needing citation are documented

Quality of sources cited

_____ 0=few are cited and those are predominantly popular rather than scholarly; 1=few are cited but there are scholarly sources among them; 2=many sources, some scholarly sources among them; 3=many sources, at least 10 of which are scholarly and original sources; 4=a truly impressive reference list, which convinces you the author has mastered the relevant literature and has read deeply in the scholarly literature AND hasn't just listed them in the references but has actually integrated every one of them somewhere in the text.

I. CONTENT _____ out of 40 possible

II. WRITING MECHANICS _____ out of 10 possible

III. DOCUMENTATION _____ out of 10 possible

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS: