



International and Comparative Politics Department

Senior Thesis Rules and Regulations

Senior thesis will be ICP students' main independent piece of research to be completed by the end of their senior year. The senior thesis must be written based on independent research into a particular (research) question and theoretical/empirical puzzle which you will formulate in consultation with your supervisor. It will require a high level of commitment, discipline, initiative, and organization on behalf of the student. The final product (thesis paper) should demonstrate originality and effort by the student.

All ICP students will be allocated a thesis supervisor among ICP full and part-time faculty. It is the student's responsibility to make sure they have a regular schedule of meetings with their supervisor. The precise structure, methods and overall success of a thesis paper will depend on the student-supervisor regular meetings.

All senior students should take **Senior Thesis Seminar I and Senior Thesis Seminar II** in their fourth year. It is a year-long course designed to help (strongly encourage) the students develop a workable topic for their Senior Thesis research projects and complete their major undergraduate paper. For that purpose, the course assignments are all designed with the idea of pushing the students to devote a regular thinking and writing time to their research projects/topics.

By the end of Senior Thesis Seminar I, the students should have a clear idea of both what their research projects are (the research design) and specifically how they would carry it out (research methods). At the end of Fall Semester, the work process should culminate in a well-written **Introduction and First Chapter**. First chapter may include some of the following: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework(s), Literature Review, and Historical Background. The first chapter will be graded by the senior thesis supervisor.

Students will need guidance with the following:

- Identifying a thesis within a manageable topic.
- Identifying appropriate research tools and methods; contacting other faculty members with related areas of expertise.
- Evaluating the relevance of published sources and preparing a focused, current bibliography.
- Devising a schedule for completion of certain stages of the thesis. This should include meetings with you on a regular basis.
- Organizing and editing the final paper in accordance with the departmental rules.

The student and supervisor should come to a clear understanding as early as possible as to the supervisor's expectations regarding the student's responsibilities, the time commitment involved for the student, etc. Regular meetings (at least bi-weekly) should be scheduled so that the student

can obtain continuous guidance, feedback, and support from the supervisor. Although it is primarily the responsibility of the student to meet the specified deadlines, the supervisor should provide a degree of supervision that would allow the student to complete the thesis research on schedule. Supervisors should be informed about the Senior Seminar course schedule and requirements to be aware of what is expected from the student. To that end, senior students will be signing Supervision Agreements with their supervisors. **All senior students must have a complete and signed Supervision Agreement Form** before they proceed with the substantive supervision process. **A copy of the Supervision Agreement Form must be submitted to the ICP Manager in Room 210 or via email.**

Students may find the form on the ICP Hub on E-Course.

Although it is not possible to give an exact figure for the time required for a successful thesis, the student should plan on spending, on average, about 5-7 hours per week on the Senior Seminar course and thesis.

The workload will likely vary considerably over the course of the academic year. Students are advised to submit a first draft of their introduction or their first chapter by the end of the Fall semester as this will be their final paper assignment of the Senior Seminar course. It is also expected that students complete their thesis research by the end of January, so that there will be ample time to analyze the data and complete the written document by the deadline. Students sometimes run into difficulties because they do not begin the work early in the academic year or pursue it diligently throughout the year and, as a result, leave too much for the end of the term.

Very occasionally, there may be some disagreements between student and supervisor concerning the thesis work. For example, a student may think that he/she is not getting sufficient access to the supervisor to deal with questions concerning data collection or the preparation of the thesis document, or the supervisor may think that the student is not fulfilling his/her obligations with respect to the research. It is important that the student and/or supervisor bring such disagreements to the attention of the course professor and/or to the chair of the department as soon as possible. It is too late to deal with such problems when it is almost time for submission of the completed thesis document.

Students and Supervisors should check whether their research needs an IRB approval by visiting e-course.auca.kg in the "university academic activity" section and checking IRB's procedures.

Students that successfully complete Senior Thesis Seminars I and II and other requirements for their major will be allowed to defend their thesis against the State Examination Committee consisting of external academics and a few ICP faculty.

Successful defense of your thesis is a requirement for the fulfillment of your degree.

The Senior Thesis Defense procedure consists of a presentation of the thesis by the student followed by cross-examination/questions from the members of the State Examination Committee. The duration of each part will be specified in Senior Thesis Seminar II.

During the defense, students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their research project, its scope, implications, significance, and its limitations. They should also successfully demonstrate that they have conducted research independently and in ways that comply with AUCA rules and regulations on academic honesty, integrity, and ethics.

The State Examination Committee reviews and evaluates the written paper, the presentation, and the cross-examination/questioning section according to the AUCA academic rules and regulations. The Committee may invite an individual student after their presentation to ask additional questions or request for additional information. Normally, students are invited for additional questions if the State Examination Committee remains in doubt (or cannot reach a consensus) about the integrity of the research project or the quality of its scholarship.

Senior Thesis Defense welcomes other ICP faculty and students, seniors' friends, and family on the condition that they do not interrupt, disrupt, or distract the defense procedure at any point. To avoid any unnecessary distractions, nobody is allowed to enter or leave the venue during the student presentation.

Students may request their supervisors to be present on the Senior Thesis Defense. However, to ensure fairness and equity, supervisors may not offer comments or ask questions that create unfair advantage for individual students.

All participants and attendees must always follow the instructions and requests of the Chairperson of the State Examination Committee.

Students and supervisors must refrain from any attempts to hold an individual conversation with the members of the State Examination Committee about individual students for the entire duration of Senior Thesis Defense. Should an exceptionally compelling reason arise, the Chairperson of the State Examination Committee may authorize an individual contact with the supervisor of the student.

The thesis must be an original work by the student (that is, not the same as one of your course papers, not a previously published project, and not a project that you completed with someone else as co-authors for some other purpose. That said, a thesis can of course be related to a previously written paper, a further substantial (not minimal) development of a previous work).

As with any other written academic work, rules concerning academic honesty and plagiarism apply (so, any bit of plagiarism or other manners of dishonest completion of the thesis are sufficient for automatic dismissal of the thesis as unacceptable; further administrative actions of punitive kind are stipulated in AUCA rules).

The thesis topic must be within the scope of your major field of specialization (so, a thesis about new methods of raising cotton in southern Kyrgyzstan would be difficult to accept in ICP department; however, it is very difficult for a student to come up with an unsuitable topic – the

scope of political science is so wide that virtually any topic of social relevance can have a political aspect to it).

The length of a senior thesis is **between 12,000- and 15,000-word** research paper on any topic chosen by the student in consultation with a thesis supervisor. The thesis should contain appropriate footnotes and bibliography, and in general, conform to the specifications of the American Political Science Association (APSA) style manual.

The deadline for comprehensive changes in the topic and change in supervisor is September 30. Supervisors may be changed only in situations where the student or supervisor encounters systematic issues associated with their supervision. Such changes are subject to availability of another supervisor already enlisted in ICP and must be confirmed by the ICP Department Chair. Students must sign a new Supervision Agreement with their new supervisor.

The deadline for Senior Thesis submission is April 30.

The final grade for the Senior Thesis is 67% for the written work and 33% for the oral defense.