

American University of Central Asia  
Department of Anthropology  
**Honors Thesis Seminar**

**Instructor**

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**Time and venue:**

Wednesday	10.50am	Room 109
Friday	10.50am	Room 118

Beginning from last year, because of new academic policies at the University, all senior students will have to write their senior thesis. If they receive grade B or higher they will be allowed to defend it. If they receive grade C – B, they will have to take state exam. If they receive grade lower than C, they will be dismissed from study. Therefore, senior thesis is a very important part of your overall study and you should take it as such.

You have one and half year to work on your thesis. During this semester you will work on your literature review, research question/hypothesis and research methodology. In May you will defend your thesis proposal before the faculty committee and receive their feedback and comments, so that in summer you can conduct your main fieldwork and data collection. You will then have two semesters to analyze your findings and write the thesis.

This course is a seminar course; therefore its structure will be slightly different from traditional lecture courses. There will be less readings and lectures, but more work on you own thesis. Towards the end of the course you will be expected to have completed the first two chapters of your thesis: Literature Review (with Research Question and Hypothesis at the end) and Research Methodology. Following is the grading schedule:

- Attendance = 10% (-2% for each missed class, missing more than 3 classes results in X)
- Participation = 10% (4 presentations x 2.5% each)
- Think-piles 8X7.5% each = 60%
- Final master piece = 20%

Students will continuously present the progress of their thesis work according to the timetable shown below. It will be beneficial for all students to see the progress of their fellows in order to reflect on their own developments. It will also be important to engage in discussion of each other's presentations with the purpose of giving constructive feedback. This will also help the presenters to learn to defend their ideas and see them in critical perspective. That is why **attendance and participation** is important and given 20% of the grade.

**Working with your thesis supervisor**

Early in the semester all students will be assigned their thesis supervisors from the members of our faculty. You must meet with your supervisor to discuss your research interests. In this meeting, you and your thesis supervisor also have to come to an agreement about the frequency of meetings and submission of your progress. Please, remember that your collaboration with supervisor is crucial for the successful completion of your thesis. If you find difficulties establishing proper contact with your supervisor, please, report to me or to the department chair as soon as possible.

**Think-piles**

While working on your senior thesis and doing qualitative research it is often recommended to focus on the process rather than on the expected outcomes. In order to generate the process each week (for 8 weeks) you will be requested to submit 2 pages of typed notes (double-space) and 7 pages (one per day) of your diary; these could be handwritten notes, your thinking diagrams, citations from readings, pictures, etc.

## Research diary and research log

Please, purchase a diary and a folder with a pile of clear files. We expect you to write in your diary every day and from the very beginning of the semester collect your notes and comments from me and your supervisor in this folder. You can also put their copies/extracts from the texts you read for your literature review. You will submit this log at the end of semester.

## Final master piece

In the second half of the semester you will work on putting together the first two chapters of your thesis: literature review and research methodology.

## Literature review

Following seven pieces will be based on your literature review. One way to approach it is to simply go source by source. Another way is to work with sections. With your supervisor you can identify at least three-five main sections of your literature review shaped around major themes of your research. Below is one possible example:

1. Introduction: main terms and definitions: *Poverty Defined*
2. Historic background: *Poverty as a Result of the Post-Soviet Transformation*
3. Main concepts and discussion: *Poverty Revisited*
4. Research context: *Poverty in the Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan*

Each of these sections requires reviewing at least three or four sources (books or academic articles). The first or the last section of your literature review should have a clearly defined Research Question and Research Hypothesis.

## Defense with the faculty committee

At the end of semester you will have to prepare a power-point presentation and present your proposal to faculty committee with the purpose of getting feedback and recommendations before you start your fieldwork.

## Suggestions

Thesis work hardly ever goes according to the schedule because it is a creative process and there are so many factors involved, which might be difficult to control. Therefore, although you have the proposed below timeline, you are welcome at some point to go ahead of the schedule and start for example drafting your research question, hypothesis and methodology before you complete all of the literature review. You might also be able to start a pilot research and collect preliminary data.

## Submission deadlines

Although there is some flexibility mentioned above, it is allowed only one way - you can submit earlier than expected, but in now way later. As an instructor in this course, I will have 19 papers to read and comment on every other week and I will not be able to accommodate any extra work. This means that late submissions are not accepted, unless there is very important reason, such as illness. If you don't submit your progress in time, you will loose your grades.

## Readings

- "The Craft of Research" by W. Booth, G. Colomb and J. Williams
- "Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation" by Irene Clark
- "The Qualitative Dissertation" by Maria Piantanida and Noreen B. Garman

## Timeline

Following table shows the timeline week by week. It has topics to be covered in short lectures and discussions and schedule for your submissions.

	Topics to cover	Thesis progress and submissions
Week 1	Introduction Finding a research topic	Research topics
Week 2	Developing research question	
Week 3	Literature review Student presentations	Think-pile #1 (research proposal) (7.5%)
Week 4	Note-taking; evaluating sources Student presentations	Think-pile #2 (literature) (7.5%)
Week 5	Arguments and Claims Student presentations	Think-pile #3 (literature) (7.5%)
Week 6	Reasons and evidence, Acknowledgement and responses Student presentations	Think-pile #4 (literature) (7.5%)
Week 7	Planning and drafting Student presentations	Think-pile #5 (literature) (7.5%)
Week 8	Revising, Introductions and conclusions Student presentations	Think-pile #6 (literature) (7.5%)
Week 9	Spring break (no classes)	
Week 10	Research Methodology Student presentations	Think-pile #7 (literature) (7.5%)
Week 11	Research Methodology Student presentations	Think-pile #8 (research methodology) (7.5%)
Week 12	Student presentations	
Week 13	Student presentations	
Week 14	Student presentations	Final master piece (20%)
Week 15	Student presentations	
Week 16	Student presentations	
Week 17	Finals Week	Defense of your thesis progress