**Undergraduate Thesis Advising Checklist: Political Science\***

The director of the Honors Program suggests that students raise the following questions with potential thesis advisers in order to set clear expectations at the beginning of the writing process. Note that all advisers should be able to commit to advising the student throughout the entire thesis writing process, until the completion and submission of the thesis in May 2020.

**1. How frequently will you meet, and for how long?** Students typically meet with their advisers every other week, for between 30 minutes and an hour. Meetings may be more frequent when the student is developing the project and conducting research. Generally when the student is engaged in the intensive writing phase, meetings revolve around review of draft chapters.

**2. What will the adviser and student do in advance of each meeting?** Some advisers ask their students to turn in something (ranging from an emailed progress report to a draft chapter) by an agreed-upon time in advance of each meeting. In turn, a student can expect that the adviser will have read his or her work and be prepared to discuss it. Please share the Senior Honors Thesis Timeline, which offers a generic template for the Spring 2020 semester, with your adviser. Please develop a specific timeline with your adviser and communicate this timeline to the director of the Honors program as soon as it is available.

**3. What happens over the winter break?** Given the range of winter break experiences, advisers and students should talk about what the student is expected to accomplish in the break between Fall and Spring semesters. Some advisers work extensively with their students over the break, or set deadlines for completing drafts which fall during the break. Others stay in contact with off-site advisees by phone or email as the student develops the topic and conducts secondary and possibly primary research.

**4. What expectations will you set about chapter and draft deadlines?** Some advisers ask their students to turn in written work by a specific time (24-72 hours before a meeting) and specify whether drafts should be submitted as hard-copy or emailed. Some set dates near to the thesis deadline after which they will not read new material.

**5. How many drafts will you read?** Many advisers read a draft of each chapter, then a draft of the entire thesis, and then selected chapters as needed just before the thesis is due. Some read more or less than this. Advisers and students should also discuss whether an adviser is willing to receive rough and unpolished drafts, or whether a student is expected to turn in a draft that has already been proof-read.

**6. How accessible will the advisers be to the student?** Some advisers are comfortable exchanging emails and phone calls between meetings; others are not. A student and adviser should discuss how frequently they expect to be in contact, and how to reach one another in an emergency.

**7. What kind of support will the adviser provide to the student?** Advisers can provide three kinds of help to thesis students, although it is uncommon for a single adviser to be able to provide all three kinds of support equally well.

• substantive support - an understanding of the substantive topic of the thesis and advice about books to read, other experts to talk to, contacts in the field, etc.

• methodological and organizational support - knowledge of the method(s) being used, assistance with interpreting interviews, coding surveys, etc.; knowledge about what a thesis looks like and advice about organizing research, pacing, editing, and writing.

• personal support - encouragement, advice and support with issues like juggling competing commitments, procrastination, and writer’s block.

Please note that as currently configured, faculty advisers are asked to provide substantial support in al three areas, with special emphasis on the first two areas. Non-substantive support will be offered under the auspices of POLS 4099, which, as noted above, does not have a syllabus or formal contact hours.

**8. How will a student get support that cannot be provided by the adviser?** Advisers and students should discuss who else at AUC can provide a student with knowledge of a topic, methodological support, and personal support. Sources may include the cohort of thesis writers in POLS 4099, the director of the Honors program, other faculty members, the Writing Center, and a student’s friends and classmates.

All thesis writers in Political Science have the benefit of the mandatory POLS 4099. Honors students will decide upon a schedule of informal meetings to be arranged with the director of the Honors program. For example, students may decide to meet regularly (every second week) during the Spring semester, or less regularly (once per month). They may use this setting to discuss the research and writing process and exchange written work. POLS 4099 is intended as an aid to keep thesis writers on track toward a timely completion of their projects, and it is meant to provide support and context for the primary advising relationship. The primary advising relation deals with the substantive subfield content of the thesis, and the research methodology. This relationship is between the thesis writer and his or her adviser, as identified in the advising contract.

All students should share the Senior Honors Thesis Timeline with their thesis advisers when they offer the advising contract to that faculty member.

\*This document is adapted from Harvard University’s thesis advising checklist (<https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/files/undergradgov/files/tf_thesis_advising_contract_19-20.pdf>).