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# HONOURS RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

Department of Political Science

15 February 2019

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# HONOURS RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT



## Why do an Honours research assignment?

- Develop and demonstrate your research and analytical skills
- Demonstrate skills in:
  - *Information seeking*: The ability to scan the literature efficiently, using manual or computerized methods, to identify a set of useful academic articles and books
  - *Critical appraisal*: The ability to apply principles of analysis to identify unbiased and valid studies.
  - *Critical analysis*: The ability to assess, evaluate, synthesize and critique the literature
  - *Presentation*: The ability to organise and present the literature in a clear, coherent and focussed manner.

### **TYPE OF RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT:**

**A small-scale investigation on a political topic of research interest**

## Format of Honours research assignment

- Cover page
- Table of contents
- Section 1: Introduction (background and rationale for study)
- Section 2: Problem statement and research question
- Section 3: Overview of the literature (literature review)
- Section 4: Research design and methodology
- Section 5: Analysis and discussion
- Section 6: Conclusion
- Bibliography

## **SECTION ONE: Introduction**

- Detailed background to proposed study
- Explanation of why the study is being undertaken (rationale)

## **SECTION TWO: Problem statement and research question**

- Aim of the research assignment is to investigate an existing problem
- The focal points of the research assignment
- Nature of the problem (and meaning of the concepts posed in problem statement) must be formulated in a single paragraph

## SECTION THREE: Overview of the literature

- A literature review is an assessment of a body of research that addresses a research question.
- A literature review is a critical analysis of published sources, or literature, on a particular topic. It is an assessment of the literature and provides a summary, classification, comparison and evaluation.

### Purpose of a literature review

Find other scholars working in your field

Find out what information already exists in your area of research

Identify major seminal works

Provides an intellectual context for your research

Identify main ideas, definitions, theories and conclusions

Establish similarities and differences between previous studies

Identify main methodologies and research techniques

Identify gaps in the literature

## **SECTION FOUR: Research design and methods**

- Describe approach(es) and methods that will be utilised to investigate the proposed problem
- Desktop research; no primary data collection permitted

## **SECTION FIVE: Analysis and discussion**

- Presentation of evidence to investigate research problem
- Analysis and interrogation of the evidence
- Discussion of how these findings relate to the literature review

## **SECTION SIX: Conclusion**

- Summary of study

## Technical requirements

- Number of credits: 30
- Word count: 10 000 words, excluding cover page, contents page, bibliography
  - You may go 10% over or under the word count (i.e. 9000 – 11000 words)
- Only typed submissions accepted: 12 font (Times New Roman or Arial); 1.5 line spacing
- Title page: Title, name of student and student number, and name of the academic advisor
- Style of referencing: Harvard method; in-text (not footnotes or endnotes)
- Bibliography: Only include sources referenced or cited in the research assignment
- All instances of plagiarism will be referred for disciplinary action

## Format of Honours research proposal

### Title page

1. Background and rationale
2. Preliminary literature review
3. Problem statement and research question
4. Research design and methods
5. Outline of the study and proposed timeframe

### Bibliography

\* More information to be provided at seminar on 12 April

### Proposal writing



"I haven't read your proposal yet, but I already have some great ideas on how to improve it!"



## Academic support programme

- 08 March: *Argumentative writing skills and the writing process*  
Presented by Dr Nicola de Jager and Prof Janis van der Westhuizen
- 15 March: *Avoiding plagiarism and writing support at SU*  
Presented by Postgraduate Skills Development and SU Language Centre
- 12 April: *Guidelines for research proposal*  
Presented by Dr Cindy Steenekamp
- 17 May: *Honours colloquium*  
Presentations by students and feedback from advisory panel

All seminars will begin at 10h00 and take place in room 648 of the Arts and Social Sciences building

## Roles and responsibilities

- **Modes of advisement:** One-on-one or cohort model
- **What can students expect from academic advisors?**
  - Guidance in the framing your research question
  - Guidance in selecting appropriate resources/literature and research design
  - Feedback on all written work submitted
- **What can academic advisors expect from students?**
  - Participation in academic support programme
  - Schedule all appointments via email
  - Attendance of all scheduled meetings
  - Timely submission of written work
- **Appointment of academic advisors**
  - Equitable distribution of students per academic advisor across the Department
  - List of advisors and available slots to be placed on notice board outside 648

## Procedural matters: Research proposal

- **Submission date and protocol**
  - Submission date: **Friday, 10 May 2019**
  - Electronic submission (via SUNLearn) by 16h00
- **Assessment of research proposal**
  - Grade by panel of academic advisors on proposal and presentation
    - Average of grades will count 10% towards final grade
  - Final grades to be calculated and made available after the November examination period

## Procedural matters: Research assignment

- **Submission date and protocol**
  - Submission date: **Monday, 2 September 2019**
  - Ring bound copy and electronic submission (via SUNLearn) by 16h00
- **Assessment of research assignment**
  - Double blind internal examination (September and October)
    - Average of two grades plus proposal and presentation mark
  - External moderation (November)
  - Final grades to be made available after the November examination period

## Important dates and deadlines

- **Early-March\*:** List of academic advisors and availability posted
- **Mid-March\*:** Final day to select academic advisor
- **08 March:** Argumentative writing & the writing process seminar
- **15 March:** Avoiding plagiarism and writing support seminar
- **12 April:** Guidelines for research proposal seminar
- **10 May:** Submission deadline for research proposal
- **17 May:** Honours colloquium
- **2 September:** Submission deadline for examination

\* Dates to be confirmed and circulated via email at least one week in advance.

## **Honours research assignment co-ordinator**

All enquires relating the research assignment should be directed to Dr Cindy Steenekamp via email ([cindylee@sun.ac.za](mailto:cindylee@sun.ac.za)) or during consultation hours