

Welcome to Inst 421, the first semester of the Croft senior thesis. The thesis represents the culmination of the international studies major and the last stage of your undergraduate education. We know it will be a challenge to start your thesis in the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are committed to helping you face whatever obstacles arise. It is always important to start working on your thesis right away, and it will be even more important than ever to do so this year. In order to keep you engaged on your thesis, you should set aside specific blocks of time to work on it – at least 9 hours every week.

In consultation with your mentor, you will develop a compelling and manageable research question, find appropriate primary and secondary sources, choose a methodology, and begin your analysis. In order to help you achieve this, you will complete five specific assignments this semester: a preliminary bibliography, a prospectus, an analysis and writing plan, a thesis writers' conference presentation, and a preliminary research product. All of these will be evaluated by your mentor and will contribute to your grade in Inst 421.

Without a spring break this semester, you have as many weeks of class as you would normally, but you do not have the extra week to work on your thesis or get a much-needed break. Consequently, you really need to pace yourself, doing a steady amount of work each week, so you do not get burned out or behind.

The Croft Institute has posted senior theses and thesis prospectuses on its website, available for viewing by mentors and thesis writers. These can be found at <http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/model-theses>. Note many of these theses are longer than our current target length, but are still useful for their methodology and bibliographies. You will need to be on the University of Mississippi campus network and use your WebID to log into this site. You can also find Croft theses, but not prospectuses, on the University's electronic depository at https://egrove.olemiss.edu/croft_thesis/.

Readers

Mentor • You should have already contacted a mentor and started doing exploratory research on your topic. If not, do so as soon as possible. The thesis mentor, also known as the first reader, is your primary guide through the thesis process. He or she will help you identify a workable research question, develop an appropriate methodology, find and use primary and secondary sources, and structure and format your thesis correctly. Be sure to choose someone you are comfortable working with, and let Dr. Schenck know if you need any help identifying a potential mentor. You should have already been put into a section of Inst 421 with your mentor as the instructor.

You should schedule regular meetings, with your mentor. Croft mentors typically meet with their students once per week, or, at a minimum, two times a month. Let Dr. Schenck know right away if you have difficulty scheduling meetings with your mentor. These meetings can be virtual or in-person, depending on what you and your mentor prefer.

Second and Third Readers • In addition to your mentor, you will also have a second and third reader, who will form your thesis committee. This semester, your second and third readers

will serve as additional resources to help you develop a compelling and manageable thesis project. They will also read your thesis at the end of Inst 422, give you feedback, and determine your grade for that course. Note that we have swapped the designations of the second and third readers starting with this semester's Inst 421 to match the practice of the Sally McDonnell Honors College.

The second reader will be a faculty person of your choosing and should be someone whose expertise complements that of your mentor. This semester, your second reader must approve your prospectus and attend the thesis writers' conference. Your mentor will help you choose your second reader, and Dr. Schenck can also offer guidance.

The third reader is an official representative of the Croft Institute who will be assigned to you. This semester, you should address all questions regarding your thesis and submissions due to the Croft Institute to Dr. Schenck, even if he is not your official third reader.

Scope of a Croft Thesis

A Croft thesis should be between 40 and 50 pages. A longer thesis is not better: make your thesis as concise as possible, and focus on your analysis rather than restating information found in your sources. Please refer to the Croft website (<http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/croft-thesis-format>) for details about formatting your thesis. Your mentor will advise you to use the formatting and reference standards of his or her field of study. The most important thing is for you to choose a specific style and apply it consistently. If you are in the Sally McDonnell Honors College, be sure to follow the formatting requirements for an Honors thesis, specifically in regards to the width of margins.

Components of Inst 421

Topic and Research Question • You should choose a topic that builds on what you have learned in your coursework, either on campus or during study abroad, rather than something new and unfamiliar. Your mentor will work with you to help you find a balance between your interests and what is achievable in terms of your theoretical and methodological preparation and the availability of data. You need to define an interesting, important, and feasible research question within the first two weeks of the semester at the same time as you identify data sources. This two-pronged approach is designed to help you develop a research question that can be answered by the data that is available to you.

If you are planning to go abroad in the fall, you might consider doing primary research while there, distributing surveys, conducting interviews, or doing archival research. But students who plan to gather data while abroad often come home empty handed and have to start from scratch in Inst 422, resulting in a stressful semester and a thesis of lesser quality. Therefore, we encourage students who want to gather data while abroad between Inst 421 and 422 to plan for a thesis that does not require data to be collected abroad but would be improved by it. Let your mentor know right away if you are interested in doing research while abroad,

Library Sessions • To help you identify appropriate primary and secondary sources, you must attend a **library session with the social science subject librarian, Adam Clemons**, during the

second week of the semester, January 25-29. Dr. Schenck will contact you shortly with the exact dates and times Prof. Clemons is available.

Preliminary Bibliography • In order to reinforce the importance of identifying primary and secondary sources early in the thesis process, you must submit a preliminary bibliography to your mentor and the Croft Institute by **Monday, February 1**. This simple, unannotated bibliography will contain the primary sources that you will use to conduct your analysis and the most important works of the relevant scholarly literature. You will not necessarily have read or even acquired all of the data sources, books, and articles included in the bibliography, but the document must include an explanation of how you are going to acquire or collect any sources that you do not already have.

You should plan to use at least some sources (primary texts to analyze or scholarly articles) written in the **language you have been studying for Croft**. If your mentor cannot help you read them, ask your second reader or Croft language advisor for help. If you **plan to interview human subjects or conduct surveys**, you need to speak to your mentor immediately about getting your research proposal approved by the university's **Institutional Review Board** (<http://research.olemiss.edu/irb>).

Prospectus • You must submit a prospectus outlining your plans for completing your thesis to your **mentor**, the **Croft Institute**, and your **second reader** by **Monday, February 8**. You will receive feedback on your prospectus by Monday, February 15, and you must submit a **revised prospectus** by **Monday, February 22**.

The prospectus should include an articulation of your **research question** and **methodology**, an identification of the **primary sources** (quantitative data, texts, etc.) you plan to use and the relevant **scholarly literature**, and a **proposed outline of your chapters**. We encourage you to adapt a methodology used in a previous study, or build on something you used in your methods class, and apply it to different cases or an expanded timeline.

You should begin working with your data – whatever form it takes – as soon as possible, even as you continue to develop your research question and methodology. Do not try to define your research question and methodology before you start working with your data. Your research question, methodology, and the data you use should all evolve alongside each other during the first semester as you gain new insights through your analysis.

Analysis and Writing Plan • You must submit a plan for your analysis and writing to your mentor and the Croft Institute on **Friday, February 26**, just after you submit your revised prospectus. It is essential for you – and your mentor – to have a clear sense of what you plan to do after the prospectus is completed. The work you do for the second part of the semester must include the application of your methodology to your data: actual analysis, not just an extended literature review or a narrative of background information. **This document should also include your plan for work over the summer and fall semester, especially if you are planning to study abroad in the fall.**

Thesis Writers' Conference • We will hold a thesis writers' conference between **Monday, March 22** and **Tuesday, March 23**. During the conference, you give a ten-minute overview of your

research so far, demonstrating what you have learned by applying your methodology to your data, including your preliminary findings, after which the faculty and other students in attendance will ask questions. This presentation must include an audiovisual component, typically a PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Schenck will be contacting you in early March to schedule the conference and to give you additional instructions.

Preliminary Research Product • You will submit your preliminary research product to your mentor by **Friday, April 23**. Your mentor will tell you exactly what he or she expects, but it is important for you to have completed **a substantial portion of your analysis and writing** (whether qualitative or quantitative) before the end of the fall semester. You may also start writing your introduction and background material, but concentrate on doing your analysis rather than summarizing other people's work. Remember, the first complete draft of your thesis is due only six weeks into the semester in which you do Inst 422.

Grade for Inst 421

Your mentor will assign you the midterm and final grade for Inst 421. Mentors are free to determine this grade as they see fit, but typically they will take into consideration your preliminary bibliography, your prospectus, your presentation at the thesis writers' presentation, your preliminary research product, your faithfulness in attending meetings, your promptness in submitting your work, and your overall dedication to the thesis process. Over the course of the semester, your mentor will also submit a midterm and a final report detailing your progress on the thesis and your readiness to move on to the next stage of the project, Inst 422. A grade of C (not a C-) or higher is required for Inst 421 to count for the major and for you to continue with Inst 422.

Inst 421 Spring 2021 Schedule of Activities and Deadlines

Summer before beginning Inst 421: Choose topic, contact mentor, and do preliminary research

Week	Dates	Activity
1	January 19-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with mentor to move from topic to research question based on reading • Mandatory meeting on Wednesday, January 20
2	January 25-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory library sessions • Identify data sources (primary sources) and scholarly literature (secondary sources) • Identify possible second readers
3	February 1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit preliminary bibliography with data sources (primary sources) and scholarly literature (secondary sources) to mentor and Croft Institute by Monday, February 1 • Develop thesis prospectus in consultation with mentor, focusing on articulation of methodology informed by scholarly literature • Notify Croft of name of second reader by Friday, February 5
4	February 8-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit prospectus to mentor, second reader, and Croft Institute by Monday, February 8
5	February 15-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers provide feedback on prospectus by Monday, February 15 • Revise thesis prospectus based on feedback from readers
6	February 22-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit revised prospectus to mentor, second reader, and Croft Institute by Monday, February 22. • Submit concrete plan to write core chapter(s) of thesis by end of the semester to mentor and Croft Institute by Friday, February 26 • Begin to analyze primary sources/data • Mentor Report #1 due Friday, February 26
7	March 1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze primary sources/data using methodology
8	March 8-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze primary sources/data using methodology
9	March 15-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare thesis writer's conference presentation, including preliminary findings
10	March 22-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis Writers' Conference from Monday, March 22, to Tuesday, March 23. • Presentations should include less background information and focus on research question, methodology, sources, and preliminary findings
11	March 29-April 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze primary sources/data; continue research and writing according to plan submitted in week 6
12	April 5-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze primary sources/data; continue research and writing according to plan submitted in week 6
13	April 12-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze primary sources/data; continue research and writing according to plan submitted in week 6
14	April 19-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit preliminary research product to mentor by Friday, April 23
15	April 26-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finals Week. Grade for Inst 421 assigned. Mentor Report #2 due by Friday, April 30