**Political Science Honors Thesis Guidelines**

*Dr. Angela Nichols*

**Prerequisites**

Writing an honors thesis in political science is a grueling task that requires serious time, effort, and dedication. As such, I only agree to supervise honors theses for students who, in my estimation, are likely to be successful. Though it is not possible to anticipate perfectly which students fall into this category, my screening process is designed to guard against the awfully stressful scenario in which a student finds him/herself struggling to complete a thesis that meets my and the department’s expectations. As a general rule (to which there may be rare exceptions), You must meet the following qualifications in order for me to supervise your thesis:

* “A-” or better in my courses
* department criteria: http://www.fau.edu/politicalscience/honors.php
* strong writing skills
* strong work ethic
* ability to receive and implement feedback

*If you meet these criteria and would like me to supervise your thesis, please send me an email (*[*nicholsa@fau.edu*](mailto:nicholsa@fau.edu)*) and request an appointment to chat about this possibility.*

Here some things to think about regarding the thesis process:

* We need to meet the spring before your senior year to brainstorm ideas for your thesis question/puzzle*.*
* During your senior year we will establish a **biweekly** meeting to discuss your progress on the thesis and any questions you might have about what you’re reading, etc. It is important that you commit to making these meetings.
* You should plan to spend at least **10 hours per week** (outside of the thesis class meetings) doing the reading, writing, and brainstorming for your thesis.
* Once you’ve chosen a research question, you need to compile a list of sources and create an annotated bibliography. You should have a minimum of 40 sources. It is a good idea to do this the summer before your senior year, but this must be complete no later than October of your senior year.
* By the end of the fall semester, you should have the front half (intro thru research design) of the thesis complete (min 20 pages of edited and ready-to-go text) and be ready to test your hypotheses. You will need to collect data, if not already complete, over winter break.
* We will run analysis during January of your senior year.
* By spring break, the first final draft of your thesis should be complete.
* Check out the office for undergraduate research for grant opportunities related to your research. You can get funding for STATA or books or travel to present your research: http://www.fau.edu/ouri/undergraduate\_grants.php
* You will need to write, re-write, edit, delete, write again, and then repeat until you get things the way you want them. Writing, and in particular theorizing is a difficult process that requires a great deal of effort and contemplation.
* A great idea from a colleague: You will also have to learn techniques for keeping up your motivation. One of my favorite techniques is called “parking on a downward slope.” What this means is that, when you come to the end of your writing session, never stop at the end of a paragraph/section; always write a sentence or two of the *next* paragraph/section so you will have an easy place to pick up when you begin writing the next time. This will save you a lot of mental effort and time. This site offers other helpful tips: <http://www.bard.edu/learningcommons/students/resources/index.php?action=getfile&id=3365223>