



Elliott School Senior Thesis  
IAFF 4199



# Disclaimer

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Students planning to pursue a Senior Thesis are required to read through this presentation and are responsible for all policies and guidelines outlined herein.



# What is a Senior Thesis?

The Senior Thesis is an opportunity to participate in a semester-long, independent research project under the guidance of a faculty member.

Students must conduct original research and write 30 or more pages (double-spaced) about an international affairs topic of their choice.

The topic can be historical or contemporary, however if historical, it must be related back to something contemporary.

# How Does it Work?

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Students are responsible for finding a GW faculty advisor who is willing to meet on a regular basis throughout the semester to supervise the research and writing process. The faculty can be affiliated with any department at GW.

This is an independent research project and so there will be no class sessions provided, nor a seminar to attend. Students will work directly with their faculty advisor to determine steps and deadlines along the way.

Students will earn three credit hours for completing the [Senior Thesis course \(IAFF 4199\)](#).



# Eligibility

**Students** must meet all of the following requirements:

1. Senior standing (90 or more earned credit hours at time of application)
2. Cumulative GPA must be 3.4 or higher at the time of application
3. Final Year of study at GW

**Faculty Advisors:**

- Can be affiliated with any academic department at GW
  - Must have knowledge of student's topic
  - Can be full- or part-time. If part-time, must have taught two courses at GW in the last three academic years
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# Dates & Deadlines

Application Form is due by the 2nd Friday of the semester you intend to complete your thesis.

Your final paper will be due to your faculty advisor one week prior to the last day of classes for the semester.

Your professor will have two weeks to review your paper and submit their final grade.

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# Application & Registration Process

1. Review your eligibility and this presentation.
2. Fill out the [application form](#).
3. You will be accepted if you meet the eligibility requirements and submit these forms by their deadlines.
4. You will be registered by the end of the 3rd week of classes.

\*If you will be dropping something when the thesis is added, you must include this on the COMPLETED RTF you will submit with your Senior Thesis Approval Form. We will then drop the class at the same time that the thesis is added so that your billing is not affected.

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# FAQs

## How do I choose a topic?

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- Consider IA topics you are interested in or passionate about - even a small idea can make a great topic!
- Consider IA topics you've researched before but thought there was more.
- Consider problems you know still need solutions.
- Further develop your ideas with your faculty advisor.

## How can I be successful?

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- Meet with your faculty advisor regularly to develop your paper.
- Set goals and deadlines throughout the semester to ensure completion of the thesis.
- Work with the GW Writing Center for additional support.

# Ten Tips on Writing a Senior Thesis\*

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1. Pick an important and manageable topic; and develop a clear research question.
  - Answer the “so-what” question.
  - Why does it matter? Who cares?
2. Assess the “state of the art” –the state of existing knowledge on your topic and research question.
3. Identify plausible answers or working hypotheses for your research question.
4. Develop a research design and strategy for addressing the research question and testing your working hypothesis or hypotheses.
  - What research method or methods will you use?
  - Large-N statistical studies, single case study, multiple case studies?
  - What kind of data or information will you collect and analyze?
5. Establish a realistic schedule for carrying out and completing your thesis on time. Remember a semester goes by quickly!



# Ten Tips on Writing a Senior Thesis cont'd\*

6. Outline your thesis, use headings and sub-headings, and outline sections before writing.
7. Write clear sentences, focus each paragraph on a single point or set of arguments, and avoid jargon and clichés.
8. Write multiple drafts, edit your drafts as if they were written by others, and proofread every single word.
9. Don't over-state or under-state your claims; acknowledge other viewpoints, and treat them with respect; anticipate and pre-empt counterarguments; and conclude with a proper conclusion.
10. Do not plagiarize. Ever. Reference religiously. Leave plenty of time to write and complete your thesis by the deadline so you do not plagiarize because of carelessness and time pressures.

\* This list of tips draws on Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 85-254; Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 123-128; and William Strunk, Jr. & E. White, *The Elements of Style* (Allyn & Bacon, 2000, 4<sup>th</sup> edition); and Alexander B. Downes, "Research Papers in Political Science: 14 Points" (PowerPoint, March 2012)



What will you  
explore in your  
Senior Thesis?