

Department of Politics, Junior Independent Work

Effective with the Class of 2018 and beyond

Students are required to complete two semesters of junior independent work. In the fall semester, juniors enroll in a Junior Independent Workshop (JIW) which consists of a plenary component and a small group component. The plenary component introduces students to the basics of sound research design. In the small group meetings, juniors develop a Junior Paper Research Prospectus under the supervision of a workshop leader. The grade for the JIW is based on participation in plenary and small group components and a series of assignments, including the Research Prospectus. A suggested schedule and list of assignments will be provided to workshop leaders by the Department. Juniors who study abroad in their junior fall participate in the plenary component remotely and work with an advisor assigned by the Department instead of participating in the small group component. They usually complete the same set of assignments as juniors on campus.

In the spring semester, juniors complete a Junior Paper under the supervision of an independent work advisor. A Junior Paper written in the Department of Politics is normally an essay of 20 to 35 double-spaced pages that is clearly focused on one--or a few related--political questions, problems or issues. Junior papers are supposed to define a significant political question or problem and to answer it through a process of systematic research which may, depending on the nature of the topic selected, involve reading primary and secondary literature or original documents, interviewing, or compiling and analyzing statistical data. The range of subjects suitable for such essays is very wide. Most projects involve the following elements: defining a significant question, formulating a hypothesis, gathering and assessing evidence, reviewing critically the work of others on this subject, evaluating alternative methods of inquiry, critically reviewing one's own arguments, and relating one's findings and conclusions to a larger political context of issues. The Junior Paper is not a passive review of the existing literature, nor a summary of facts, nor a long editorial. It presents a critical and creative analysis of a question, problem or issue. A presentation of the student's own well-reasoned views is an essential part of this exercise. Policy recommendations are welcome but not required.

In general, the standards for senior theses apply in faculty evaluations of the Junior Paper, with the understanding that the time available to work on a Junior Paper is much less than the time available for the senior thesis. The Department views the Research Prospectus and the Junior Paper as "building blocks" toward the preparation of a strong senior thesis. Faculty advisers are expected to submit extensive comments on the written work of the students whom they advise.

A student's Junior Paper may be supervised by a faculty member outside the Department of Politics. The Director of Undergraduate Studies may require a paper supervised outside of the Department to be second read by a Politics faculty

member. If there is a difference in the assigned grades, the two grades will be reconciled according to the procedures for grading senior theses.

The rough draft deadline set by the Department for the Junior Paper is the last Friday in March. Advisors are under no obligation to give detailed comments on preliminary versions of Junior Papers if they are submitted after the deadline. Advisors may choose to read drafts after these deadlines, and faculty are encouraged to set their own preferred deadlines for preliminary work on the Junior Paper. It is strongly urged that students submit a rough draft of their Junior Paper.

Students are encouraged to direct their Junior Paper toward a possible thesis topic, and are allowed to use some of the same research for both. Nonetheless, the Junior Paper must be an independent piece of work which stands on its own, and it may not be incorporated directly into the thesis.

Special permission is required to submit the same paper both for purposes of Junior Independent Work and for a course. The Director of Undergraduate Studies and all instructors involved must give their consent in writing. This option is strongly disfavored, and permission will be given only in extremely exceptional circumstances. In cases where the course instructor is also the student's junior advisor, it may be required that the paper be second-read by another faculty member of the Department.

Students must achieve at least a "D" on each of their two semesters of junior independent work as well as an average of a "C" or above across the two. If the average of the two is below "C" or one of the two receives an "F", a second Junior Paper is required (with a grade that brings the average of the passing two junior independent work grades to "C" or better) before entering the senior year. For purposes of this requirement, the grades before the application of any late penalties are used.

The completed final assignment (Research Prospectus in fall semester, Junior Paper in spring semester) must be received and logged into the office of the Department of Politics by 4:00 pm on the due date for junior independent work established by the Dean of the College. Assignments will not be accepted after this time without approval from the Dean of the College. If the Dean of the College does approve an extension with a late penalty in conjunction with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, then a late penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade for every 48 hours that an assignment is late will be applied, beginning at 4:00 pm on the due date. Assignments are only accepted by the Department during normal business hours, and students should plan accordingly so as to minimize accumulated penalties.