API-901: DOCTORAL RESEARCH SEMINAR
Matthew Baum
Harvard Kennedy School
Fall 2016
Tuesday, 10-12, T301

FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION
Matthew Baum
Email: matthew_baum@harvard.edu
Tel: (617) 495-1291
Office: T244

Marlana Creed (Faculty Assistant)
Email: marlana_creed@hks.harvard.edu
Tel: (617) 496-1472
Office: T379

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the API-901 Doctoral Research Seminar is to facilitate the development of incoming doctoral students’ dissertation research ideas and to build community among Harvard Kennedy School doctoral students and faculty. This course is required of all first-year PhD students in Public Policy. Permission of instructor is required for other students.

Overview of seminar process. During the first half of the semester, Harvard Kennedy School faculty will join the seminar for the first hour (10:00-11:00am) to talk about various aspects of the research process (e.g., working with organizations to obtain data, running experiments, developing a research program, etc.). Following the faculty conversations, students will share and discuss with one another their emergent dissertation research ideas. Two students will present for approximately 20 minutes each following the faculty conversations. In the second half of the semester, class sessions will be dedicated to more formal presentations of the students’ research proposals. We will have three student presenters per class session for approximately 30 minutes each.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation
Thoughtful, prepared class participation is essential. This seminar is designed to give doctoral students opportunities to engage classmates and professors in conversations about the research process. Some conversations started in this seminar will continue through students’ doctoral careers and beyond. Students should take advantage of this opportunity to build their research community by engaging fully in class discussions with fellow students and faculty.

Faculty conversations. In preparation for the conversations with Harvard Kennedy School faculty about the research process, students must complete the assigned background reading. As indicated on the class schedule, there will be only one article or chapter assigned per class. In addition to the assigned article or chapter, students should review the background information on the professor provided through the links inserted in the seminar schedule.

Student discussion leaders. Twice during the semester, students will serve as “discussion leaders” for faculty conversations. Discussion leaders should email a brief (max 200-word) set of
comments or questions for the faculty to marlana_creed@hks.harvard.edu by 5pm on the Monday before class. These comments and questions will be distributed to classmates and shared with the faculty presenters prior to the seminar. We will assign “discussion leaders” to faculty presenters on the first day of class.

Research Inspiration Assignment
For the first class session on September 6, students should identify a recent publication (e.g., academic article, book) that is an inspiring model for their own research interests. The inspiration could be theoretical or methodological or stem from the type of practical impact that the research has achieved. On the first day of class, students will have about five-to-seven minutes to introduce themselves and describe their “inspiring research” example.

Research Proposal Development
The primary assignment in this course is to develop a research proposal that could serve as the basis for dissertation research. Students will have two opportunities to present their emergent dissertation research ideas to the class:

1. **Informal Group Conversation** (20 minutes of presentation and discussion). Following the faculty conversations in the first half of the semester, the final 45 minutes of class will be devoted to informal discussions of the students’ emergent dissertation research ideas. Two students will have 20 minutes each to share ideas and get advice and suggestions from their classmates. For instance, students might solicit feedback on a research idea, ask for literature suggestions, or get feedback on survey or experimental materials.

2. **Formal Presentation of Research Proposals** (30 minutes of presentation and Q&A). In the second half of the semester, each student will make a formal conference-style presentation of a research proposal to their classmates (e.g., using PowerPoint). The presentation proper should be limited to 10-15 minutes to allow time for conversation. The proposal should represent the students’ own research ideas. It is fine for students to present joint research with fellow students or faculty, but only if the student is leading the research.

Students should email a 2-page (double-spaced, 12-pt font) summary of their research proposal to matthew_baum@harvard.edu by 5pm on the Monday prior to their presentation.
Following is a suggested outline for the research proposals:

1. Motivating Research Question
   a. Explanation of why question is important
   b. Brief review of relevant literature
2. Proposed Method
   a. Overview of research design
   b. Research population/subjects
   c. Materials/Data Sources
   d. Measures
3. Proposed Analyses
4. Discussion
   a. Limitations of research methods
   b. Potential contributions to the literature

Final Paper
The final paper in the course should be an elaboration of the formal research proposal presented in class. It should reflect constructive feedback received during the seminar as well as feedback from at least one professor with related research interests or expertise. This five-page (double-spaced, 12-pt font) final research proposal is due by noon on Friday, December 2. Email a copy of the final research proposal to matthew.baum@harvard.edu and submit a hard copy to the Faculty Assistant, Marlana Creed, in Taubman 379.

When preparing your final paper, keep in mind the quote from Cicero: “If I had more time, I would have written you a shorter letter.” It may be challenging to articulate your research ideas succinctly in five double-spaced pages. But, the page limit is intended to help you communicate your research ideas clearly and efficiently, so that you are well poised to continue to seek out potential faculty advisers for feedback and guidance.

Summary of Assignments
1. Report “research inspiration” on first day of class (September 6)
2. Serve as “discussion leader” two times during the semester (scheduled during first class)
3. Make “informal presentation” of research ideas (scheduled during first class)
4. Make “formal presentation” of research ideas (scheduled during first class)
5. Submit “summary of research proposal” on Monday before “formal presentation”
6. Submit “final research proposal” by noon on Friday, December 2

GRADING
Grading will be on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis, reflective of the quality of students’ class participation and research proposal.

COURSE MATERIALS
To the extent possible, we have made advance readings available electronically through web links inserted in this syllabus. Research that must be distributed in hard copy will be handed out in class.
CLASS SCHEDULE

September 6
**Introductions & Research Inspirations**
During the first class session, students will introduce themselves, describe their research interests, and present their inspiring research example (as described above). We will discuss the purpose and process for the seminar, and assign students to dates to serve as discussion leaders and to present their research.

September 13 –
**Conversation with Professor Ariel Dora Stern, Mark Shepard, and Samuel Stolper on Surviving Graduate School**

Link to Bios:
http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facId=735581
http://scholar.harvard.edu/mshepard/biocv.
http://scholar.harvard.edu/ssstolper/home

Informal Student Research Presenter(s):
1.
2.

September 20
**Faculty Conversation with Professor Robert Stavins on “Origins of Research Ideas and Projects”**

**Background Readings:**

Links to Professor Stavins’ bio and CV:
http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/rstavins/
http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/rstavins/cvweb.html

**Student Discussion Leaders:**

Informal Student Research Presenter(s):
1.
2.
September 27

Faculty Conversation with Professor Ryan Sheely on “Qualitative Research”

**Background Reading:**

Link to Professor Sheely’s bio:
http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/ryan-sheely

**Student Discussion Leaders:**

Informal Student Research Presenter:
1.
2.

October 11

Faculty Conversation with Professor Jeff Liebman on “Policy Research”

**Background Reading:**
TBD.

Link to Professor Liebman’s bio:
http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/jeffreyliebman/

**Student Discussion Leaders:**

Informal Student Research Presenter:
7.
8.

October 18

Faculty Conversation with Professor Todd Rodgers on “Using Data and Big Data Sets from Natural Experiments for Empirical Analysis”

**Background Readings:**
TBD.

Link to Professor Rodger’s bio:
https://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/todd-rogers

**Student Discussion Leaders:**
1.
2.
October 25

Faculty Conversation with Asim Khwaja on “Evidence Based Design”

Background Readings:

Link to Professor Khwaja’s bio:
http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/asim-khwaja

Student Discussion Leaders:
1.
2.

November 1

TBA

Background Readings:

Student Discussion Leaders:

Formal Student Research Presenter:
1.
2.

November 10

Faculty Conversation with Professor Daniel Shoag on “Field, Lab Experiments, and Surveys”

Background Readings:

Link to Professor Shoag’s bio:
http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/daniel-shoag

Student Discussion Leaders:

Formal Student Research Presenter:
1.
2.
November 15

Faculty Conversation with Professor David Lazer on “Big Data”

Background Reading:
TBD.

Link to Professor Lazer’s bio:
http://www.davidlazer.com/

Student Discussion Leaders

Formal Student Research Presenters:
6.
7.
8.

November 22
Student Research Presentations

Formal Student Research Presenters:
3.
4.
5.

November 29
Student Research Presentations

Formal Student Research Presenters:
1.
2.