

April 7, 2008

To: Political Science Seniors Eligible for Department Honors

Each year, senior Political Science majors with outstanding academic records are invited by the Department to apply for admission to the Political Science Honors Thesis Program. This program, not to be confused with the College of Letters and Science Honors Program, is designed for students desiring a rigorous and intensive research and writing experience in their senior year. Each person admitted writes a thesis under faculty guidance.

As coordinator of the program for the 2008-2009 academic year, I would like to invite you to consider this outstanding program, which is designed to provide our best students the opportunity to engage in a two quarter research project on a topic of their own choosing. You are one of a handful of Political Science majors who may be both qualified for the Honors Program and capable of benefiting from the two quarters of independent research. I strongly encourage you to explore this opportunity.

This is very different from most of the classes you have taken thus far. It is not for the passive learner, but for students who wish to take charge of a project of their own design, and proactively push it to completion. Faculty will offer advice and guidance, but your effort alone will determine whether the project is successful. Even more than most things, what you get out of it will be a function of what you put into it.

Completing the Honors Program requires two quarters beginning in Fall 2008 and concluding in Winter 2009. In Fall you will participate in a seminar on research methods (PS 191H) designed to prepare you further for a project of this magnitude: you will refine your research question and develop hypotheses that you and your classmates will poke and prod until your writing task for the following quarter is clear. The scheduled meeting time for PS 191H in Fall 2008 will be announced at the end of Spring 2008. Participation in PS 191H is mandatory: you must be in residence during Fall 2008 to participate in the honors program in Political Science. During the Winter Quarter (PS 198), you will research and write your thesis under the supervision of your thesis adviser, a member of the Political Science Faculty, and meet with me from time to time.

In past years, this has been a 3-quarter sequence. Because it is now shorter, it is incumbent on you to take full advantage of the summer to read widely in your chosen subject area, and to begin to formulate a research question and some ideas about how to answer it. Accordingly, it is a very good idea for you to already have an idea about a topic and about what faculty member you would like to supervise your project at the time that you apply. A pre-application conversation with that faculty member (or more than one) is strongly advised. If you have a project in mind, but either cannot figure out which faculty member would be most appropriate or cannot make contact with the person you have identified, please ask me for advice. Then, if you are accepted into the program, it will be expected that you meet or at least speak with your advisor before the summer, to generate a reading list and a plan of action.

The catalog states that this seminar sequence is open only to seniors who 1) have completed an Honors Seminar (Political Science 191 series, formerly 197 series), 2) have a 3.5+ GPA in upper division Political Science courses, and 3) are eligible for College of Letters and Science Honors (12+ graded UCLA units and a cumulative UCLA GPA of 3.5+). However, because the Department has not been able to offer as many Honors Seminars as were planned when the catalog language was drafted, we may waive that requirement for students who have experience in writing substantial research papers.

If you wish to apply for this program, an application form accompanies this announcement. Please be sure to include an e-mail address with your application. The application also requests your College Honors Status. Please apply for College Honors if you wish to join the Departmental program. Among other benefits, College Honors gives you library privileges that you may find useful for your research.

Please return the completed application no later than **Friday, May 2**, along with a copy of your degree progress report (DPR) and a tentative thesis proposal (no more than 2 pages) to the Undergraduate Counseling Office, 4269 A or B, Bunche Hall, UCLA Political Science Department, PO Box 951472, Los Angeles, California, 90095-1472. If you are not in residence, you may submit your application by e-mail. As it is likely that there will be more applicants than places for the course, I will contact some or all applicants to set up a time for an informal interview, either by phone or in person. Applicants will be notified of whether or not they have been accepted by **June 2**. A PTE # to enroll in Political Science 191H will be issued to students accepted to the program. The PTE number guarantees a place in the course and may best be used during the second pass enrollment period. If you have questions about procedures, please consult the Undergraduate Counselors at (310) 825-3862 or (310) 206-7669. If you would like to talk to me about your project or the class, you may arrange an appointment by e-mail at thies@polisci.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Michael Thies
Associate Professor and
Departmental Honors Coordinator, 2008-09

