

INTL 7002: Dissertation Prospectus Workshop

Spring 2026

Dr. Shane P. Singh

Office: 305 International Affairs Building (202 Herty Drive)

Office Hours: Mondays, 1:30–3:30PM

Email: singh@uga.edu

Course Webpage: eLC

Class Meeting Time: Fridays, 2:55–4:15PM

Class Location: 115 International Affairs Building (202 Herty Drive)

Goal of the Course: The goal of this course is to provide guidance and support to students in the Political Science and International Affairs doctoral program who are preparing to write and defend their dissertation prospectus. In most cases, students in this class will be in the third or fourth year of their doctoral program and will have passed comprehensive exams. In the first half of the course, we will overview the content and goals of a prospectus, we will discuss applying for external funding and data collection, and we will discuss the process of defending one's prospectus. In the second half of the course, we will hold several practice prospectus defenses. In these practice defenses, students will present their prospectus to the class, members of which will in turn provide constructive comments and criticism. We will also hear from one or more guest speakers who have recently defended their prospectus successfully.

Requirements:

Participation: Participation involves more than attending class. When you speak up in class, you enhance the experience of other students in the course. Asking questions can lead to valuable conversations that would not have come about otherwise. Your participation will be particularly important in the second half of the semester during the practice prospectus defenses.

Creation of Draft Prospectus: You are required to share a draft prospectus via eLC during or before Spring Break in PDF format. We will talk in detail about the content a prospectus should include in the first few weeks of the course. Your prospectus draft should be between 10 and 35 pages, inclusive of the bibliography.

Practice Prospectus Defense: In the weeks after Spring Break, each student will defend their prospectus in front of the class. The class will play the role of the student's dissertation committee.

Grades: This course is graded dichotomously: students receive either an "S" for satisfactory participation or a "U" for unsatisfactory performance. Students receiving an "S" will earn course credit, while those receiving a "U" will not and will need to retake the course. These grades are not included in the computation of grade point averages. Students' participation in class and completion of the assignments will jointly determine their grade in the course.

Students who miss classes without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency and/or do not complete the assignments will receive a “U”.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources: If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>). If you need help managing stress, anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Academic Integrity: The academic honesty policy of the university is supplemented (not replaced) by an Honor Code which was adopted by the Student Government Association and approved by the University Council May 1, 1997, and provides: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” All students agree to abide by this code by signing the UGA Admissions Application.

Course Schedule: *The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

WEEK 1

January 16: No Class (SPSA)

WEEK 2

January 23: Welcome and Introductions

Go over syllabus

WEEK 3

January 30: Coming Up with a Dissertation Idea

- New theory?
- Puzzle?
- New data?
- New method?
- New concept?
- New measure?
- Hole in the literature?
- Revising someone else's theory or empirics?

WEEK 4

February 6: What Should a Prospectus Include?

- “Book style” or “three articles”?
- Elements of the prospectus
 - Describe your contribution
 - Review the state of the literature
 - Describe your theory and hypotheses
 - Describe data you will collect
 - Describe how you will test your hypotheses—your empirical approach
 - Perhaps a pilot study

WEEK 5

February 13: Applying for External Support

- The grant application process
- Common external funders for people in graduate school

WEEK 6

February 20: Collecting and Analyzing Data

- Ethics concerns and approval
- Pre-registration
- Transparency and replication
- Quantitative, qualitative, or both?
- If quantitative: observational, quasi-experimental, experimental, or a mix?

WEEK 7

February 27: What Does a Prospectus Defense Entail?

- How should you prepare?
- What will happen at the prospectus defense?
- What should you do if you don't pass?
- What are the criteria for success?

Pick practice prospectus defense days.

WEEK 8

March 6: Discussion with an Advanced Graduate Student Who Is About to Defend Their Dissertation

Discussion with Aidan González

WEEK 9

March 13: No Class (Spring Break)

You must share your draft prospectus via eLC during or before Spring Break.

WEEK 10

March 20: Practice Prospectus Defense(s)

WEEK 11

March 27: Practice Prospectus Defense(s)

WEEK 12

April 3: Practice Prospectus Defense(s)

WEEK 13

April 10: Practice Prospectus Defense(s)

WEEK 14

April 17: Practice Prospectus Defense(s)

WEEK 15

April 24: No Class (MPSA)