#### WRITD Course

**Proposal**

*Note:* The **Writing in the Disciplines Course Guidelines** may be found in the Faculty Book (yellow pages) at: [Faculty Book](https://gustavus.edu/facultybook/)

**Date**: January 11, 2016

## I. Course Information

1. Department: POL
2. Course #: 399
3. Course Title: Senior Seminar
4. Name of Instructor(s); multiple instructors may apply for WRITD designation for a commonly taught course: Chris Gilbert, Richard Leitch, Jill Locke, Mimi Gerstbauer, Alisa Rosenthal, Kate Knutson
5. Has a copy of this proposal been shared with the department chair?

Yes  No

1. Maximum enrollment: 20

The maximum enrollment cap for WRITD courses is 20.

1. Catalog course description:

Senior seminars are required for the major and offered yearly in three subfields of political science: American politics, international relations/comparative politics, and political theory/law. While the specific topics of the courses will vary, all will include the completion of a substantial research paper. Students will be notified of specific course offerings during their junior year and will be placed in a seminar based on their preference. Prerequisite: POL-200. WRITD, Fall and Spring semester.

**II. Writing Conventions**

Although WRITD courses do not require use of a specific style manual, what discipline-specific writing conventions (MLA, APA, etc.) will students be asked to use within this course? APSA guidelines (based on Chicago Style)

**III. Please respond to the following questions** as completely as possible in the space below. Refer to the WRITD course criteria in **section 2.2.2 (yellow pages)** of the Faculty Book found at the link listed at the top of this form.

1. WRITD courses require students to search for at least some of the texts, data, artifacts, artworks, etc. that they will be writing about, or to generate their own data (through interviews, experiments, observations, composition, etc.). **Describe one assignment or activity that will help students search for or generate their own data or texts.**  The senior seminar is a capstone course for the major that requires students to produce a 25-30 page research paper or critical essay based on original data collection and/or analysis. The specific texts and data used in each of the seminars differs based on the topic of the course, with some seminars focused more heavily on collection and analysis of original data and others focused more heavily on analysis of historic or contemporary texts. Two examples illustrate these different approaches. In Kate Knutson's seminar, students collect quantitative and/or qualitative data based on a research question they propose. Data in this class might include interviews, campagin donations, campaign advertisments, or media coverage. Students write a prospectus that requires they propose an appropriate data collection method. The proposed methodology is refined through discussions in class and with the professor over several weeks. In contrast, in Jill Locke's seminar, which focuses more on original analysis of historic and contemporary texts, students learn to search for relevant text through a weekly reading response assignment in which they are asked to submit an annotated list of 3-5 readings that are related to the assigned reading. Through this assignment, students develop skill in identifying relevant sources and placing them in conversation with course texts.
2. WRITD courses should develop students’ ability to find, evaluate, and incorporate outside source material into their writing. **Describe one assignment that will require students to find, evaluate, and incorporate outside source material into their writing.** All of the seminar sections emphasize finding, evaluating, and incorporating outside source material into the final seminar paper. Many faculty include a prospectus or literature review assignment that requires students to work with outside source material. In Mimi Gerstbauer's seminar, for example, students write a prospectus before the first full draft of the seminar paper. This assignment requires that students demonstrate how their research question and argument fit into existing scholarly literature and asks students to assess whether they have the types of evidence and variety of sources needed to support their argument. Both Alisa Rosenthal and Kate Knutson use an in-class activity to teach students how to work with multiple sources in preparation for writing a literature review. Students use separate notecards for each of the sources they have identified in their research and then group the sources together thematically. The notecards allow students to move sources around and work with multiple themes in an effort to identify the multiple ways in which the sources fit together. The exercise helps students identify the scholarly conversations surrounding their research topics and incorporate the arguments into a coherent narrative.
3. WRITD courses should require students to complete one or more major assignments in stages, with revision cycles, before final grading. **Describe one example of such an assignment, including its revision cycle.**

All of the seminar sections use a process-based approach to the final seminar paper. Students submit several scaffolded assignments such as a research question, proposal, annotated bibliography, literature review, and multiple drafts of the full paper. These assignments are generally spaced throughout the semester so that students can utilize feedback from faculty and peers. For example, in Chris Gilbert's seminar, students submit a topic statement in the third week, a list of sources in week four, and an outline of their research question and general argument in week six. Students then write an annotated bibliography and begin submitting portions of the final paper over the next few weeks. Chris provides students with feedback on these assignments along the way and students also receive feedback from peer review groups. In Richard Leitch's seminar, students write three major papers building off of each other to develop a comparative analysis of a topic. They begin by identifying a specific public policy topic and selecting three countries for analysis in the first paper. The subsequent papers draw students deeper into the anlaysis by focusing on governmental and nongovernmental actors. Each of the papers depends on the analysis developed in the previous papers.

1. WRITD courses ask faculty to spend some class time engaged in activities involved in the writing process. **Describe a strategy or exercise you will use to engage students in the writing process during class.** Senior seminars are usually offered in three hour blocks and faculty generally devote one hour of each class session to the final seminar paper. This may include discussing upcoming assignments, exploring library resources, discussing writing challenges, or conducting a peer review workshop. All of the seminar faculty use a structured peer review process to engage students in the writing process. This often includes assigning students to peer review groups for the duration of the semester. Students will read drafts in advance of class and come prepared with notes about the drafts. In Alisa Rosenthal's section, students work in teams of three. During an hour-long in-class peer review session, two reviewers share their reactions to the draft while the author of the draft takes notes about the comments and has the opportunity to ask questions. This format takes authors out of the role of needing to "defend" their paper because authors are explicitly instructed simply to listen to the feedback and to ask quesitons.

**Submit this form to the Provost’s Office at the following email address:** [**courseproposal@gustavus.edu**](mailto:courseproposal@gustavus.edu)