

DRAFT SYLLABUS

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THESIS OPTION IN THE MSIR PROGRAM AT TROY STATE UNIVERSITY

Students in the Master of Science in International Relations degree program at Troy State University have two program options.

1. Ten Course Option – Students are required to complete ten courses in the program, satisfy all Concentration requirements, and successfully pass a Comprehensive Examination.

2. Thesis Option – Students are required to complete ten courses in the program including the satisfaction of all Concentration requirements. They must then complete two additional courses (POL 6668 and POL 6669), which involve the proposing, research, and writing of a Master's thesis. Students will receive no letter grade for the two thesis courses, only a *pass* or *fail*. Students completing this option are not required to take the Comprehensive Examination.

At the present time, the majority of students in the program choose the Ten Course Option. Nonetheless, some students find that the completion of a thesis is important to them. There are three primary reasons for a student to consider the Thesis Option:

1. They have personal research interests and a research agenda that they would like to fulfill through the preparation of a thesis.
2. They would like to have a substantive, written body of research that they may add to their curriculum vitae demonstrating a particular expertise in a topical issue in the study of International Relations.
3. They plan to pursue scholarship beyond the Master's level in the discipline. Most Ph.D. programs look favorably on a student's application that includes the completion of a Thesis project at the Master's level.

The Master's Thesis Process

The Master's Thesis process involves a number of steps:

1. **Discussion with the MSIR Program Chair** – If the student is considering the Thesis Option, they should contact Dr. Rinehart ASAP (office phone is 334-670-5646). This discussion is best facilitated over the phone rather than through e-mail (although it can be done by the latter, if necessary). Be prepared to discuss what you have in mind and why you would like to pursue this option.

2. **Choice of an Advisor and a Reader** – In the preparation of your thesis, you will eventually be working with two professors in the program. The first of these is your **thesis advisor**. This is both your choice and the professor's choice. You should be prepared to work with someone who shares your research interests and is willing (and has the time) to work with you. The second will be your **reader**. The reader only gets involved with the process once you have completed the final product.
3. **Preparation and approval of the thesis proposal** -- The thesis proposal should present some basic information with respect to the research project that you have in mind:
 - A. What specific research question will I attempt to answer? Or, what hypothesis will I attempt to test?
 - B. What methodology(s) will I employ in answering the question? Will this project utilize quantitative analysis; comparative analysis; field research; surveys; historical analysis?
 - C. Why have I chosen this specific research design?
 - D. Why is this study important?Your thesis advisor must approve your thesis proposal.
4. **Research and writing the thesis** – This will take some time. Thus, you should not register for POL 6668 and POL 6669 in the same term. Spread them out over two terms. This will give you twenty weeks to complete the thesis. Obviously, you will work closely with your advisor during this period.
5. **Submission of the final manuscript to the Reader** – Do this only after you have approval to do so from your advisor.
6. **Defense, Approval, Binding and Submission to the Graduate School** – The procedure for the defense of your thesis will be determined by your advisor, with the approval of the MSIR Program Chair. Generally, this will **not** require you to travel to the main campus.

Once your thesis has been defended and approved by both advisor and reader, you must submit copies and the original to the Graduate School for final review and binding. See the *TSU Thesis Guidelines* for details.