

Completing the Bachelor's Essay in Political Science Policies and Procedures

A bachelor's essay is a two-semester independent original research project designed and conducted under the supervision and guidance of a primary faculty supervisor and a second reader during the course of a student's senior year. It is an opportunity for students to intensively research and write on a topic of particular interest and contribute to the existing scholarship in the area. Final projects should seek to achieve publishable quality. Students interested in undertaking a bachelor's essay should carefully review the policies and procedures outlined below.

1. Students are responsible for the initiation, conduct, and completion of the project. Prior to approaching a faculty member, a topic area should be identified and some thought given to the type of research design a student wishes to undertake.
2. Students must seek out a faculty member to supervise and guide the project. Only full-time faculty members in Political Science may serve as the primary supervisor. Students should be prepared to outline the nature and scope of the desired research project at the first meeting. A second reader is also required. The second reader may be any faculty member at the College of Charleston.
3. Upon gaining agreement from the faculty member to supervise the project, a written proposal is required prior to registering for the class. The bachelor's essay is intended to be a year-long, intensive independent research experience earning 6 academic credits completed in successive semesters. Registration is for POLS 499 and earns 3 credits in each of two semesters. Students must register through the department for POLS 499 by completing submitting the "*Application for enrollment in the Bachelor's Essay*" form and attaching a copy of their degree audit. Two grading options are available to the faculty supervisor, they may award a separate grade for the work done in the first and second semesters or award an IP (In progress) grade for work completed in the first semester, with a final grade submitted for the 6 hours of credit when the project is complete.
4. Students and faculty supervisors should establish a schedule for regular interaction and adopt a set of dates by which draft material is submitted and discussed throughout the year.

Timeline for Political Science Bachelor's Essays that start in the Fall:

- Summer Prior to enrolling: topic selection and preliminary reading
 - September: read, expand reading list and refine topic.
 - October: write research question, consult faculty advisor and seek Internal Review Board approval if necessary, begin work on a research design.
 - Late October/early November: complete draft research design, status report, and participate in a Bachelor's Essay Workshop (*see Workshop section below for details*)
 - Mid to late November: complete research design, begin writing.
 - December – early February: conduct primary research and keep writing.
 - Early February – mid March: complete and submit 2 copies of the First Full Draft of the Bachelor's essay by the second Monday in March to the main office by 4:30 pm.
 - Mid March –mid April: revisions, re-writes, prepare for presentation, visit the Speaking lab.
 - Late April: presentation to peers and faculty (*usually on reading day*)
 - By May 3: Final edits made and three clean copies delivered to the political science main office.
5. Final bachelor's essays are reviewed by the supervising faculty member and the second reader. The supervising faculty member is responsible for assigning a final grade for the work.

The Bachelor's Essay Workshop

These workshops are designed to assist you in refining your research question, developing your research design and anticipating potential obstacles and challenges. All Bachelor's essay students and faculty advisors will participate in one of two workshops. *To facilitate the workshops all students must submit a 2-3 page status report to the faculty member supervising your Bachelors Essay no later than one week before the workshop you are scheduled to attend.*

The status report should include: your name and the title of your project, your research question and a few sentences explaining the significance of the question you pose, a brief summary of major questions and debates on the topic arising from a review of research literature, a draft thesis statement (hypothesis or hypotheses), an explanation of how your research will contribute to existing scholarship in the field and how it advances our understanding of the topic, a brief description of methodologies that you might use (e.g. identifying data, case studies, interviews and oral histories, and other methods) and a description of the current status of the project along with any problems you have encountered or that concern you. Workshop dates and participants will be determined by mid-September each Fall.