Information for Potential Mentors of Justice and Peace Studies (JUPS) Thesis-Writing Seniors

Program on Justice and Peace: http://justiceandpeace.georgetown.edu/

One of the requirements for a Justice and Peace Studies major at Georgetown University is the completion of an undergraduate thesis and the corresponding 3-credit course, JUPS 303. (Note that JUPS minors and certificate students may also elect to complete a thesis.) Over the course of this year, JUPS seniors will meet weekly for workshops on issues such as methodologies, editing, ethics, peer feedback, and library-based research, as well as to support one another in the process of scholarly research and writing, and to share with the broader JUPS community at Georgetown the work that they are undertaking. The JUPS 303 seniors will also work in small peer feedback/editing groups and meet individually with the instructor. Seniors are required not only to write a thesis, but also to present it in some manner; possibilities include facilitating a class session, teaching at a local school/church, presenting at a conference, organizing a group event, etc.

If you are reading this memo, then you likely have been approached by a JUPS senior for your advisement. You should expect that the student has come prepared with a list of relevant courses taken in preparation for the project, a thesis proposal, a working bibliography, and confidence that you can be helpful to their efforts. The JUPS program has prepared this memo in the hope of clarifying for all constituents the role of a thesis mentor in order to provide some uniformity to the experience of students in the program. The JUPS program asks you to accept the mentor role if you are familiar and comfortable with the proposed topic and also have the time to mentor. In general, the mentor’s initial task is to provide information regarding research sources – particularly current books, articles, and journals that are relevant to the project. It is not necessary for you to be an expert in this particular topic or field, only that you are able to guide and provide structure for the student’s efforts. In our experience, the most effective mentors are those who ask JUPS seniors questions that move their thinking and writing forward.

The JUPS 303 Senior Seminar course meets weekly during the fall term, but the thesis process generally covers the fall and spring semesters (exceptions would be for students graduating in December). The final grade for JUPS 303 is awarded retroactively after completion of the thesis in the spring. Thus, a student receives an “IP” (in progress) grade for the course on their fall transcript. Upon thesis completion, the grade is changed to a final letter grade.

The JUPS thesis tends to be at least 60 pages, although this length depends on the methodology, research questions, and format of the project. The role of the mentor varies from student to student, thesis to thesis. At the very least, the thesis mentor commits to reading a full thesis turned in by the student no later than mid-March and then submits feedback to the student no later than early April. The student revises and re-submits the thesis to the mentor, and the mentor submits the grade by mid-April. However, the mentor-student relationship can take various forms, is flexible, and will in most cases be more dynamic than simply reading and grading a final written thesis. In previous cases, for instance: the mentor and student created a chapter-by-chapter feedback plan managed through email; the mentor and student met on a regular schedule to discuss drafts, concerns, and issues; the student’s thesis was complementary to the mentor’s research and thus advisement was delivered through other venues (project meetings, conferences, community events, etc.); or the student and mentor met on an “as-needed/requested” basis as determined by the student. It is the responsibility of the mentor and student to create and agree upon a plan that both parties can honor.

Students are advised to prepare themselves to address and seek the mentor’s assistance in the following areas:

- difficulties encountered in finding and incorporating relevant and useful sources;
- focusing, clarifying, and augmenting the specific question and scope of the paper;
- assessing the logic of arguments developed as pertaining to the research and data presented;
- discussing possible counterarguments and developing ways to address and respond to them;
- exploring potential venues for presentation, publication, or other forms of public articulation.
The JUPS faculty, program director, administrator, and Senior Seminar instructor are available to support JUPS 303 students in their thesis process, serving as a complement to the thesis mentor. Toward the end of the fall term, we will hold a Mentor Appreciation Dinner, and at the end of the spring semester there will be a concluding Senior Luncheon (to which mentors are invited) to honor JUPS graduates (specific dates TBA).

Please know that your service as a JUPS Thesis Mentor is greatly appreciated by the program! We consider mentorship to be a foundational component of the program’s ethos. In that light, we offer the following:

**Is a JUPS thesis different from any another undergraduate thesis?**

In general, the Program on Justice and Peace gives a great deal of academic freedom (and responsibility) to the thesis mentors. Similarly, we give our seniors great freedom. There is no set guideline for what a thesis looks like, except that it should be the equivalent of at least 60 pages. The theses come in a wide range of writing styles and formats, and the style/voice/format depends on the student’s particular topic and mode of inquiry. At the same time, we expect students to adhere to all academic standards and produce scholarship of the highest quality. Some specific areas to consider in evaluating JUPS student work may include (additional information on evaluation guidelines will be provided at a later date):

- **Grammar and structure**: Mentors often give feedback on grammar and structure, and expect students to take that into consideration for their final product. A mentor’s primary job, however, is not to be an editor. Seniors should get editing/grammar help elsewhere if the need exceeds the mentor’s capacity. A JUPS thesis should balance substance and style to comprise an effective final product.

- **JUPS framework**: The transdisciplinary field of Justice and Peace Studies is normative and thus value-laden. Some of the major values that undergird our teaching/research in the JUPS program are Nonviolence, Social Justice, Conflict Transformation, and Restorative Justice. Against this backdrop, the specific framework or “lens” that the student is using should be clear and consistent. It might come appear to some readers unfamiliar with the field as being “subjective” or “biased” – but the JUPS framework inherently values-oriented and is about respecting the potential and dignity of all people and cultures.

- **JUPS positionality**: Given the JUPS framework, thesis students need to be clear on their positionality – that is, both their methodologies and “who they are” as it impacts how and what they research. Students are encouraged to blend personal voice with scholarly investigations of their topics. The location of the research with regard to the subject of inquiry is critical to evaluating the work, representing a dynamic that is reflexive, iterative, and process-oriented.

- **Process**: JUPS students know that their process (meeting with mentor, responding to feedback, being in touch, taking responsibility, meeting deadlines, working with others) all affects the final product. In the JUPS program, we emphasize the notion of “peaceful ends through peaceful means” – and the same holds true for research: “peace research through peaceful methods.”

Again, on behalf of the entire JUPS program, we are incredibly grateful for your service as a thesis mentor!

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