

**POL 214A**  
**Fall 2022**  
**Ben Highton**  
**Course Description (9/16/22 version)**

The primary purpose of POL214 is for you to prepare to pass your Qualifying Exam (QE) in Spring 2023.<sup>1</sup> Some landmarks along the way are:

1. Selecting a POL214 faculty advisor to supervise you work on your QE paper
2. Putting together a QE committee
3. Writing the penultimate draft of your QE paper
4. Orally & visually presenting your QE research to the department
5. Incorporating feedback on your QE research into the final version of your QE paper.<sup>2</sup>

Success depends on your engaging in extensive, self-directed, individual work—much more than in a typical graduate seminar and over a longer period of time. This usually requires a change in mindset from your early years in graduate school when you were primarily doing coursework. Yes, your faculty advisor and I will provide guidance and feedback. And, yes, the assignments provide some scaffolding for you. Nevertheless, and ultimately, success depends primarily on the time you put in and the quality of your work.

#### Students with Disabilities

I will be happy to accommodate students with disabilities, and campus policy requires working through the [Student Disability Center \(SDC\)](#). If you need academic accommodations, please submit your SDC Letter of Accommodation to me as soon as possible, ideally within the first two weeks of the quarter. If you have any questions, please let me know.

#### Grades

Your grade in POL 214A will be based on a series of assignments designed to facilitate progress on your QE paper and planning for your QE exam. The specifics will be developed after I meet you and become familiar with your interests. In general, you can expect to be writing annotated bibliographies, literature reviews, preliminary research designs, final research designs, progress memos, etc. And, please note that only in exceptional circumstances will late assignments be graded without a penalty.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the purposes this course is *not* intended to serve are: (a) producing a paper suitable for publication in a scholarly journal, (b) developing a dissertation idea, let alone (c) writing a draft of a dissertation chapter. It is possible one of these things may happen, but “simply” accomplishing the stated purpose is sufficient. And, it is also the case that attempting to use this course for (a), (b), or (c) *may* be counterproductive to the primary goal.

<sup>2</sup> What does a final version of QE paper look like? It resembles in many ways (e.g., length, structure, organization, data, and analysis) a journal article found in scholarly political science journals (e.g., *American Political Science Review*, *Political Behavior*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *Political Theory*).

**POL 214B – Winter 2023**  
**Ben Highton**  
**Course Description (1/5/2023)**

As you know, the primary purpose of POL 214 is for you to prepare to pass your Qualifying Exam (QE) in late Winter or early Spring 2023.<sup>1</sup>

Timeline

- January 9: Class meeting. Prepare a very short (5-minute) presentation on one interesting aspect of your project (not an overall update or complete presentation of your project). Note: What I will be looking for is evidence of continued progress from December.
- January 27: Draft of results section due. [Theorists produce a draft of something new, not just revisions from last quarter.]
- By January 30:
  - Schedule and meet with me to discuss the status of your projects.
  - Finalize your QE committee by selecting your outside member
- February 13: Penultimate QE paper draft due
- February 13-16: Oral presentations [POL 214 students are expected to attend all the presentations unless they have scheduling conflicts discussed with me in advance.]
- By February 27: Finalize scheduling your QE exam for March or April.
- March 17: Final QE paper & revision memo due

Students with Disabilities

I will be happy to accommodate students with disabilities by working through the [Student Disability Center \(SDC\)](#). If you need academic accommodations, please submit your SDC Letter of Accommodation to me as soon as possible, ideally within the first two weeks of the quarter. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Grades

Your grade in POL 214 (A&B) will be based on all of the assignments in the fall and winter quarters, with the greatest weight being placed on the final QE paper. Like in Fall, please note that only in exceptional circumstances will late assignments be graded without a penalty.

Examples

If you want to see some actual examples of QE papers, you can read them here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14y5avIVQzsgWyOr86w8iNiPrCCT1BE4A?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14y5avIVQzsgWyOr86w8iNiPrCCT1BE4A?usp=share_link)

Finally (for now)

For obvious reasons, you should read the following document carefully.

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<sup>1</sup> Reminder: Success depends on your continuing to engage in extensive, self-directed, individual work—much more than in a typical graduate seminar and over a longer period of time. This usually requires a change in mindset from your early years in graduate school when you were primarily doing coursework. Yes, your faculty advisor and I will provide guidance and feedback. Nevertheless, and ultimately, success depends on the time you put in and the quality of your work.

## UC Davis Political Science Department Qualifying Examinations

*Updated Spring 2022*

### Overview

After all the other degree requirements but the dissertation are met, students are required to pass a qualifying examination by the last day of instruction of the Spring Quarter of their third year in the program (although they are strongly encouraged to complete it by the end of Winter Quarter of their third year). This exam consists of an oral presentation of (1) an independent research paper and (2) steps the student has taken to address committee members' comments on an earlier draft of that research paper. After the committee confers about and reports their assessment of the student's performance on the QE, students continuing in the program are encouraged to use the remainder of their scheduled QE time to brainstorm with their committee about the student's future research and professional plans, including the dissertation.

### Guiding Philosophy

Whereas the comprehensive exams test students on their demonstration of knowledge of the literature, the Qualifying Examination tests students on their demonstration of ability to conduct professional research and to respond to constructive criticism of that research.

### Timeline

- Fall of student's third year:
  - Take first quarter of 214.
  - By end of Fall Quarter: select QE committee based on which faculty members seem (at the time) best positioned to help the student through their dissertation work. Note that per university policy the QE chair can \*not\* be the faculty member that the student intends to have as dissertation chair, but the intended dissertation chair can be on the QE committee.
- Winter of student's third year:
  - Take the second quarter of 214.
  - Midway through Winter Quarter, students submit full draft of paper and give the 214 presentation, which is a longer 20-30 minute presentation compared to the shorter 5-10 "conference" presentation that will come in the QE.
  - QE committee members read the draft 214 paper, attend the 214 presentation, and give student a single set of written comments, coordinated through the QE committee chair, including (a) explicit changes that would need to be made for the student to fulfill the QE expectations of demonstrating the ability to conduct professional research and (b) feedback about whether the committee encourages pursuit of the project as part of the student's dissertation. These comments must be delivered to the student within one week of the 214 presentation.
  - Student schedules the QE for the end of Winter Quarter or beginning of Spring Quarter.
  - By end of Winter Quarter (a date set by the 214 instructor to allow grading of papers before quarter grades are due), student submits their QE paper in the form of their final 214 paper.
- Spring of student's third year:
  - If students receive a Not Pass on their QE, they should re-take the QE by the end of Spring Quarter. Students who do not re-take their QE by the last day of instruction of Spring Quarter of their third year will be ineligible for departmental awards. They and their advisor(s) will be notified by email that the student is not in good standing on their degree progress.

### Qualifying Examination Parameters

After an oral presentation, there will be open questioning by the examination committee on the subject matter of the paper and the student's incorporation of earlier comments. To remain in good academic standing, a student must complete this requirement before the last day of instruction in the spring quarter of their third year. This means that any student that does not pass on their first attempt must schedule their second attempt before this deadline. A student who receives a report of "Not Pass" for the qualifying exam will be given one academic quarter to complete satisfactorily this requirement (e.g., a student who receives a "Not Pass" in Spring Quarter of their third year has until the end of Fall Quarter of their fourth year to re-take the exam). A second "Not Pass" will result in a recommendation of termination from the program.

- Written requirements of the QE (to be submitted at least 10 days in advance of the scheduled QE, or earlier if committee members request extra time):
  - QE paper (which must be a revised version of the earlier 214 paper): a completed, independent research paper that adheres to the norms and standards of contemporary, published political science research. For students outside of the political theory subfield, the QE paper should contain one of the following, at the guidance of the QE committee: (1) a completed data analysis, (2) a completed research design with quantitative simulations, or (3) a fully solved formal model. Students in political theory should consult the political theory faculty about what specific elements should be included in their QE papers. The QE paper need not have supportive or publishable results, but in that case, the paper should include a thorough discussion of how the author plans to proceed.
- Oral presentation required by the QE:
  - Conference-style presentation of research paper (5-10 minutes)
  - Short presentation of how student has addressed committee members' feedback from 214 paper
- Committee members will then ask the student (tough) questions about the items above, including questions about the scholarship addressed by the paper (e.g., "Please situate this paper within the relevant literatures") but not "comps-style" questions about academic literatures not directly related to the student's QE paper.
- The student will be evaluated on the quality of the QE presentation, the QE paper itself, how they responded to the committee's feedback on the earlier (214) draft, and how they respond to questions asked by the committee at the QE. Having already passed the comprehensive exams (designed to test a student's knowledge of their particular subfields), the QE is an evaluation of a student's ability to conduct and present research as part of the larger research field.
- Within the exam, once the student and committee have completed the discussion of the QE paper, the QE is over. After the committee confers about and reports their assessment of the student's performance on the QE, students continuing in the program are encouraged to use the remainder of their scheduled QE time to brainstorm with their committee about the student's future research and professional plans, including the dissertation.
- The Qualifying examination committee reports the results of the examination to Graduate Studies, indicating one of the following:
  - Superior/Pass: Recommendation that the student be advanced to candidacy.
  - Not Pass: Committee specifies how deficiencies in the student's performance must be corrected within one academic quarter. Not Pass can be reported only once. If the student fails to complete the requirements set forth, a report of Fail must be submitted to Graduate Studies.
    - The Qualifying Examination Committee advises the student that the examination must be taken within one academic quarter and the Committee will report Not Pass to Graduate Studies with an indication of retake requirements; or
    - If the student has taken the examination twice, the Committee reports Fail to Graduate Studies and recommends termination from the program.
  - Fail: Recommendation that the student be terminated from the program.

### **Committee Composition**

Students are responsible for recruiting their own Qualifying Examination committee of four individuals. One member of the committee must be from outside the UC Davis Political Science graduate program. The committee should be assembled by the end of Fall Quarter of the student's third year. It is the student's responsibility to contact the proposed Qualifying Examination Committee members and to receive their agreement to serve. Typically, most or all of the members of a student's QE committee will continue on to serve as the student's dissertation committee. However, the two committees may not have the same chair. Students should complete and submit the Application for Qualifying Exam during the quarter they successfully pass both field exams. These nominations are submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies for formal appointment in accordance with Graduate Council policy (DDB 80. Graduate Council B.1.). The major professor/dissertation chair may not serve as Chair of the committee. These requirements stem from university guidelines, which state: "No fewer than three members of the QE committee must be voting members of the Academic Senate of University of California which includes Professors, Lecturers with Security of Employment, Professors in Residence and Professors of Clinical " ", and Acting Professors (GC1998-01 Policy on Service on Advanced Degree Committees). In order to ensure that a breadth of knowledge is tested and to provide external oversight, the committee should include at least one committee member who is not a member of the student's graduate program, except when the program has an approved exception. In cases where a student is completing a Designated Emphasis (DE), at least one committee member must be affiliated with the DE (GC1988-01 Designated Emphasis Policy and Proposal Guidelines), in order to ensure that there is dedicated examination of DE topics."