I. Course Overview and Objective
This course is designed to help you make consistent progress on your master’s thesis throughout the semester, as well as to provide structure during the writing process. The master’s thesis, upon completion, should answer a fundamental research question in the subject matter of your choice. It should be an academic paper based on data that you can acquire, clean, and analyze within a single semester, with an emphasis on clarity and policy relevance.

Remember that your thesis is not designed to be the crowning achievement of your career. If you find that the scale of your topic is too great, please choose a limited number of research questions to explore for the master’s thesis. Keep in mind that your time is limited!

Early semester homework: Selecting a topic of interest is often the most difficult part of writing an academic paper, but deciding on the data you will be using is a significant step towards completing a satisfactory dissertation project. We will discuss your data before exploring plausible research designs. If you have elected to change topics from the literature review you prepared for G4010, let me know and begin researching other ideas so that you are prepared to move quickly through the semester.

II. Course Requirements & Grading
All written work must be original and produced exclusively for this class. You are expected to follow the University’s guidelines for the submission of written work. All students are required to make an appointment with the Columbia Writing Center and attend a consulting session at some point during the semester. Please visit: columbia.mywconline.net

The final grade for the course will be based on your successful completion of each of the following requirements:

1. Assignments (10%) – Throughout the semester, you will be required to complete five assignments that will contribute to your final thesis. All assignments are due by 12:00 pm on the due date. Regardless of when you plan to graduate (more on this below), you will be required to submit all five assignments by their respective due dates. Extensions will rarely be given, and will only be granted for unexpected emergencies. All assignments are due on the given due date, and one point will be docked off for every late day. Please upload the assignment as a word document on Courseworks. In addition to uploading the file, send a copy to your peer reviewer via email.
2. **Peer Reviews (5%)** – Peer reviewing will be an integral part of this course. Learning to edit and review others’ work is essential in social science research, and the process can teach you much about your own work as well. Peer reviewers will be assigned after the first class and will be responsible for helping you meet the requirements for all assignments in preparation for the final thesis submission.

All peer-reviewed assignments are due by 12:00 pm on the due date. Please upload the peer review assignment as a Word document on Courseworks. Reviewed papers must contain a minimum of five substantive comments or suggestions. The focus is less on grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors, but on clarity of ideas, suggestions for references or analytical techniques, and new ideas or suggested directions.

It is imperative that you send your assignment to your peer via email simultaneously with your submission on Coursework. Once you have made your edits and comments on your peer’s work (using Word’s tracked changes feature), please upload your peer’s assignment on Coursework, the deadline for submitting peer reviews are one week after the original assignment deadline.

3. **Class Participation (5%)** – Attendance to all class sessions is mandatory and reading assignments are to be completed before each class session. All reading assignments will be available on CourseWorks. Please contact me in case of an emergency.

4. **Final Thesis (80%)** – All course assignments will lead to your final thesis. Your final thesis should be between 40-45 pages in length (double-spaced, including all figures and tables). Half of your final thesis grade will be provided by your advisor, I will grade the other half.

III. **Class Meetings**
We will have a total of thirteen class sessions

**Session Group 1. Talking about your data**

Session 1 **September 6th**  
Session 2 **September 13th**

**ASSIGNMENT 1 (Data source and description),** Due September 13  
**PEER REVIEW 1,** Due September 20

**Session Group 2. Literature pertaining to your data**

Session 3 **September 20nd**  
Session 4 **September 27th**

**ASSIGNMENT 2 (Literature Review and Concept Selection),** Due September 27  
**PEER REVIEW 2,** Due October 4th

**Session Group 3. Your research design**
Session 5 October 4th
Session 6 October 11th

ASSIGNMENT 3 (Research Design), Due October 11th
PEER REVIEW 3, Due October 18th

Session Group 4. The results of your research design/data analysis

Session 7 October 18th
Session 8 October 25th
Session 9 November 1st

ASSIGNMENT 4 (Data Analysis Results), Due November 1st
PEER REVIEW 4, Due November 8th

Session Group 5. Organizing your writing

* No School November 8th, go vote if you are eligible but do work on your thesis
Session 10 November 15th

ASSIGNMENT 5 (Discussion of the Findings), Due November 15th
PEER REVIEW 5, Due November 22nd

Session Group 6. Presenting your thesis

Session 11 November 22nd, First group
Session 12 November 29th, Second group
Session 13 December 6th, Third group

IV. Assignments

NOTE: Please use formatting guidelines in your Master’s Thesis Guide.

Assignment 1 (Due September 13) – (Data source and description)
- 1000-word summary of your data source, and expected research plan, include data showcases if available

Assignment 2 (Due September 27) – (Literature Review and Concept Selection)

1000-word literature review based on your G4010 final paper (or an alternate outline of the works that you plan to use). Outline the connection with the data source you proposed in Assignment 1.

Assignment 3 (Due October 11) – (Research Design) Data and Descriptive Statistics
- 1000-word summary of your research design, and expected results—use examples from the data source in Assignment 1 and 2

**Assignment 4 (Due November 1st) – (Data Analysis Results) Methods of Analysis**
- 1000-word summary of the results of the design, and/or descriptive statistics.

**Assignment 5 (Due November 15) – (Discussion of the Findings) Results and Implications**
- 1000-word summary to discuss the results of your analysis and policy implications.
  Highlight the answers to your original research questions.
- Initial demonstration of your analysis results

**Master’s Thesis FINAL VERSION Due on December 13th, 2016**

**For students who choose to defer graduation to May 2016:**
You must notify Meghan and me by November 1st that you plan to defer your graduation. You will be expected to attend all remaining class sessions and complete the first three assignments. For the final two assignments, you will be expected to review your peer partner’s work in the fall, and then submit your own work during the spring semester.