

AGU Department of Political Science and International Relations

POLS 421 Capstone II

INSTRUCTOR RECORD

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Office	BA115
Office Hours	Thursday 15:00 – 17:00 or by appointment

COURSE COORDINATOR

Name	Çağlar Kurç
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Office Hours	Thursday 15:00 – 17:00 or by appointment

COURSE RECORD

Code	POLS 421 (2)
Name	Capstone Project II
Hour per week	2 (2+0)
Credit	2
ECTS	6
Level/Year	Undergraduate
Semester	Spring 2026
Type	Compulsory
Classroom	Thursday 16:00 – 17:45 @F0D09 / BA115

Prerequisites	None
Special Conditions	You should have access to CANVAS and MSTeams

Webpage	For this course, we will be using the CANVAS Course Website. You will access the course syllabus and materials from CANVAS, including links to related websites, assignments, articles, etc. You are responsible for checking Canvas regularly. All the announcements will be posted to CANVAS. Information about exams and assignment grades will also be available on this site.
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Content	This course simulates a research and publishing cycle to familiarize students with the independent research and publishing process. Thus, the course aims to improve students' ability to conduct independent research, write a publishable research paper, and go through feedback, revision, and submission processes. The course provides an opportunity for students to explore issues that intrigue them but have not found time and opportunity to explore. Students are expected to build on the knowledge that they gathered throughout their undergraduate education. Furthermore, students will present their work and get peer feedback as well as feedback from selected referees. Students will experience a complete research and publishing cycle at the end of the course.
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Objectives	Beyond contributing to the general development of students' intellectual maturity and abilities, the more specific objectives of the course include; 1. Improving students' independent research skills in the social sciences. 2. Fostering writing skills. 3. Developing project management skills. 4. Fostering originality.
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Learning Outcomes	This course will also help students: LO1: Improve their knowledge of Political Science and International Relations. LO2: Manage a project effectively. LO3: Utilize appropriate methods for testing and evaluating the data. LO4: Apply theoretical and empirical knowledge. LO5: Demonstrate strong critical analytical skills.
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Teaching Methodology	This course is based on weekly meetings, research proposal submissions, peer evaluations, presentations, referee evaluations, and a completed manuscript. The
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AGU Department of Political Science and International Relations

POLS 421 Capstone II

	lecturer and the student will discuss the research progress during the face-to-face meetings. Students are also expected to provide a research proposal at the beginning of the semester, as well as several draft works and completed manuscripts. Furthermore, students will present their work and get feedback from their peers.
Requirements	Attendance is mandatory

ASSESSMENT

Evaluation Criteria	Weight (%)	Dates
Final Manuscript	25%	Jun 11
Draft Manuscript	15%	April 16
Presentation	10%	March 26
Peer Feedback	10%	April 02
Reviewer Manuscript	15%	May 07
Progress Meetings	10%	Biweekly
Research Proposal	15%	March 02
Total		100%

For a detailed description of the grading policy and scale, please refer to the website at <https://goo.gl/HbPM2,y>, section 28.

ASSESSMENT EXPLANATION

Manuscripts A manuscript goes through several revisions before it is published. It is an integral part of the publishing process. Since this course aims to replicate the publishing process, the student papers will also go through several revisions in parallel with feedback that the manuscript gets from peers and reviewers. Thus, students are expected to prepare two drafts and a final manuscript, which could be submitted to an undergraduate journal. The final manuscript should be publishable in an undergraduate journal.

Rubrics are available on Canvas. In general, however, manuscripts are expected to have the basics of a published work, a clear research question, a discussion of the literature, a discussion of the research method, and an argument supported by data/evidence.

Students can use previously written papers (i.e., research papers for another course). But, even if the students already have a paper (written for another course, for example), all students had to go through the publishing process that the course lays out.

A list of undergraduate journals is available on Canvas if students want to submit their manuscripts to a journal. However, the course does not require students to submit to a journal.

Since each journal has different requirements for length and style, the course uses an average word limit and widely used style. Students are expected to abide by the word limit and style rules.

Rules for Manuscripts

Word Limit: 5000 – 9000 words (draft manuscripts could be slightly lower than the limit)

- References and tables are included; the abstract is not included

Style Rules:

- Use the Taylor and Francis manuscript layout:

<https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/writing-your-paper/journal-manuscript-layout-guide/>

For Word templates:

POLS 421 Capstone II

<https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/writing-your-paper/formatting-and-templates/>

- Citation: Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition (full note) – footnotes – no bibliography
- Please use Zotero or similar citation management software.
- Every manuscript should have an abstract of between 150 and 200 words.
- Every manuscript should have at least three, at most, five keywords.
- Every manuscript should have a title page.

Please submit your manuscripts in .doc or .docx format.

The first draft will be submitted after the peer reviews and is expected to include suggestions from the peer review, not all but important ones.

The second draft should incorporate the reviewers' recommendations.

The final manuscript should incorporate the course instructor's suggestions.

Late submissions will be accepted only within THREE DAYS, with a 10% penalty for each day. After three days, manuscripts will not be accepted.

Late submissions for the final manuscript will not be accepted.

Meetings and
Advisors

Students will have biweekly meetings with the course instructor. Students will be divided into two groups. Some weeks, the course instructor will meet with all students. During the meetings, students will provide a progress report on their project and consult with the instructor.

Apart from the biweekly meetings with the course instructor, students can also meet with their advisor, depending on the chosen topic. Having a project advisor is optional.

The second advisor could be any Department of Political Science and International Relations member. The students need to reach out to the Department members and have an agreement with the advisor. In this case, the students do not require approval from the course instructor, but the student should inform the instructor regarding the second advisor.

Should the students like to bring an advisor outside of the department and the university, it is subject to approval from the instructor.

Peer Feedback

Students are expected to give peer feedback on others' research projects.

Peer feedback should aim to improve the research project and help students prepare their first draft. Thus, peer feedback should be polite but honest. Only praise does not help anyone. Peer feedback will be evaluated based on their precision and helpfulness. Peer feedback should be between 250-500 words for each presentation.

Late submissions for the peer feedback will not be accepted.

Research Proposal

At the beginning of the semester, students will submit a research proposal. The research proposals must include a research question, a short explanation of why the selected topic is essential, and an outline (presenting the main argument and

POLS 421 Capstone II

supporting arguments). Students can choose any subject as long as it is within Political Science and International Relations.

The instructor will approve the research topic. Unapproved research proposals have to be revised and resubmitted in a week.

Late submissions will be accepted only within THREE DAYS, with a 10% penalty for each day. The research proposal must be submitted for the following manuscripts to be accepted.

Review

The first drafts will be sent out to reviewers. Course instructor will select the reviewers who will be selected among the members of the Department. Their evaluation on the quality of the manuscript will determine the review grade.

Presentations

Students will present the research idea and preliminary findings to their peers. The goal of the presentation is to get the best possible feedback, which would help them in preparing the first draft.

Students are expected to present:

- The Puzzle (why are you interested in researching that topic, what is the missing key in the literature, what is amazing about the topic)
- The research question(s).
- Research method.
- The argument and initial findings

Students will have 10 minutes to present their research. Comments should be provided in written form.

Depending on the number of students, time, and classroom availability, students could be divided into groups and present simultaneously to different instructors. Alternatively, the course could be extended for the presentation week. The specifics will be determined as a group.

Outline of the presentation should be submitted the day before the presentation. Late submissions are not accepted.

ETHICAL RULES AND COURSE POLICY

Course Policies

- English should be used at all times to communicate with one another during instruction hours.
- I do not advise the use of electronic devices during the lecture. Looking at your phone, even if you are skimming through the relevant sources, will negatively affect your concentration and you would not be absorbing what I am saying. If you think that you can multitask, there is scientific evidence that discredits the practices of juggling intellectual engagement with related activities or attempting to perform two intellectual functions at once; studies have discovered measurable degradation of perception and performance when multitasking.
- It is your responsibility to **check CANVAS** regularly. When course announcements are sent via CANVAS, I assume that you read it.

For the AGU Make-up policy, please refer to the website <https://goo.gl/HbPM2y> section 26.

AGU Department of Political Science and International Relations

POLS 421 Capstone II

Attendance Policy	• If you are late to the class less than or equal to 15 mins, please do not hesitate to enter. However, please be polite and try not to disturb the ones in the class. • If you are late more than 15 mins, please wait until the break. • Please, respect the allotted times provided for breaks. • Class attendance is mandatory. At least 70% attendance is required. Failing to have at least 70% attendance will result in NA. • Class attendance is strongly recommended and will count toward your participation grade. Regular class time will include informal assessment activities for which points will be assigned. Participation in these activities will help you prepare for exams and homework and also provide me with feedback on your progress. For a detailed description of AGU attendance policy, please refer to the website at https://goo.gl/HbPM2y section 25.
Email Policy	When contacting the instructor, please use the AGU email. Please do not use other means like Canvas to reach me. I regularly check my emails but not the others. Please include the class and section number in the subject line when emailing. If this information is not included, your email may not be answered. Any announcements or warnings will be sent to your AGU e-mail. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every student to read their AGU e-mails regularly. AGU webmail can be accessed through https://mail.agu.edu.tr If you have any problems or questions concerning the course, please feel free to contact the lecturer. The inquiries will be answered within three business days. If unanswered, please assume your email has been marked as spam. In this case, please inform the lecturer after the class. Depending on the urgency, the response time could be shorter. If you send emails after 10:00 PM, please do not expect a quick answer. I will probably see your email next morning.
Cheating & Plagiarism	You are responsible for knowing the University policies on cheating and plagiarism. Not giving credit to someone for their intellectual work and passing it off as your own is stealing. Specifically: • Copying or allowing someone to copy your work on an exam, homework, or in-class assignment is cheating. • Cutting and pasting material from the web or any other electronic source is plagiarism. • Copying and turning in the same assignment as someone else from this or another class is cheating. Unless explicitly told otherwise, you can discuss and problem-solve on homework together. Still, the final product has to be your own – not just your handwriting but your way of explaining and organizing your ideas. • Making superficial changes (minor additions, deletions, word changes, tense changes, etc.) to material obtained from another person, the web, a book, a magazine, a song, etc., and not citing the work is plagiarism. The idea is the intellectual property, not the specific format in which it appears (e.g., you wouldn't reword Einstein's theory of relativity and imply that relativity was your idea, would you?) • If you find material and it is precisely what you are trying to say, or you want to discuss someone's idea, give the person credit and cite it appropriately. Don't overuse citations and quotes: instructors want to know how you think and reason, not how someone else does.

POLS 421 Capstone II

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- If you have any questions or concerns about whether your behavior could be interpreted as plagiarism, please ask the assistants or me before you submit the work.

For a detailed description of AGU policies, please refer to the website at <https://goo.gl/FjLhzH>

AI Policy

AI use is encouraged with certain tasks but not permitted for certain activities.

AI tools may be used in this course for certain tasks. You are invited to use AI platforms to help *prepare* for assignments and projects, e.g., to help with brainstorming. I also welcome you to utilize AI tools to help *revise and edit* your work, e.g., to help spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs or to fix citations.

Additional activities where AI (e.g., chatGPT) is **permitted** may include:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas
- Fine-tuning your research questions
- Finding information on your topic
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is **not permitted** in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat.
- Completing group work that your group has assigned you unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool.
- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI prompt. You are still responsible for fact-checking and verifying information. Your use of AI tools must be appropriately documented and cited to stay within AGU's policies on academic honesty. Text generated using ChatGPT should include a citation that aligns with specific assignment guidelines regarding citation expectations. Please get in touch with your course instructor if you have questions about AI use or citation before submitting coursework. Submitting AI-generated work without identifying it as such will violate AGU's Academic Integrity Policy. A lack of compliance with course expectations regarding AI usage may negatively impact assignments or course grades.

Flexibility

Although much thought and planning were put into the course schedule included in the syllabus, the schedule could change as necessary to adapt to the specific needs of the class. Occasional departures from the schedule, such as additional readings, assignments, and activities, may be announced in class and canvas during the semester. If possible, any change to the course schedule will be discussed with students to find most suitable solution for all parties. Therefore, it is each student's responsibility to be in class, on time, and paying attention in order to keep up-to-date with whatever changes are made in the schedule.

Feedback

Your comments and suggestions are very important and will be taken into consideration during the course. Please do not hesitate to provide feedback about the course. You can give your feedback during class, at office hours, or through e-mail.

AGU Department of Political Science and International Relations

POLS 421 Capstone II

COURSE LOAD

Activity	Duration	Quantity	Workload
Manuscript (writing)	25	3	75
Research	6	13	78
Peer Feedback	2	1	2
Presentation (incl. preparation)	4	1	4
Research Proposal (writing)	5	1	5
Meetings	2	8	16
Total:			180

ECTS: 6 (Workload/30 per ECTS)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

W	Date	Topic	Activities/Assignments
1	Feb 19	Introduction (All Sections)	@F0D09
2	Feb 26	Meeting (All Groups)	BA115 – Individual research topic discussion
3	Mar 05	Meeting (Group A)	Research Proposal submission (Mar 2)
4	Mar 12	Meeting (Group B)	
5	Mar 19	Spring Break – Ramadan Holiday	
6	Mar 26	Meeting (All Groups)	Presentations (rooms will be announced)
7	Apr 02	Meeting (All Groups)	Peer feedback submission
8	Apr 09	Fall Break	
9	Apr 16	Meeting (GA)	First Draft submission
10	Apr 25	Meeting (GB)	No meeting on National Sovereignty and Children's Day
11	Apr 30	Meeting (GA)	
12	May 07	Meeting (GB)	Reviewer manuscript
13	May 14	Meeting (GA)	
14	May 21	Meeting (GB)	
15	May 28	Sacrifice Feast Holiday	
16	June 04	Meeting (All Sections)	@Seminar Room A-B-C / Final Manuscript (June 11)

AGU Department of Political Science and International Relations

POLS 421 Capstone II

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter Grade	Quality-point equivalents	Number Grade Range
A	4.00	90 - 100
A -	3.67	87 - 89
B +	3.33	83 - 86
B	3.00	80 - 82
B -	2.67	77 - 79
C +	2.33	73 - 76
C	2.00	70 - 72
C -	1.67	64 - 69
D +	1.33	56 - 63
D -	1.00	50 - 55
F	0.00	0 – 49
NA	0.00	