September 2015

To: Second Term Seniors in Social Studies
From: Anya Bassett, Director of Social Studies
Re: Titles of Senior Honors Essay Deadline

Please email a title and a short description (no longer than five sentences) of your senior honors essay to Katie Greene (kgreene@fas.harvard.edu) in the Social Studies Office by October 5th, 2015. This list will go out to potential readers. Titles should clearly indicate the subject of the essay, and descriptions should cover methodology and general approach. Please note your title may change for the final version of your thesis.

Below please find four sample paragraphs:

**Paul Linden-Retek**

*Public Responsibility, Solidarity, and Citizenship: Vaclav Havel and Jurgen Habermas on Morality and Democratic Politics*

This thesis explores the common conceptual ground in the works of Vaclav Havel and Jurgen Habermas. The contributions of the former dissident and Czech President in the fields of moral philosophy, social theory, and democratic theory have yet to be thoroughly analyzed and treated as a coherent philosophical program. To understand more fully Havel's place within the contemporary discourse on responsibility, solidarity, and democracy, I provide a close study of the way in which his theory approaches and serves to supplement Habermas's conceptions of legitimation crisis, the colonization of the lifeworld, discourse ethics, and deliberative democracy. This thesis, including serious consideration of Havel's literary (in addition to political) works and incorporating analysis of thinkers such as Czech philosopher Jan Patocka, Hannah Arendt, and Emmanuel Levinas, will show that Havel offers insights that remain relevant and deserve greater attention within modern democratic politics.

**Luke Messac**

*Lazarus at America's Doorstep: Explaining U.S. Federal Appropriations for Global HIV/AIDS Programs*

This thesis evaluates the determinants of U.S. federal appropriations for international HIV/AIDS programs between 2000 and 2006. During this era of Republican Party dominance in the legislature and the executive, appropriations for global AIDS programs increased nearly thirty-fold. Using personal interviews with members of Congress, legislative staffers, civil servants and advocates as well as quantitative analysis of legislative roll call and co-sponsorship data, I compare the explanatory power of historically salient mechanisms for changes in foreign aid spending. I argue that while media coverage, constituent activism, national security and economic interests each played facilitative roles, a key yet oft-ignored determinant of the rise in appropriations was elite advocacy tailored to the worldviews of indifferent or even unsupportive foreign policy agenda-setters. Finally, I will examine the implications of this study on debates about the applicability of the delegate and trustee models of representation to the domestic politics of foreign aid.
Ashley Shuyler  
*Putting the Exam to the Test: Tanzania's National Examination System and Its Consequences for Educational and Economic Development*

This thesis explores the intended and unintended consequences of the system of national examinations in Tanzania's secondary schools, focusing both on educational outcomes and opportunities for economic development. A total of 499 questionnaires were completed by third- and fourth-year secondary students in Tanzania, and 22 focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, parents, and graduates of secondary school. This paper primarily builds upon focus group discussion data to discuss the ways in which examinations shape attitudes toward schooling and classroom practices, and impact socioeconomic outcomes beyond the classroom. Findings reveal that, despite its purported educational aims, the exam instead perpetuates a system in which students do not seek to understand material but rather to mimic and memorize. Consequently, Tanzania's schools are not graduating individuals to the employment sector who have practiced critical thinking or problem-solving skills—the very skills that will enable Tanzania to achieve its objective of participating in the global economy.

Tom Wooten  
*Reviving the Neighborhood: A Comparative Study of Resident-Driven Recovery Efforts in Post-Katrina New Orleans*

My thesis is a comparative study of the recovery efforts of three New Orleans neighborhoods – Broadmoor, Gentilly, and Lakeview – all of which were badly flooded as a result of the levee failures that followed Hurricane Katrina. It is based primarily upon two months of interviews and participant observation that I conducted in these neighborhoods during the summer of 2007. In my thesis, I attempt to explain differences in the three neighborhoods' rates of repopulation, as well as differences between specific recovery outcomes in each of the neighborhoods, such as the rebuilding of schools and the reopening of businesses. I argue that these differences are not solely attributable to "structural" variables such as pre-storm demographics or amount of damage suffered, and that organized resident-driven recovery efforts have had profound effects upon the rate and nature of each neighborhood's recovery. By examining differences in approach and outcome between the neighborhoods' resident-driven recovery efforts, I draw lessons about how neighborhood-based disaster recovery can be effectively undertaken.