

## RESEARCH TOOLS

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Office Hours: Wednesday 18.00-20.00

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### INTRODUCTION:

The first doctoral year is dedicated to writing a rigorous and feasible research proposal. Therefore, the main goal of the present course is to assist students in making the first steps in this process and to familiarize them with the plurality of approaches and methodologies in the social and political science. This course is dedicated to the study of some of the research tools (the logic of comparative analysis and methodology are left to the next semesters). The course has three parts. The first part is the introduction to writing doctoral dissertation and involves acquiring different kinds of “formal” tools of investigation, writing (e.g., a review), and a strategy to get it published (in a journal, as a chapter of a book, as a working paper, etc.)

The second part of this course is dedicated to argument-related research tools. It provides for understanding of different types of fallacies, the right way of critical reasoning and developing an argument. It also tackles such questions as “what is a concept?”, “how to formulate a research question?” etc. This part provides some basic conceptual tools for getting the research proposal started. It is meant to familiarize students with the plurality of methodological approaches to research. Regardless of the differences in methodology and discipline, a rigorous and successful research proposal usually involves the following sections: introduction, a main research question, secondary research questions, conceptual/theoretical framework, description of methodology, of case-studies, data and sources, state of the art, contribution to the field (novelty), plan of study (calendar), etc.

A few last sessions are dedicated to presentations of proposals on writing theses and to an open discussion of these proposals. The last sessions are meant (1) to provide some initial feedback to facilitate the first steps of preparing doctoral proposals and (2) to address questions and problems which might arise in the very beginning of writing doctoral theses.

NOTE: Advanced and specialized courses on how to construct hypotheses, frame them theoretically, to operationalise variables, courses on methodology, etc. will be offered in the next semesters. Students are strongly recommended to attend these courses.

**OBJECTIVES** The objectives of this class are the following:

- 1) To provide the “formal” tools necessary for investigation, writing, presentation, publishing academic work and for starting PhD thesis;
- 2) To provide some of the conceptual tools necessary for writing the research proposal;
- 3) To familiarize students with the plurality of methodological approaches
- 4) And with the plurality and rigor of research of social and political science.

### EVALUATION

50% class assignments and participation in class

30% research proposals (3 pages) and its Power Point presentation

20% final exam

## PLAN

### **PART I: Formal Tools: Writing, Presenting, Publishing**

#### **Session 1 (13 October) *Introduction: The process of research and writing the Thesis***

- 1) *Suggested*: J. E. Mauch, J. W. Birch (1998) *Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: A Handbook for Students and Faculty* 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg, Chapter 1, pp. 1-33.
- 2) *Suggested*: "The research thesis", pp. 1-17 in Paul Oliver (2008) *Writing Your Thesis* SAGE: London, (Chapters 1).
- 3) *Suggested*: "Informed Consent and Other Ethical Concerns: Common Ethical Concerns, Informed Concerned, Bias-Free Writing" in *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* by K. E. Rudestam, R. R. Newton, pp. 196-206

#### **Session 2 (20 October) *Elements of Academic Writing***

- 1) Lynn White "Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article" in *Journal of Marriage and Family*; Nov. 2005, N. 67, 4, p. 791.
- 2) *The Guide to Writing* (Harvard University) Available at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/resources.html>
- 3) D. della Porta and M. Keating (2008) "Introduction" in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralism Perspective* by D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-17
- 4) *Suggested*: D. della Porta and M. Keating (2008) "Comparing approaches, methodologies and methods" in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralism Perspective* by D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), Cambridge University Press, pp. 316-323
- 5) *Suggested*: "Why Are There Different Citation Styles?" Available at <http://www.yale.edu/bass/writing/sources/kinds/principles/why.html>
- 6) *Suggested*: Kate L. Turabian (1996) *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* Chicago: The University of Chicago (Sixth edition)

#### **Session 3 (27 Oct.) *Writing the Proposal, Presenting one's work, Getting published***

- 1) "Publishing findings during preparation of the thesis" in Paul Oliver (2008) *Writing Your Thesis* SAGE: London, Chapter 13, pp. 151-158
- 2) Chapter 3 "Developing the Proposal" and Chapter 4 "Preparation of the proposal" in J. E. Mauch, J. W. Birch (1998) *Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: A Handbook for Students and Faculty* 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg, pp. 63-131.
- 3) W. C. Booth, G. G. Colomb, J. M. Williams (1995), *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 3-6, The University of Chicago Press

- 4) *Suggested*: “Composing an Argumentative Essay” in *A Rulebook for Arguments* by Anthony Weston, 1992, Cambridge, pp. 60-80.
- 5) *Suggested*: “Writing” by J. Veroff in *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* by K. E. Rudestam, R. R. Newton, pp. 145-168.
- 6) *Suggested*: Robert Day “How to Write and Publish Scientific Papers” Available at: [http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0074-02761998000300029&script=sci\\_arttext&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0074-02761998000300029&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en)

## **PART II Tools of Research Design**

### **Session 4 (3 November): *What is a concept?***

- 1) Peter Mair (2008) “Concepts and concept formation” in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralism Perspective* by D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), Cambridge University Press, pp. 177-198
- 2) “The intellectual content of the thesis” pp. 17-30 in Paul Oliver (2008) *Writing Your Thesis* SAGE: London, (Chapters 2).
- 3) David Collier and J. E. Mahon (1993) “Conceptual Stretching Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis” in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (December), pp. 845-855

### **Session 5 (10 November): *What is a relevant research question?***

- 1) “Selecting a suitable topic” in *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* by K. E. Rudestam, R. R. Newton, pp. 9-20.
- 2) G. King, R. Keohane, S. Verba (1994) “Construct Falsifiable Theories” in David de Vaus (edt.) *Research Design* Volume II, SAGE Publications: London, pp. 9-14
- 3) Robert K. Merton (1996) *Notes on Problem-Finding in Sociology*, pp. ix-xxxiv.

### **Session 6 (17 November): *What is an argument?***

- 1) Chapter 3 “Theoretical Statements Relating Two Variables” and Chapter 4 “Theoretical and Operational Linkages” in P. Shoemaker, J. Tankard, and D. Lasorsa (2004), SAGE Publications, pp. 37-65
- 2) Anthony Weston (1992) *A Rulebook for Arguments* by Anthony Weston, 1992, Cambridge, Chapters I-IV, pp. 1-36.
- 3) *Suggested*: Perry Weddle (1978) *Argument: A Guide to Critical Thinking* California State University
- 4) *Suggested*: Anne Thomson (1996) *Critical Reasoning: A Practical Introduction* Routledge: London and New York

**Session 7 (24 November): *What is a hypothesis? What are Fallacies?*  
*Summary of Research Tools***

- 1) "The intellectual content of the thesis" pp. 17-30 in Paul Oliver (2008) *Writing Your Thesis* SAGE: London, (Chapters 2).
- 2) Anthony Weston (1992) *A Rulebook for Arguments* by Anthony Weston, 1992, Cambridge, Chapters V and VI, pp. 37-60.
- 3) Adrienne Héritier (2008) "Causal explanation" in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralism Perspective* by D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-80.
- 4) Philippe Schmitter (2008) "The Design of Social and Political Research" in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralism Perspective* by D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), Cambridge University Press, pp. 263-296.

**PART III: Research Proposals**

Session 8 (1 December) ***Discussion of Research Proposals (I)***

Session 9 (15 December) ***Discussion of Research Proposals (II)***

Session 10 (22 December) FINAL EXAM