

Master Thesis

2015/2016

Code: 42278

ECTS Credits: 10

| Degree | Type | Year | Semester |
|---------------------------|------|------|----------|
| 4313335 Political Science | OB | 0 | 2 |

Contact

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Use of languages

Principal working language: english (eng)

Prerequisites

Before enrolling in the Master Thesis module it is advisable to do the Introduction to Research module.

Remedial reading:

Pollock, P. 2009 *The essentials of political analysis*, Washington: CQ Press, 3rd ed.

Katzer, J. 1998, *Evaluating Information. A Guide for Users of Social Science Research*, Boston: MacGraw Hill

Objectives and Contextualisation

The purpose of the module is to help students to produce a Master Thesis.

The Master's Thesis (MT) is a substantial piece of academic work that proves the student's competence to carry out research autonomously at a Masters level. In the MT students should be able to present:

- a research question related to any of the topics dealt with in the substantive modules of the master,
- a well structured theoretical framework that proves good knowledge of the literature and the debates involved in the research question,
- a suitable research strategy involving methods learned in the methodological modules of the master.

The MT must show that the student is capable of carrying out sound and rigorous academic research and has the ability to evaluate research conducted by others.

Students are encouraged to include their own empirical analysis in their MT.

For further details on what is a master thesis and this module see our Master Thesis Guide.

Skills

- Apply the qualitative and quantitative techniques necessary for the systematic and rigorous analysis of specific aspects of politics today.
- Demonstration reading comprehension for specialist texts in English.
- Design a research project that satisfies the criteria of rigour and academic excellence.
- Design and write projects and technical and academic reports autonomously using the appropriate terminology, arguments and analytical tools in each case.
- Develop leadership skills.
- Generate innovative ideas.

- Identify the main methodological difficulties that arise in political analysis and know how to deal with them using the existing tools.
- Manage a set of political science data and specific sources, such as statistics, surveys or other documents.
- Students should be able to integrate knowledge and face the complexity of making judgements based on information that may be incomplete or limited and includes reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities associated with the application of their knowledge and judgements
- Students should know how to apply the knowledge they have acquired and their capacity for problem solving in new or little known fields within wider (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the area of study
- Students should know how to communicate their conclusions, knowledge and final reasoning that they hold in front of specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
- Using the appropriate criteria make an individual evaluation of reports, documents and research carried out by third parties.

Learning outcomes

1. Define the main concepts involved in the problem and the limitations of their corresponding operationalisation
2. Demonstration reading comprehension for specialist texts in English.
3. Design a research strategy that is adequate for answering the questions proposed.
4. Design and write projects and technical and academic reports autonomously using the appropriate terminology, arguments and analytical tools in each case.
5. Develop leadership skills.
6. Generative innovative ideas.
7. Identify a research question justifying its political and academic relevance.
8. Identify sources of available data to tackle the research questions proposed.
9. Identify techniques adequate for answering the research question proposed and apply them to the available data.
10. Identify the limitations of your conclusions.
11. Position a research question in an academic debate, identifying what is known to date and the limitations of previous works
12. Students should be able to integrate knowledge and face the complexity of making judgements based on information that may be incomplete or limited and includes reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities associated with the application of their knowledge and judgements
13. Students should know how to apply the knowledge they have acquired and their capacity for problem solving in new or little known fields within wider (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the area of study
14. Students should know how to communicate their conclusions, knowledge and final reasoning that they hold in front of specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
15. Using the appropriate criteria make an individual evaluation of reports, documents and research carried out by third parties

Content

MT contents are chosen by students among the topics dealt with in any of the substantive modules of the master. Students are encouraged to develop their own research questions, but can also define a MT in relation with some of the ongoing professors' research projects.

Methodology

The module involves intensive autonomous work by the researcher. Additionally students should attend individual and collective tutorials. Master Theses are defended in public in July and September.

Activities

| Title | Hours | ECTS | Learning outcomes |
|--|-------|------|---|
| Type: Directed | | | |
| Presentation of ongoing MT in collective tutorials | 25 | 1 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 |
| Type: Supervised | | | |
| Individual tutorial sessions | 10 | 0.4 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 |
| Type: Autonomous | | | |
| MT elaboration | 214 | 8.56 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 |

Evaluation

The module MT will involve three assessment components:

- the MT itself (80%)
- the presentation and defence (10%) and
- the participation in collective tutorials (10%).

The MT must prove that the student has:

- Ability to guide research towards the fruitful analysis of a particular relevant question. This will be assessed considering the definition and justification of the research question.
- Knowledge and a critical understanding of the academic debates around this specific question. This will be assessed considering the theoretical framework of the MT.
- Ability to relate theory and empirical analysis. This will be assessed considering the definition of an appropriate research strategy and the data gathered and analyzed.
- Ability to assess other researchers' work. This will be assessed considering how the MT takes into account previous research on the matter and in the students' contribution to collective tutorials.
- Ability to communicate both in writing and orally. This will be assessed considering how the MT is written and defended.

The MT will be evaluated by two professors of the department and will be defended publicly in July or September. A MT can obtain the following marks:

- Excellent (10-9 out of 10): A very well written MT, compelling and original, based on thorough reflection and rigorous analysis, including detailed knowledge of the literature, a solid research design and data analysis appropriate to answer the research question.
- Good (8-7 out of 10): Interesting argument and good knowledge of the literature. Includes a research design and data analysis reasonably appropriate to the question posed.
- Pass (6-5 out of 10): The knowledge of the literature is sufficient but could be improved. Some minor limitations are found in the proposed methodology and/or in the data analysis.
- Fail (4 or less out of 10): Severe problems with the research question, theoretical framework, research design or data analysis.

Evaluation activities

| Title | Weighting | Hours | ECTS | Learning outcomes |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|------|---|
| MT public presentation and defence | 10% | 1 | 0.04 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 |

Bibliography

Hanké, Bob 2009, *Intelligent Research Design*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Dunleavy, Patrick 2003, *Authoring a PhD*, Houndmill: Palgrave

General advice: http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Teaching_and_Learning.htm

How to write an academic paper in political science: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/political-science/>

How to write a dissertation and other tips: http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay_dissertation.html

The illustrated guide to a Ph.D: <http://matt.might.net/articles/phd-school-in-pictures/>