

Master's Dissertation Seminar International Politics (K001073)

Course size (nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)
 Credits 3.0 Study time 90 h Contact hrs 30.0 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2018-2019

Offering	Language	Teaching Method	Hours
A (year)	Dutch	integration seminar	25.0 h
		lecture	5.0 h
B (semester 1)		lecture	5.0 h
		integration seminar	25.0 h
C (semester 2)		lecture	5.0 h
		integration seminar	25.0 h

Lecturers in academic year 2018-2019

Name	Code	Role
Lesage, Dries	PS03	lecturer-in-charge
Biscop, Sven	PS03	co-lecturer
Haesebrouck, Tim	PS03	co-lecturer
Paredis, Erik	PS03	co-lecturer
Van de Graaf, Thijs	PS03	co-lecturer
Vermeiren, Mattias	PS03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2018-2019	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Political Science (main subject International Politics)	3	A, B, C

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Methods and analysis, research, academic writing, project management, presentation and debating skills

Position of the course

This course unit is compulsory for all students enrolled in one of the master's programmes of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences. Students enrolled for their master's dissertation are required to take this course unit during same academic year. The master's dissertation seminar principally consists of small-group sessions. In these sessions, students will discuss methodological and other aspects of their ongoing research. Through these interactive, 'hands on' small-group sessions, this course unit aims to enhance the research skills of the students. In this manner, the course unit aims to complement and integrate the various research skills acquired in the course of their university studies. The master's dissertation seminar aims to help students to conceive their dissertation as a long-term project. In this way, this course unit also aims to train a number of important professional skills, such as the capacity to work cooperatively with peers (i.e. other students) or supervisors and the capacity to maintain a constructive professional relationship with other actors. In addition, at a lower-order level, this course unit also aims to improve the academic writing of students and their their presentation and debating skills.

Contents

This course unit comprises an introductory lecture (15%) and an interactive part (85%). In an introductory lecture, the supervisor will discuss the standards concerning the development and production of social scientific research work, with a particular focus on the most important criteria, challenges and pitfalls which may be encountered in the

process of writing a master's dissertation. The formal assessment criteria in relation to the master's dissertation, as elaborated in the faculty-specific education and examination code, will be explained and illustrated with examples. In addition, the introductory lecture will explain in detail what this course unit expects of the students in terms of cooperation and interaction. This lecture will also specify how this course unit will be assessed. The core of this course unit consists of a number of interactive workshops. Each of these workshops will engage with a number of themes, such as:

- Formulating a research question in relation to contemporary scholarly consensus or debate
- Methods and/or methodology, operationalization, analysis
- Reporting and presenting data or findings [note: this list is not prescriptive, it only suggests some possible themes]

In the course of the academic year, each supervisor will organise a number of workshop sessions (at least three) for his or her master's students. Where appropriate, one or more joint workshop sessions with the students of other supervisors may be organised. These workshops aim to improve the research skills of the students, as well as to enhance the debating and presentation skills. Moreover, the workshops aim to raise the overall quality of the submitted master's dissertations by encouraging students to make a time planning and to start work on their dissertations on time. In these workshop sessions, students will present and discuss their ongoing research. At designated stages, students will be asked to submit via Minerva specific short papers pertaining to their research (see below). The supervisor will specify the desired format and length of these papers.

These papers do not necessarily or exclusively constitute partial drafts of the master's dissertation. Instead, they are 'technical notes', intended to give an outline of a number of methodological, theoretical, analytical or other choices made by students. In this manner, these notes (to be submitted before each workshop) will form the basis of the discussions in the workshops and the ensuing critical reflection and feedback.

These 'technical notes' may be:

- Accounts of decisions made during the research process (justifying pros and cons)
- Annotated tables of contents
- Progress reports
- Descriptive analyses, e.g. to clarify operationalisation decisions
- Statistical analyses or analyses of qualitative data, with a preliminary account of the most important findings or challenges
- Pre-deadline presentations (allowing to identify and redress problem areas)
- A critical reflection on the management of a master's dissertation as a personal, long-term project [note: this list gives a mere indication of possible formats.

The supervisor will specify in advance the format, character and length of each of the 'technical notes' to be submitted. In addition, the assessment modalities (e.g. rewarding participation) of this seminar will be explained in detail via Minerva] Under the guidance of their supervisor, students will read, discuss and give feedback about these submitted 'technical notes'. Where possible, students will be encouraged to present their ongoing research work.

Initial competences

To have successfully completed an academic bachelor's programme, linking programme or preparatory programme which entitles entrance to the master's programme, or, alternatively, having achieved the intended learning objectives in another way. This course unit will be followed in conjunction with the master's dissertation, during the same academic year.

Final competences

Being able to contextualise an operationalisable research question within the international scholarly literature, thereby demonstrating a sound and integrated understanding of the relevant discipline

Being able to select and justify a suitable research strategy and analytical approach to address a research question

Being able to report findings and/or data and to act on feedback in an appropriate manner

Being able to give critical and constructive feedback on theoretical, methodological or other decisions made by peers (i.e. fellow-students)

Being able to present one's theoretical, methodological or other decisions pertaining to the research process and defend these decisions towards peers

Understanding the criteria of the academic field or discipline to assess scholarly work

Being able to manage one's own research project in a conscious and systematic manner

Conditions for credit contract

This course unit cannot be taken via a credit contract

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Lecture, integration seminar

Extra information on the teaching methods

In the introductory lecture, the supervisor will explain the normal criteria employed to assess scholarly work, with particular attention to the formal assessment criteria in relation to the master's dissertation.

However, the principal teaching method will be an 'integration seminar'. The workshop sessions are interactive and are highly dependent on the submissions and interactive cooperation of the students. The workshop sessions are organised in relatively small groups, with guidance by the supervisor. In the first instance, the overall aim of the workshop does not consist of training specific techniques. Rather, the course unit aims to critically integrate the various methodological skills and other competencies which students acquired in the course of their degree programmes.

Learning materials and price

International scholarly literature in relation to the specific methodologies, contents and approaches of the students' master's dissertations.

References

Course content-related study coaching

During the workshops

Communication and interaction via Minerva

Supervisor (or assistant academic staff): by appointment

Evaluation methods

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Participation, assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Students will be assessed on the basis of the papers submitted in relation to the workshops. In addition, attendance and active and constructive participation in the workshops will form part of the assessment. In the introductory lecture, the supervisor will specify the criteria to be employed to assess and grade the active participation of students in the workshops.

Calculation of the examination mark

The submitted papers count towards 60% of the final mark, attendance and active participation in the workshops counts towards 40% of the final mark.

Facilities for Working Students

As a substitute for active participation in the workshops, working students are required to give written comment (via Minerva) on the papers submitted by their fellow-students. The quality of these submitted comments will be the principal alternative to assess the 'active participation' of students.