Thesis Writing Workshop
Mandatory MA 2/2 Course, Fall 2014

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Credits: 0.5 CEU credits, 1 ECTS credits

Classes: five 100-minute meetings with each student attending three as shown in
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-t5Dbz2IUhaEziqRBQOV8kkbwJRX5a9wPPp7VN84Fg/edit#gid=0

Office hours: available time-slots can be booked at http://gabortoka.youcanbook.me/

Course Description
The objective of this seminar is to help preparing MA thesis and think through related issues of
theory, research strategy, methodology, and write-up. Course participants present and discuss the
newly written fieldwork/analysis chapters that they are to submit as part of their half thesis-
length drafts. The in-class discussions are to focus on the choice and formulation of the research
question and the methodology; their justification in terms of relevance, timeliness, and
tractability; the clarity of theory; the translation of the research question into a manageable
research agenda via hypotheses or other means; the suitability of concept formation and
measurement; the identification of appropriate research methods; the appropriateness of
supporting arguments throughout the draft; the structure, quality and readability of figures, tables
and text; and the clarity and implication of the findings.

Learning outcome
- Ability to conceive, elaborate and defend a research plan
- Reason analytically, applying abstract models to complex empirical situations and engage
  with different intellectual traditions, subfields, research designs and methodologies in the
  social sciences
- Ability to design, implement and write up an original academic or applied research in a
  rigorous and consistent manner
- Ability for effective oral presentation of scholarly thoughts, developing listening and
discussion skills
- Ability to harmonize the research plan with the empirical findings, to foresee the
difficulties of empirical research, to integrate unexpected results

Evaluation
This course is meant to help developing your thesis, which will be separately graded anyway.
Therefore your coursework in this seminar will be merely assessed with a pass/fail grade. To
earn a pass grade you need to prepare and deliver your own presentation thoughtfully and within
the given time constraint; make the progress required in the departmental thesis grading policy;
serve as chair (once), discussant (for five or six chapters depending on the allocation of time slots) and assistant note-taker (once) in the subsequent discussions; and help your peers with active and well-prepared participation at their presentations. Active participation means carefully reading and thinking through their drafts beforehand and making comments on them and the presentation as appropriate; i.e. personally contributing to the creation of a stimulating, engaging, focused, supportive, and yet challenging learning environment for all participants in the class. Regarding expectations and assessment methods for the thesis, please see the departmental policies at [http://politicalscience.ceu.hu/departmental-policies-0](http://politicalscience.ceu.hu/departmental-policies-0)

**Your assignments**

Each participant will have five minutes to introduce his/her chapter, situate it within its broader context in the thesis and the literature, and highlight what s/he thinks are the most pressing, salient issues re any further work on the chapter and the thesis as a whole. This will be followed by an approximately 30-minute discussion. Course participants will take turns in chairing discussions, and serving as assistant note-taker and discussants. The chair will have to decide who can speak next and take care of good time keeping (e.g. stop discussants taking too much time while saying not much new or constructive, and make sure that the presenter does not go beyond his/her five minutes in introducing the discussion). The assistant note-taker will help the presenter to remember the content of the discussion about his/her chapter by taking notes of the discussion and then share the notes with the presenter.

**Readings**

It is expected that the in-class discussions will result in recommendations as for further readings, and these recommendations will be posted on the e-learning site of the course. Below you find a set of recommended introductory readings on various topics that we will get to in class at one point or another. To save you time with the library search, I entered the Dewey shelf numbers in front of some entries. You will also find some otherwise hard-to-trace readings uploaded to the e-learning site and should feel free to add to the collection for the benefit of your class mates.

**Epistemology**


**Causality**


### How theories come about


### Concept formation


### Key methodology textbooks and handbooks on the aspiring graduate student’s shelf


**Academic writing, style sheets, prose, illustrations, reference managers**


http://www.academicproductivity.com/ (A specialized site with lots of advice, including reviews of some of the many books about effective academic writing, including:)


http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng/dictio/data/kaiga/55sesshu.html (A great story from the superb website of the Kyoto National Museum that tells you how to write such that your readers will remember it)

**Techniques for literature review and meta-analysis**


