

S4 - Masters Thesis Seminar

Autumn 2025

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Overview

The Master's Thesis Seminar is a year-long course designed to support students in the planning, development, and completion of their Master's thesis in Political Science. The seminar provides a structured and collegial environment in which students receive feedback on their work, engage with the methodological and theoretical foundations of their research, and develop the academic skills necessary for producing a high-quality thesis.

Throughout the year, students will work closely with their supervisor and seminar group to define a clear research question, review relevant literature, develop an appropriate research design, and analyze empirical material. The course emphasizes peer feedback, academic writing, and the presentation of work-in-progress. It is especially useful for students in the "political systems" track, including those focusing on comparative politics, political parties, and research on political attitudes and behavior. In addition, students seeking to conduct quantitative research will find the seminar particularly advantageous.

Objectives

By the end of the seminar, students will be able to:

- Formulate a clear, original, and feasible research question;
- Situate their work within relevant scholarly literature and debates;
- Design and execute an appropriate research strategy;
- Present their research findings in a coherent and well-structured written thesis;
- Provide and incorporate constructive peer and instructor feedback;
- Demonstrate academic integrity and mastery of scholarly conventions.

Additional Learning Objectives

- Ability to critically evaluate scholarly peer-reviewed research.
- Explain the distinctions between conceptualization and operationalization.
- Identify the dependent and independent variables in research studies.
- Identify the unique traits of the different methodological approaches.

General Structure and Expectations

The seminar is organized into several key phases:

- **Autumn Semester:** Focus on literature review, situating the contribution, and research design. Topic selection should already have been completed, but adjustments may occur if needed. Early in the semester, students submit a research proposal and present it for feedback.
- **Late Autumn to Early Spring:** Emphasis on empirical work, analysis, and writing. Students present drafts of their work and receive targeted feedback on their progress.
- **Mid to Late Spring:** Completion and submission of the full thesis. All theses are checked for originality before being submitted for grading.

Tasks

Throughout the seminar, students will be required to complete a series of preparatory tasks tied to key stages of the thesis process. These tasks are intended to support students' progress and to ensure productive seminar discussions. Specific criteria or examples for the tasks will be presented on Moodle to assist you.

All tasks must be submitted on Moodle by the deadline indicated in the meeting schedule. The first task will be discussed collectively as a group, allowing all students to contribute to the initial round of feedback and exchange. For each subsequent task, designated discussants will be assigned in advance. Discussants are expected to read their assigned peer's submission carefully and provide thoughtful, constructive feedback during the seminar session.

These structured discussions are a core component of the seminar and attendance, preparation, and timely submission are required.

Participation

Active participation is a central part of the thesis seminar. Academic research is not only an individual pursuit but also a collaborative and dialogical process. Engaging with others' work through discussion, feedback, and critique helps refine arguments, clarify theoretical frameworks, and inspire new directions. Regular attendance, thoughtful contributions, and constructive peer feedback are therefore essential. Participation in the seminar fosters both the intellectual rigor and the sense of scholarly community that support high-quality research.

Important Information

Thesis Information Links
UTUGradu Instructions

Seminar Schedule

Part I - Getting Started

Task 1: Submit a formalized and testable research question(s). In addition, identify potential sources of data that could be utilized to explore the research question.

Due: 10.09.2025 at 17.00

Meeting 1: Fri 12.09.2025 10.00-12.00 Pub169

Topic: Research Ideas and Thesis Direction

Part II - Research Proposal

Task 2: Submit a 1-2 page research proposal, diagram of the phenomena, literature list, and prepare a 5 minute presentation.

Due: 16.09.2025 at 17.00

Meeting 2: Fri 19.09.2025 10.00-12.00 Pub169

Topic: Thesis Plan

Part III - Analysis of Literature

Task 3: Submit a 7-12 page literature review.

Due: 28.10.2025 at 17.00

Meeting 3: Fri 31.10.2025 10.00-14.00 Pub169

Topic: Gaps in the Literature

Part IV - Research Design and Data

Task 4: Submit a complete research design (and initial data analyses, if possible). Prepare a short presentation.

Due: 04.11.2025 at 17.00

Meeting 4: Fri 07.11.2025 10.00-14.00 Pub169

Topic: Research Design and Data Analysis

Meeting 5: Fri 14.11.2025 10.00-14.00 Pub169

Topic: Research Design and Data Analysis (continued if needed)

Part V - Outlines and Drafts

Task 5: Submit a rough draft of the thesis (does not need to be complete). If not possible, submit a full outline of the thesis paragraph by paragraph.

Due: 18.11.2025 at 17.00

Meeting 6: Fri 21.11.2025 10.00-14.00 Pub169

Topic: Thesis Progress Evaluation

Meeting 7: Fri 28.11.2025 10.00-14.00 Pub169

Topic: Thesis Progress Evaluation