MA Programme in Diplomacy and Global Governance

MA Programme in Peace, Security and Strategic Studies

Course Syllabus

POL497 – Thesis Writing I

Number of ECTS credits: 6
Time and Place: Canvas, Wednesdays 11-13

Contact Details for Professor
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E-mail: caterina.carta@vub.be and stephan.Klose@vub.be
Office hours:

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Course Prerequisites (if any)

POL495
**Course Description**

This course is based on POL 495M (MA thesis & capstone writing) and continues the preparation of the MA theses. The major task of the course is to – in close cooperation with your thesis-supervisor – draft the introduction of your thesis, “Literature Review” and “Conceptional Framework and Methodology”, and start developing your analytical chapter. For this purpose, you write three papers reflecting the three mentioned chapters. Your papers should be based on your work in POL495 and are a continuation of those. You will be asked to present and discuss your projects in peer review sessions with your fellow classmates and to comment on the work of others (peer review).

**Course Learning Objectives (CLO)**

**In terms of knowledge:**
- Demonstrate understanding of the key components of a MA thesis, by structuring and drafting the Introduction, Literature Review and Research Design chapters of their thesis;
- Demonstrate knowledge of selected IR concepts and conceptual debates and real-life global problems, as they apply to research;

**In terms of skills**
- Use appropriate referencing and bibliographic methods;
- Ability to critically present and discuss research strategies and findings in peer-to-peer colloquia;
- Write the draft introduction of their master’s thesis based on a puzzle or problem;
- Identify and structure the relevant theoretical and empirical literature in their field and engage critically with it and to formulate an appropriate literature review.
- Identify, select and apply the relevant methodology to their cases and write a methodology chapter and develop an appropriate research design.

**In terms of attitudes, students should develop in this course:**
- Critical attitudes, which are necessary for “life-long learning”;
- Ability of time and anxiety management;
- An attitude of open-mindedness and self-critical reflection with a view to self-improvement;
- Awareness of the ethical consequences of plagiarising in academic practices.

**LINK BETWEEN PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES, COURSE OBJECTIVES, TEACHING METHODS, ASSIGNMENTS AND FEEDBACK**

**Summary:**

**Number of assignments used in this course:** Four

**Number of Feedback occasions in this course (either written or oral):** Six +
**Number and Types of Teaching Methods:** Lectures, seminars, working groups and Pomodoro sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Objectives</th>
<th>Course Learning objectives addressing the Programme Objectives (testable learning objectives)</th>
<th>Methods used to Teach Course Objectives and numbers/types of assignments used to test these learning objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Knowledge of major theories and core concepts of international relations (IR) and diplomacy and global governance from a Western and global perspective</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of selected IR concepts and conceptual debates and real-life global problems, as they apply to research. Identify and structure the relevant theoretical and empirical literature in their field and engage critically with it and to formulate an appropriate literature review.</td>
<td>During lectures, by means of examples; in the writing process, by embodying relevant literature in the thesis. Written feedback on the introduction and literature review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4. Knowledge of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Tools, skills and frameworks required for graduate research, academic writing and thesis-writing</td>
<td>Identify, select and apply the relevant methodology to their cases and write a methodology chapter and develop an appropriate research design. Use appropriate referencing and bibliographic methods.</td>
<td>During lectures, by means of examples; in the writing process, by embodying relevant methodologies and methods in the thesis. Written feedback on the research design section and the data collection sheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1. Ability to apply interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding to concrete ‘real-life’ issues and challenges in the areas of diplomacy and global governance</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of selected IR concepts and conceptual debates and real-life global problems, as they apply to research.</td>
<td>During lectures, by means of sections on the analytical sections of the thesis; through in class exercises and working groups. Feedback on relevant thesis chapters and works in progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. Ability to confidently develop and apply ideas and arguments emanating from theory, concepts and paradigms in the formulation of academic and/or policy-relevant analyses</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of selected IR concepts and conceptual debates and real-life global problems, as they apply to research.</td>
<td>During lectures, by means of sections on the analytical sections of the thesis; In the process of drafting and writing. Feedback on relevant thesis chapters and works in progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1. Ability to demonstrate and apply critical thinking skills and a critical mindset to the synthesis, evaluation of competing theories of International Relations, diplomacy and global governance</td>
<td>Identify and structure the relevant theoretical and empirical literature in their field and engage critically with it and to formulate an appropriate literature review. Identify, select and apply the relevant methodology to their cases and write a</td>
<td>During the lectures, seminars and in class working groups, by critically and constructively discussing one and others’ works. In the process of drafting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Learning Objectives</td>
<td>Course Learning objectives addressing the Programme Objectives (testable learning objectives)</td>
<td>Methods used to Teach Course Objectives and numbers/types of assignments (used to test these learning objectives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>methodology chapter and develop an appropriate research design and writing. Feedback on relevant thesis chapters and works in progress</td>
<td>In the process of drafting and writing. Feedback on relevant thesis chapters and works in progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**D1. Ability to communicate arguments, recommendations and research results in a convincing, precise, effective manner in written form**

Write the draft introduction of their master’s thesis based on a puzzle or problem. Identify and structure the relevant theoretical and empirical literature in their field and engage critically with it and to formulate an appropriate literature review. Identify, select and apply the relevant methodology to their cases and write a methodology chapter and develop an appropriate research design.

**D2. Ability to communicate arguments, recommendations and research results in a convincing, precise, effective manner through the spoken word**

Ability to critically present and discuss research strategies and findings in peer-to-peer colloquia.

**E1. Attitude of open-mindedness, academic integrity, critical and self-critical reflection with a view to contribute to rigorous analysis and academic debates.**

An attitude of open-mindedness and self-critical reflection with a view to self-improvement. Awareness of the ethical consequences of plagiarising in academic practices. Teaching session on plagiarism and ethical issues in writing. Meta-discussions on learning, writing, reading and the process of writing. Ongoing feedback on the process of writing.

**E2. Independence of thought and an autonomous approach to studying, research and acquisition of new knowledge and skills.**

Ability of time and anxiety management. Critical attitudes, which are necessary for “life-long learning”. Teaching session on anxiety management. Meta-discussions on learning, writing, reading and the process of writing. Ongoing feedback on the process of writing.
Main Course Material (please note that you can find the readings for each week and session in the Course Schedule section below):

The course material consists of powerpoint presentations, lecture notes and readings from the textbook. Powerpoint presentations will be made available after the respective classes have taken place. A week-by-week overview of the course readings can be found in the section below. The syllabus, powerpoint presentations and important messages will be uploaded to the Vesalius portal ‘Canvas’. Students are expected to visit this site regularly to keep abreast of course evolutions. The professor is expected to upload relevant material in a timely manner.

Course material marked as ‘suggested readings’ and ‘additional sources’ is helpful for research and to gain an increased understanding but is not mandatory. This material can be found online or will be made available upon individual request.

Textbook:


Recommended References books:


1 This book will also be adopted for POL498. It is a very useful resource to learn how to approach your topic analytically, how to structure an argument and how to identify logical fallacies. We suggest you look into it beyond assigned readings.

2 This is the book in use for POL495. For our course, we will mainly use Part III on Writing resources.
Active Learning and Intensive ‘Reading around the Subject’: Additional Sources, Recommended Journals and Websites:

Learning should be an active and self-motivated experience. Students who passively listen to lectures, copy someone else’s notes, and limit their readings to required chapters are unlikely to develop their critical thinking and expand their personal knowledge system. Students are strongly recommended to have an updated understanding of developments related to this course and related to their wider Programme. Active and engaged learning will turn out to be enriching to the overall course and class discussions. Students are invited to deepen their understanding of both theoretical and current issues from a variety of sources. Please find a list of suggestions compassing the entire course below. You are encouraged to read and browse in the leading journals of your discipline.

Leading Journals in International Relations

International Affairs; International Interaction; Foreign Policy Analysis; Foreign Policy; International Security; European Journal of International Relations; International Organization; Review of International Studies; Cooperation and Conflict; Security Dialogue; International Relations of the Asia Pacific; International Studies Quarterly; International Studies Review; Global Governance; Security Studies; Journal of Common Market Studies; World Politics; Contemporary Security Policies; Asian Security; European Security; World Politics; Millennium: Journal of International Studies; Journal of Peace Research; Review of International Political Economy; Journal of Conflict Resolution

Websites of Interest:


The University of Toronto website and the University of Edinburgh advice about writing a literature review, here https://advice-writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/literature-review/ and here https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub/learning-resources/literature-review


A guide to write an abstract can be found at https://advice-writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/abstract/
Work Load Calculation for this Course:

This course counts for 6 ECTS, which translates into 150 – 180 hours for the entire semester for this course. This means that you are expected to spend roughly 10 hours per week on this course. This includes 3 hours of lectures or seminars per week and 7 hours ‘out of class’ time spent on preparatory readings, studying time for exams as well as time spent on preparing your assignments. Please see below the estimated breakdown of your work-load for this course.

**Time spent in class:** 3 hours per week / 30 hours per semester

**Time allocated for course readings:** 3 hours per week / 30 hours per semester

**Time allocated for preparing Assignment 1:** 15 hours

**Time allocated for preparing Assignment 2:** 30 hours

**Time allocated for preparing Assignment 3:** 30 hours

Time allocated for preparing Assignment 4: 10 hours

**Number of reading pages per week:** 50

**Total hours for this Course:** 145 hours

Structure of the course

This course is based on both lectures and seminars. The lectures introduce the topic of the day. The seminars offer the possibility of familiarizing in a dynamic way with the main concepts, theories and issues learnt throughout the course. Reading in advance and getting prepared for both lectures and seminars is, therefore, a fundamental requirement of the course. Please, note unannounced that reading texts will regularly take place. During the seminars, we will engage in writing exercises and activities.

Working Group sessions

You will work in group of three, with the purpose of talking about your research and constructively receive feedback on the state of the art of your research, with particular regard to the chapters that are still work-in-progress.

During working group sessions, the students share their drafts and discuss the state of advancements of their thesis. The working groups constitute a way to have feedback from your peers and to share concerns, doubts and strategies to refine the research. Your main task as a member of a working group is to exchange constructive feedback on the state of your research and make sure that no one falls behind throughout the writing process. In order to ensure a smooth functioning of your working group:

1. Be collaborative and take your own and your colleagues’ work seriously. Establish a safe environment where discussing your doubts, sources of anxiety and discuss ways of overcoming them.
2. For each session, work with concrete tasks (e.g. presenting findings; discuss the theoretical framework; collect data, etc.).
3. Make sure that everyone participates and that everyone is on time with the working schedule.
4. Elect a moderator, who will ensure that time allocated to activities is respected and that everyone is effectively working on the thesis.

5. Use the working group as a “security blanket” and a watchdog, which helps you fight procrastination and negative attitudes!

When you present your work, make sure that you include information regarding:
- Your topic;
- The puzzle of the research;
- Your research question;
- The theoretical/conceptual framework you apply in your analysis;
- Your research design and methodology and
- Some hints on the data that you include in the analysis (e.g. official documents/declarations from governments, IGOs, NGOs; statistics; information on the financial implications of a given policy measure; tweets; social network; press releases....).

When commenting on other students’ work, make sure that in your colleagues’ work:
- The topic is relevant and well identified.
- The research question flows from a clearly identified research puzzle, which is factually or theoretically relevant. The research question is clear and realistic and allows the student to address it fully.
- The student has selected a meaningful and coherent theoretical framework and a clear and effective methodology. The research design clearly revolves around the research question and identifies the strength and limits of the selected research strategy. The research design provides an open-minded, non-prejudicial account of the topic under inquiry and shows the ability to redefine own perspective according to the research findings.
- The research thus far demonstrates advanced knowledge of factual, conceptual, methodological and theoretical questions surrounding the topic.

Pomodoro Technique sessions

Based on the pomodoro technique (https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique), these in-class sessions are in-class intensive writing sessions based on a specific time-management technique. This technique is based on 4 simple sequential steps (from the website):

1. **Choose a task you’d like to accomplish** – *Something big, something small, something you’ve been putting off for a million years: it doesn’t matter. What matters is that it’s something that deserves your full, undivided attention.*

2. **Set the pomodoro for 25 minutes** – *Make a small oath to yourself: I will spend 25 minutes on this task and I will not interrupt myself.*

3. **Work on the task until the pomodoro rings** – *Immerse yourself in the task for the next 25 minutes. If you suddenly realize you have something else you need to do, write the task down on a sheet of paper.*

4. **When the pomodoro rings, put a checkmark on a paper** – *Congratulations! You’ve spent an entire, interruption-less Pomodoro on a task.*

5. **Take a short break** – *Breathe, meditate, grab a cup of coffee, go for a short walk or do something else relaxing (i.e., not work-related). Your brain will thank you later.*
6. **Every 4 pomodoros take a longer break** – *Once you’ve completed four pomodoros, you can take a longer break. 20 minutes is good. Or 30. Your brain will use this time to assimilate new information and rest before the next round of Pomodoros.*
# Course Schedule (Overview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title of the session and major deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W1</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course and Survival Toolkit (you will survive!) – <strong>Send the research proposal you have written for POL495</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W2</td>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>Introducing and structuring your research: the importance of a solid backbone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W3</td>
<td>24.02</td>
<td>Another “go” to the literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W4</td>
<td>03.03</td>
<td>Drafting, referencing, formal aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W5</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>No class session. <strong>Work on your introduction and send it by W6.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W6</td>
<td>17.03</td>
<td>Conceptual section and methodological framework – <strong>Introduction due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W7</td>
<td>24.03</td>
<td>In-class working group: gathering data, planning interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W8</td>
<td>31.03</td>
<td>No class. <strong>Work on your literature review and send it by W9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W9</td>
<td>21.04</td>
<td>Data gathering and data collection – <strong>Literature review due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W10</td>
<td>28.04</td>
<td>Managing anxiety and in-class working groups: practicing the Pomodoro technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W11</td>
<td>05.05</td>
<td>No class session. <strong>Work on your conceptual and methodological section and send it by W12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W12</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>In-class working groups: working with data and distinguish descriptive from analytical. <strong>Conceptual and methodological section due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W13</td>
<td>19.05</td>
<td>No class session. <strong>Work on your data collection sheet and send it by W14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W14</td>
<td>26.05</td>
<td>In class brainstorming on the writing process. <strong>Data collection sheet due.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W15</td>
<td>09.06</td>
<td>No course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detailed Session-by-Session Course Outline

Week 1 – Introduction to the course and “survival toolkit”

Compulsory readings: (47 pp)


Recommended readings:


Week 2 – Introducing and structuring your research: the importance of a solid backbone

Compulsory readings (37 pp):


Recommended readings:


**Week 3 – Another “Go” to the Literature Review**

**Compulsory readings (40 pp):**


**Recommended readings:**


**W4 – Drafting, referencing, formal aspects**

**Compulsory readings (60 pp):**


**Recommended readings:**


**Week 5 – No class session. Work on your introduction and send it by W6 (March 17).**

**Week 6 – Conceptual section and methodological framework**

**Compulsory readings (72 pp +):**


Spray, S, Roselle, L and Shelton JT (2019) Research and Writing in International Relations (London: Routledge), chapter 3 and 4 [to review if you had already read these chapters, just glance at it if you have not].

**Recommended readings:**


**Week 7 – In-class working group: gathering data, planning interviews**

**Compulsory readings (43 pp):**


**Recommended readings:**


W8 – No class. Work on your literature review and send it by W9 (April 21)

Week 9 – Data gathering and data collection

Compulsory readings (55 pp. c.a.):


Recommended readings:


Week 10 – Managing anxiety and in-class working groups: practicing the Pomodoro technique

Compulsory readings (20 pp):


Check the blog of A Peary http://www.prolificmoment.com and watch her Tedx talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/alexandria_peary_how_mindfulness_can_transform_the_way_you_write. You will find some suggestion that can help you mitigating anxiety

**Recommended readings:**


**Week 11 – No class:** *Work on your conceptual and methodological section and send it by W12 (May 12)*

**Week 12 – In-class working groups: working with data and distinguish descriptive from analytical**

**Compulsory readings (70 pp):**


**Recommended readings:**


**Week 13 – No class: work on your data collection sheet (due to May 26)**

**Week 14 – In class brainstorming on the writing process. Data collection and analytical draft due.**

*Compulsory readings:*

*No compulsory reading*

*Recommended readings:*


**Week 15 – NO CLASS. Good luck with the thesis!**
Grading Scale of Vesalius College

Vesalius College grading policy follows the American system of letter grades, which correspond to a point scale from 0 – 100. All assignments (including exams) must be graded on the scale of 0-100. To comply with the Flemish Educational norms, professors should on request also provide the conversion of the grade on the Flemish scale of 0-20. The conversion table below outlines the grade equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Scale of 100 (VeCo Grading Scale)</th>
<th>Scale of 20 (Flemish System)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-100</td>
<td>17.0-20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>81-84</td>
<td>16.1-16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-80</td>
<td>15.3-16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>14.5-15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>69-72</td>
<td>13.7-14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>66-68</td>
<td>13.1-13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>62-65</td>
<td>12.3-13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>58-61</td>
<td>11.5-12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>54-57</td>
<td>10.7-11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-53</td>
<td>10.0-10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>0-9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Assessment: Assignments Overview

The students will be evaluated on the basis of their performance as follows Should be concise:

- Introduction 20%
- Literature review 35%
- Conceptual chapter 35%
- Source selection and gathering 10%
- TOTAL 100%

Key deadlines

W6: Introduction

W9: Literature review

W12: Research design

W14: Data collection document
Description of Activities, Grading Criteria:

Introduction (20% final grade) – due to March 17 – This is going to be the basis for your introductory chapter in the thesis. You will write a paper of minimum 1.200 words. You are going to present the societal relevance of your topic (who is affected in which way and why is this an issue in international relations) and the scientific relevance (where is the topic situated in the academic literature, is there a research gap? How will the outcome of your research will enrich the body of literature already available?). You will present a clear and concise research question and introduce your central argument. You will end up the introductory chapter with the outline of your thesis.

“Before writing the introduction, consider the following questions:
- Why is this problem important?
- How does the study relate to previous work in the area? If other aspects of this study have been reported previously, how does this report differ from, and build on, the earlier report?
- What are the primary and secondary hypotheses and objectives of the study, and what, if any, are the links to theory?
- How do the hypotheses and research design relate to one another?
- What are the theoretical and practical implications of the study?

A good introduction answers these questions in just a few pages and, by summarizing the relevant arguments and the past evidence, gives the reader a firm sense of what was done and why (APA, 2013: 26)."

A concise structure of the introduction (based on Creswell, 2009: 104-109, APA 2013 and Hart 2016: 196) can be found in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening statement</th>
<th>Announce the topic of the review with a clear and concise statement (Hart 2016: 196). Stimulate the interest of the reader and relate to an issue/puzzle that introduces the relevance of your selected topic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Identify the research problem leading to the study. Briefly give background information on the topic and connect it to your research puzzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Explain the relevance of the topic by providing a concise review of the literature. Indicate why the problem is important by citing numerous references. Refer to the studies by summarizing groups of studies, not individual ones. Anticipate deficiencies in past literature and inform the reader about how you intend to address these deficiencies. Make sure that the problem is framed in a manner consistent to research in the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Introduce your research question and your research statement (see Creswell 2009: 111-114). Give an indication of how you intend to tackle your topic. Explain why your study is significant for select</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 4 Introduce the structure of the research.

Literature Review (35% final grade) – due to April 21 – On the basis of the literature review you presented in POL 495M (tailor-made keywords central to your research and a full list of all relevant articles in the matrix) you will develop your literature review. In a paper of minimum 2,000 words, you will identify the debates in the literature, name the central authors and present and contrast their arguments both with respect to theoretical assumptions and empirical evidence. You will place your thesis into the academic context and define how your work contributes to the literature and which gap you aim to fill.

In order to develop the review, reflect on the following questions: “what is the purpose of the research? [...] What specific questions or hypotheses will the research address? [...] How are key terms defined? If there is no agreed definition the most important of the perspectives will usually need to be provided and then the working definition applied in the thesis justified in the context of these perspectives [...] What are the boundaries of the investigation and why were they chosen? [...] What are the origins of the research? [...] What is the methodological approach? [...] What contributions will my research make? [...] Why are some sources of key value? [...] What are the lacunae in the research? [...] What are the major issues and debates around the topic? [...]” (White, 2011: 216-217).

There are several ways of organizing a literature review. Based on your research statement, select one or more guiding principles (see White, 2011: 209 ff) and systematically review the literature according to the principles you have identified. You can find a concise example of how to organize the literature review (adapted from Creswell, 2009: 44) in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction of the section</th>
<th>Re-instate the research statement, as based on the research puzzle, and your hypotheses, describe the structure of the section. Provide the context and importance of the investigation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Address the scholarly literature about the dependent variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Review the scholarly literature about the independent variable(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Include the scholarly literature that relate the independent and dependent variables. Get as close as possible to your proposed students and identify how scholars have tried to address research questions similar to the one you want to address.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
<td>Provide a summary that highlights the most important studies and themes, critically identify areas that still need to be explored. Locate your study in the general literature and explain how your study contributes to scholarly knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conceptual and Methodological Chapter (35% final grade) – due to May 12 – In a paper of minimum 1,800 words, you propose and defend the choice of a theoretical approach (or explain why the research is not/cannot be based on existing theoretical assumptions). You will
present your hypothesis and an appropriate method for verification or falsification. You show how you operationalize your concepts. You will explain how you collect your empirical data and criticize the quality of it. Finally, discuss possible limitations and potential shortcomings of your study both with respect to “fuzzy” sources and explanatory scope.

There is no single way to structure a conceptual and methodological section. The structure of the section depends on the selected methodology. Make sure you show competence of relevant methodological literature. The section needs indicatively to include the following information and be structured as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicative structure of the conceptual and methodological section</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement of research information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concise information on the selected logic of inquiry and methodological approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the scope of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of core concepts/variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Where needed) operationalization of core concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method(s) of analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles and methods of case selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the sources adopted in the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitation of the selected approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reinstatement of the research question and the research statement.

Advance the hypotheses of your research.

Provide basic information on your selected methodological approach, on whether your selected methodology is inductive or deductive, interpretive or positivist. Justify your choice and explain why your selected methodological approach is best suited to address your research question.

Provide information on the spatial and temporal scope of your analysis and on the rationale that presides over its selection.

Based on the literature review, define the main terms of the analysis and explain the reason for such selection.

If you are conducting quantitative analysis, describe how you intend to translate selected concepts into measurable indicators.

Provide information on how you intend to analyse your topic, whether you are conducting a case study, comparative analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, etc.

Provide information on your selected case(s), explain why it/they are relevant to understand the phenomenon under enquiry.

Provide information on the sources used in your analysis and the reason why these sources can help shed light on the phenomenon under enquiry. Whereas relevant include information on the ethical dimension of your research (e.g. conducting interview, including sensible information, etc.).

Anticipate the expected results and critically discuss the limitations of your analysis.

Assignment 4 – Data Collection (10% final grade) – due to May 26 – In this short document (around 800 words, excluding bibliography) you will present the material that you have already collected and the material that remains to be collected for your analytical chapter.
You will reflect on the challenges that you have encountered, or which you might encounter, in collecting your data. Finally, you will present a contingency plan which explains how you will respond to (potential) problems in your data collection process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 1</th>
<th>Describe the data which you plan to collect, and which you have already collected, for your analysis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Reflect on the challenges you have encountered (or might encounter) in the data collection process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Section 3 | Develop a contingency plan that explains how you deal with problems in your data collection process.  
You may, for instance, describe the extent to which a lack of certain data (e.g. interviews) can be compensated for by alternative sources, or how you plan to shift the focus of your research should certain data not be available. |
| Section 4 | Include the references of the material (primary and secondary sources) that you have already collected and the ones that remain to be collected. |
### Rubrics: Transparent Grading Criteria

**A. Grading rubric for the introduction (30%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and Outline</th>
<th>Fail 0-49</th>
<th>Low Pass 50-57</th>
<th>Pass 58-68</th>
<th>Good 69-80</th>
<th>Excellent 81-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete, incoherent introduction. The puzzle of the research is not well identified. The outline of the thesis is missing both structure and coherence.</td>
<td>The introduction barely gives basic information. Not all presented information is relevant or presented in full. The outline of the thesis is missing structure and coherence at certain points.</td>
<td>Overall the introduction is well framed and contains the most relevant information. Minor flow in the organization of the chapter. The outline of the thesis is overall well-conceived.</td>
<td>Very well-framed introduction, containing all relevant information, from the puzzle to the RQ, from the thesis statement to the outline of the research. Succinct outline of the structure of the thesis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Relevance of the topic | Your topic is irrelevant or addressing an insignificant problem and/or it is missing scientific significance (already researched or not in the IR context). | Your topic is not entirely relevant. The scientific relevance of the topic is barely explained. | Your topic is partly relevant and addressing a problem with a certain scientific significance. | The topic is societally and scientifically relevant. | You are about to fill a real research gap. Your topic is highly relevant and you are addressing a significant societal and scientific problem. |

| Research question and coherence of the key argument | The research question is irrelevant or misleading. You don’t present an argument. | Your research question is too broad or too narrow. You present an argument but it is not really convincing. | The research question is appropriate. The argument is overall sufficiently introduced, even if it could be better developed and conceived. | Good ability to identify a research question and to pose a relevant research question. The outline is overall good and background information is relevant. Some redundancies. | Clear and concise research question. Succinct outline of the structure of the main argument. |

| References and formal aspects | The text is unclear or hard to read. Less than sufficient use of | Barely adequate introduction. Sources are | Adequate introduction. The author adequately | Overall the introduction is well written. The author | Very well written. Excellent use of sources in |

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*Dr Caterina Carta and Dr Stephan Klose – POL497M – Thesis I*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fail (0-49)</th>
<th>Low Pass (50-57)</th>
<th>Pass (58-68)</th>
<th>Good (69-80)</th>
<th>Excellent (81-100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical engagement with the literature</td>
<td>The literature is simply mentioned and the selected literature is irrelevant. There is hardly any critical engagement with the literature.</td>
<td>Barely sufficient critical engagement with the literature. Most articles are not entirely relevant to the analysis or the research question.</td>
<td>Sufficient critical engagement with the literature. Not every article is relevant to the analysis or the research question.</td>
<td>Overall, the literature review is well-conceived. Fairly good critical abilities and good engagement with the central arguments in your research field</td>
<td>A broad and deep selection of articles is presented. Clear identification of academic arguments and debates; Good ability to compare and contrast key arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to identify main authors and summarize key arguments and debates</td>
<td>Inability to identify and summarize relevant debates and to compare and contrast the major arguments of the central authors. Articles are analyzed as stand-alone pieces.</td>
<td>The section summarizes the overall picture obtained from the literature review but lacks synthesis and critical grasp of key debates.</td>
<td>The section summarizes relevant debates in a satisfactory manner. Not all identified arguments/information is relevant to the RQ. Satisfactory engagement with the literature and attempts to critically analyze it.</td>
<td>The section summarizes the overall picture obtained from the literature review and synthesizes the knowledge gained.</td>
<td>The section summarizes and insightfully synthesizes the literature information, including analysis of gaps in and/or limitations of the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, quality and quantity of the sources analysed, referencing style</td>
<td>No or insufficient sequencing, or structure. Sources are not relevant and/or appropriate in order to</td>
<td>The section is organized in a barely acceptable way. Sources are often irrelevant or inappropriate. Noticeable</td>
<td>Sufficiently organized; acceptable logical sequencing or structure. Sources are overall relevant and/or appropriate, some notable absences. Insufficient number of sources (11-15).</td>
<td>Well organized, but demonstrates illogical sequencing or structure. Sources are relevant and</td>
<td>Well organized, demonstrates logical sequencing and structure. Outstanding selection of sources, in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Grading Rubric for the literature review (30%)
address the RQ. Key articles are not acknowledged. Insufficient number of sources (below 9). Poor referencing style.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lacuna in cited literature (10-14).</td>
<td>Information is cited but has errors.</td>
<td>of good quality. Good number of sources (16-20). Information is cited properly</td>
<td>terms of relevance and quality. Very good number of sources (21+). Information is cited properly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

### C. Grading form for the conceptual and methodological chapter (30%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fail 0-49</th>
<th>Low Pass 50-57</th>
<th>Pass 58-68</th>
<th>Good 69-80</th>
<th>Excellent 81-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual framework</strong></td>
<td>Poorly conceived and irrelevant conceptual framework.</td>
<td>A conceptual framework is partly insufficient, incomplete, or unjustified.</td>
<td>The conceptual framework is sufficiently complete and conceived in an overall satisfactory manner.</td>
<td>Overall good conceptual framework. Some minor imprecision in the presentation of the conceptual choices; some minor flaws in the selection of the theoretical toolkit.</td>
<td>Coherent and well-conceived conceptual framework. Very good justification and critical assessment of theoretical/conceptual frameworks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology and research design, methods selected</strong></td>
<td>The research design is underspecified and not manageable, confusing or incomplete given the research question and strategy. Important limitations and assumptions have not been identified. The methods selected do not fit into the research design.</td>
<td>Barely sufficient ability to identify appropriate methodology to research the problem.</td>
<td>Sufficient ability to identify appropriate methodology to research the problem. The research design is described in sufficiently detailed terms. Some problems in applicability and questions about whether the methods are manageable in practical terms</td>
<td>Good selection and description of methodology. Some minor flaws in the description of the methodology. The research design fits well the RQ and is well structured and presented. Minor doubts about the practicability of the</td>
<td>Excellent selection and description of methodology. The research design is solid and coherently allows to address the RQ. The methods selected fit the research design and are manageable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Identification of relevant data</td>
<td>Methods selected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected data are irrelevant or inexistent.</td>
<td>Barely acceptable selection and use of data</td>
<td>Good selection of data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely acceptable selection and use of data</td>
<td>Selected data sufficiently allow the author to address the research question.</td>
<td>Selected data coherently support the research design and allow the author to address the RQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Grading form for the data collection paper (10%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation of data</th>
<th>Fail 0-49</th>
<th>Low Pass 50-57</th>
<th>Pass 58-68</th>
<th>Good 69-80</th>
<th>Excellent 81-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No or very poorly presented set of data</td>
<td>The presentation of data is insufficient. The presented data set is ill-conceived and incomplete.</td>
<td>The presentation of data is well-conceived but flawed (e.g. characterized by gaps or inconsistencies). The data collection process is briefly explained but not sufficiently clear.</td>
<td>The presentation of data is good. There are some minor flaws in the data set. The data collection process is well-described.</td>
<td>The data set and data collection process are well-described. The data set is well-reasoned, coherent, and complete. The status and trajectory of the data collection process are clear.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflections on Data Collection Challenges</th>
<th>Fail 0-49</th>
<th>Low Pass 50-57</th>
<th>Pass 58-68</th>
<th>Good 69-80</th>
<th>Excellent 81-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on challenges are absent or very superficial.</td>
<td>Reflections on the challenges are very brief and mostly superficial. Obvious challenges are not addressed.</td>
<td>Reflections on the challenges are overall sufficient but lack in clarity. Some challenges are briefly mentioned but not critically assessed.</td>
<td>Reflections provide a clear understanding of (potential) challenges, but the implications of these challenges are not always clear.</td>
<td>Reflections provide an excellent understanding of (potential) challenges, as well as a clear idea of how they may impact the research project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contingency Plan</th>
<th>Fail 0-49</th>
<th>Low Pass 50-57</th>
<th>Pass 58-68</th>
<th>Good 69-80</th>
<th>Excellent 81-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The contingency plan is absent or very poorly conceived.</td>
<td>The contingency plan is superficial, it barely addresses some but not necessarily all of the outlined challenges, the</td>
<td>The contingency plan addresses most of the outlined</td>
<td>The contingency plan clearly addresses the outlined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>addresses the outlined challenges.</td>
<td>provided solutions are vague or impractical</td>
<td>challenges. It provides sensible though at times flawed solutions to envisaged problems</td>
<td>challenges and develops very sensible and feasible solutions to (potential) problems</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>
Additional Course Policies

Vesalius College Attendance Policy

As the College is committed to providing students with high-quality classes and ample opportunity for teacher-student interaction, it is imperative that students regularly attend class. As such, Vesalius College has a strict attendance policy. Participation in class meetings is mandatory, except in case of a medical emergency (e.g. sickness). Students will need to provide evidence for missing class (doctor’s note). If evidence is provided, the missed class is considered as an excused class. If no evidence is provided immediately before or after the class, the missed class is counted as an absence. Participation implies that students are on time: as a general rule, the College advises that students should be punctual in this regard, but it is up to the professor to decide whether to count late arrivals as absences, or not. If a student misses two classes in a row, his/her advisor will be notified.

Late paper policy

Because all deadlines are communicated to students beforehand, and because this is a master level course, it is students’ responsibility to make sure they are able to finish the assignments on time. Therefore, assignments that are not handed in on time are subject to the following penalties. The only exception to this can be a medical issue, proven by a doctor’s note. These penalties are deducted after calculating the overall grade of the assignment.

- 1 day late (0-24 hours): 10% reduction of original grade;
- 2 days late (24-48 hours): 20% reduction of original grade;
- 3 days late (48-72 hours): 30% reduction of original grade;
- 4 days late (72-96 hours): 40% reduction of original grade;
- 5 days late (96-120 hours): 50% reduction of original grade.
- After five days, the assignment is no longer accepted, resulting in an automatic grade of F.

Academic Honesty Statement

Academic dishonesty is NOT tolerated in this course. Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.

Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action.

If you refer to someone else’s work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.

Please consult the Section “Avoiding Plagiarism” in the College Catalogue for further guidance.

Turnitin
All written assignments that graded and count for more than 10% towards the final course grade need to be submitted via the anti-plagiarism software Turnitin. You will receive from your professor a unique password and access code for your Class.
Further academic Resources


Useful resources/ tools

The purpose statement (Creswell, 2009: 114)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this ____ (strategy of inquiry, such as case study or other type) study is (was? Will be?) to ____ (understand, describe, develop, discover?) the _____ (central phenomenon to be studied) for ____ (the participant, such as the individual, groups, organization) at ____ (research site). At this stage of the research the _____ (central phenomenon being studied) will be defined as ____ (provide a general definition).</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUANTITATIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this ___ (experiment, survey?) study is to test the theory of ____ that ____ (compares? Relates?) the _____ (independent variable) to the ____ (dependent variable), controlling for ____ (control variables) for ____ (participants) at ____ (research site). The independent variable(s) will be defined as ____ (provide definition). The dependent variable(s) will be defined as ____ (provide definition). The control or intervening variable(s) will be defined as ____ (provide definition).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WRITING GOALS AND JOURNAL (Allen, 2019: 156-157)

1. My writing goal for today is ____________________.
   I will write ___ new words today.
2. What new obstacles or challenges are you facing today?
3. What will you do to overcome these obstacles?
4. What new strategies have you learned that could make you a more productive writer?
5. Identify and list at least 2 of these strategies you will begin to use in the next 24 hours. Then, if they work for you, make them a habit.

At the end of your writing today,
1. How did you do in meeting your goals today? How many new words did you write?
2. Were there any obstacles or challenges you faced?
3. What will you do so these obstacles do not stop or slow your writing productivity?
4. Write an assessment of how your writing process worked for you today; include a brief summary of your work and use it as a guide to help you start to write and get to flow at your next writing session. Getting to flow means you are working with clear goals, deep
concentration, a sense of control, and a belief that your abilities to accomplish the task surpass your anxiety and doubts that you can’t (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

**Word count progress chart (Allen, 2019: 158-159)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New words on primary project</th>
<th>New words on other projects</th>
<th>Writing goal(s) today</th>
<th>How did it go?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dissertation progress meeting date (Allen, 2019: 174)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checkpoint</th>
<th>For today’s meeting</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My action items since last meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adviser action items since last meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other developments since last meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Progress update on drafts: Introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, conclusions, other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feedback from adviser:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Questions and issues that need clarification:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Adviser’s questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before next meeting

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My action items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Adviser’s action items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Am I on schedule? Are there any challenges? How will I manage or address them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What is the next milestone or deliverable? By what date?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>When is our next meeting? (Send a reminder, with any deliverables, on [date].)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>What is the next most important thing you must do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing tips and strategies (Allen, 2019: 181)

1. Write every day.
2. Schedule your writing time
3. Write earlier in the day if at all possible.
4. Find your best energy and write. (That’s usually earlier in the day.)
5. Write in 90-minute blocks.
6. Can’t find 90 minutes? Write for 15 minutes.
7. Set a goal. Small and soon.
8. Make two lists before you start writing.
9. Remove, reduce, avoid distractions.
10. Don’t stop writing when it’s hard.
11. Don’t stop writing when it’s easy.
12. Your scheduled writing time should be about producing new words.
13. Find a place to write, anywhere.
14. Use deadlines to your advantage.
15. Don’t wait for inspiration.
16. Begin to write before you feel ready.
17. Develop outlines or chapter summaries.
18. When you stop, make a list of what comes next.
19. If you don’t know how or where to start, then start in the middle.
20. Don’t write and edit at the same time.
21. Don’t call it writer’s block.
22. Write until you are in the flow, then keep writing.
23. Write bad first drafts.
24. Do not binge write.
25. Make yourself accountable.
26. Use a writing support group.
27. Write with others.
28. Get feedback.
29. Think forward and plan backward.
30. Request feedback from your adviser by asking specific questions.
31. Write with integrity.