

Course Syllabus

Department: European Studies
Course: Senior Theses Seminar II
ID: 401
Semester / Year: Spring 2014
Course Organizer: Alexander Wolters, PhD
Credits: 3

American University of Central Asia
Academic Year 2013/2014

Course description, Goals & Objectives

This course is designed for European Studies and American Studies senior students writing senior thesis and seeks to create a discussion forum for students' senior thesis projects. The overall goal of the course is to observe the progress of students on their senior theses writing. Doing so, it will seek to create a bridge to a successful preparation and defense of the senior thesis. In particular the Senior Thesis Seminar II aims at assisting the students in the empirical research, conduct analysis and incorporate findings into their work.

Please follow the link for more Information: https://www.auca.kg/en/eu_thesis/

“A senior thesis is a large, independent research project that European Studies and American Studies students undertake in the senior year of their study. The senior thesis involves two semesters of independent research and writing efforts resulting in a substantial paper on a research topic of the student. Such a work requires from ES / AMS students a great deal of discipline, self-motivation, and creative thinking. For formalities students have to comply with, for deadlines and format, the participants are asked to check with the Qualifying Rules.”

Course Organiser

The Course Organiser is Alexander Wolters
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Teaching methods

Lectures, discussion-rounds, progress report presentations and writing exercises

Organization of the course:

1. If applicable I will divide students into small groups based on similarity of interest. These groups will provide the opportunity to give and receive comments on individual work. Doing so they will act as peer groups.
2. Participation in the class is obligatory for students writing senior thesis. Missing of classes for more than three times will result in final grade “D”, **missing more than six times will result in final grade “F”**.
3. Students should submit during the semester five documents:
 1. Thesis abstract (300 words)
Deadline is February 6, 2014, 23.59
 2. Interview-protocol (Interview with expert / relevant respondent) or content analysis of primary source
Deadline is February 27, 2014, 23.59
 3. Mit-term paper (9.000 words or 30 pages)
For deadline see Qualifying Rules
 4. Presentation for Defense
Submission the day following presentation!
 5. Draft thesis (40 pages).
For Deadline see Qualifying Rules.

STUDENTS MUST HAND IN ASSIGNMENTS IN TIME. LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!!
4. Some classes will be devoted to a discussion of ongoing research projects by students, research methods, related bibliography, and data.
5. Students will be required to make formal presentations in class: on their thesis abstract, their research findings and for defence practising.

Changes to the syllabus

Additional *assessments* will not be added to the syllabus; however I reserve the right to alter reading or/and topics to meet the needs of the students taking the course. Additional *readings* may be scheduled if they relate to specific problems researching or drafting the BA papers. A reader with all necessary texts will be provided for the course.

Plagiarism

For any written assessment the **AUCA Essay Writing and Anti-plagiarism Rules** apply. In addition, students should submit a statement certifying that the paper has been written independently, that no assistance and source other than those stated has been used and that quotations have been marked as such.

Students are expected to think for themselves and to express themselves in their own words. In that limited sense their work should be original. It must not be plagiarised. Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's thoughts or words without attribution. Plagiarism is an offence against Academy Rules and leads to the failure of the course (F grade).

Attendance

All students enrolled for the course are required to attend all seminars. A register of attendance at any meeting of the class will be taken.

Practicalities

Ours is a large class, which means that all of the usual elements of academic courtesy – that you turn up on time to class, that you listen when the Course Organiser or one of your peers is talking, that you hand in work on time – become all the more important to the functioning of the class. Students absent without good reason, constantly late in person or with their work, have 'negative participation' in class will be dropped from the class (F grade).

Requirements

Participation	25%
Defence Presentation	15%
Mid-Term	25%
Final Paper (Thesis Draft)	35%

The mid-term and final term grades will be given jointly by the course instructor and the supervisor (50% - 50%)

Concerns about progress

It is the policy of the course that students worried about progress in individual subjects may discuss their work (including, in broad terms, how they went wrong in units of assessment) with the Course Organiser. Students worried about progress in writing may discuss their work with me and with their supervisor.

Special needs

Students with special needs are encouraged to bring this information to the attention (in confidence) of the Course Organiser and Supervisor.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Subject
1	14.1.2014 16.1.2014	Introduction into Syllabus and Course Format Where do we stand? What lies ahead?
2	21.1.2014 23.1.2014	Empirical Research: Interviews and Observation I Empirical Research: Interviews and Observation II
3	28.1.2014 30.1.2014	Empirical Research: Text Analysis I Empirical Research: Text Analysis II
4	4.2.2014 6.2.2014	Writing an Abstract Empirical Research: Text Analysis III
5	11.2.2014 13.2.2014	Findings and Interpretation I Findings and Interpretation II
6	18.2.2014 20.2.2014	Writing Workshop Writing Workshop
7	25.2.2014 27.2.2014	MLA Style I MLA Style II
8	4.3.2014 6.3.2014	Theoretical Framework I: Narrowing down Concept and Terms Theoretical Framework II: Applying Theory
9	11.3.2014 13.3.2014	SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK
10	18.3.2014 20.3.2014	Defense Presentation Defense Presentation
11	25.3.2014 27.3.2014	Defense Presentation Defense Presentation
12	1.4.2014 3.4.2014	Defense Presentation Defense Presentation
13	8.4.2014 10.4.2014	Defense Presentation Style and Formating I
14	15.4.2014 17.4.2014	Writing Workshop Writing Workshop
15	22.4.2014 24.4.2014	Style and Formating II Conclusion Writing
16	29.4.2014 1.5.2014	Appendices Labor Day

Grading Standards:

Fail (F)

Inadequate work in most relevant aspects, with many very serious weaknesses

- The thesis has no introduction and no coherent structure throughout;
- There is no understanding of relevant approaches, the thesis is incoherent on major themes and shows no understanding of the question;
- There is no understandable argument or proper synthesis;
- Structure is non-existent, the thesis is very short, unclear and wholly lacking in conclusions;
- There is no supporting data, or an entirely inappropriate methodology has been used;
- No bibliography is presented

Poor (F)

Inadequate work in most relevant respects, with many very serious weaknesses

- The thesis has a weak introduction, if any, providing little or no frame for the thesis as a whole;
- There is little mention or understanding of relevant approaches so that they are presented in a highly restricted and unclear manner and/or with no sense of context;
- The relevant arguments and evidence are scarcely related together, and there is no proper synthesis;
- The thesis lacks structure, is too short, is unclear, and conclusions are lacking or inadequate and ungrounded;
- No data, irrelevant data, or otherwise flawed data with inadequate rationales, if any, for data selection and overall methodology (applies where empirical analysis is required);
- The bibliography is non-existent or minimal and/or entirely unclear and inadequately presented.

Marginal / bare pass (D-)

EITHER generally unsatisfactory, inadequately planned and presented, with no or poor understanding but with some redeeming features OR properly organized but more or less wholly irrelevant. In the former case, the work would have the following features:

- the introduction is very weak, barely providing a frame for the thesis as a whole;
- there is some mention of relevant literatures or approaches, but this outline is very patchy, unclear, and/or very inadequately placed in context with the result that the thesis reveals little or no knowledge of their significance and fails to engage in critical discussion;
- the relevant arguments and evidence are not properly related together, resulting in an unsystematic approach, significant weaknesses in understanding and rigor, and no attempt at synthesis;
- the thesis is poorly organized, with little or no structure, serious weaknesses in clarity, and little or no attempt to draw conclusions;
- limited ability to gather and summarize relevant data and other material or to interpret it (applies where empirical analysis is involved);
- The bibliography is very limited and/or unclear and poorly presented.

Not very satisfactory (D and D+)

Limited work in most relevant respects, with several significant weaknesses

- The introduction is weak, providing only a limited frame for the thesis as a whole;
- Some relevant literatures are outlined, but this is limited, patchy, unclear, and/or not adequately contextualised so that, although some major points are brought out, there are significant gaps, misunderstandings, and/or little grasp of detail or subtlety;
- The relevant arguments and evidence are related together in a weak manner and thus the thesis conveys neither a critical understanding nor a reasonable synthesis;

- The thesis is poorly organized, with a poor balance between context, literatures, discussion, and synthesis but some attempt is made to draw conclusions ;
- There are significant problems with methodology for gathering material and its interpretation (applies where empirical analysis is required);
- The bibliography is limited and/or unclear and poorly presented.

Satisfactory (C- to C+)

A competent thesis that shows understanding of material and presents it satisfactorily. There is a coherent argument throughout and an adequate conclusion. In short, it is an acceptable work in most relevant respects, but with some significant weaknesses.

- the introduction is adequate, providing a reasonable frame for the thesis as a whole;
- the major approaches are outlined and adequately contextualized so that the major points are reasonably brought out and interrelated to reveal an adequate grasp of the topic but with a relatively unsystematic approach and some weaknesses in understanding and rigor;
- the relevant arguments and evidence are related together adequately, there is some attempt at synthesis but no originality, and there are some weaknesses in terms of the clarity of argument;
- the thesis is adequately organized, achieving some balance between context, literatures, discussion, and synthesis, with broadly satisfactory conclusions;
- weak rationale for gathering data and materials, some problems with actual data and other material collection and its interpretation (where empirical analysis is required)
- the bibliography is adequate, reasonably clear, and well-presented.

Good (B- to B+)

Shows a firm grasp of material and contextualizes it, has good research and presentation skills, argues well and effectively, is able to criticize and evaluate material convincingly and appropriately. In short, good to very good work in most relevant respects, with few weaknesses.

- the introduction is good, clearly and appropriately framing the thesis as a whole;
- the most important literatures are outlined and soundly located in an appropriate context with few serious omissions so that the thesis presents a sound critical discussion of the topic based on a good overall grasp of the chosen readings;
- the relevant arguments and evidence are related together in a clear manner that achieves a good overall synthesis without being original;
- the thesis is well organized, achieving a good balance between context, literatures, discussion, and synthesis with valid conclusions grounded in evidence;
- generally competent rationale and use of data collection methodology and good use of data, including specialized resources and/or some original data (empirical analysis is required);
- the bibliography is quite extensive and well presented.

Very Good (A-)

Very good understanding of material and contextualizes it well; shows facility in the handling of ideas/theories/concepts/data; communicates clearly and effectively; shows insight and perceptiveness, a well-developed critical faculty and good judgment. A fresh and original, unusual or substantial contribution to the debate. Therefore, excellent work in all relevant respects, with only marginal weaknesses.

- the introduction is excellent, clearly and appropriately framing the thesis as a whole;
- extensive and relevant readings are identified, outlined and located in an appropriate context with no serious omissions so that the essential points are identified and interrelated in a very good overall grasp of the topic in question and very good command of both the detail and the subtlety of the arguments;
- the relevant arguments and evidence are related together in a clear and critical manner that achieves a convincing overall synthesis, and also reveals elements of originality;

- the thesis is very well organized, achieving an excellent balance between context, literatures, discussion, and synthesis, with convincing and well-argued conclusions;
- sound rationale for collecting data and other material, including use of specialized resources and/or gathering of original data; very good use of the data and material (where empirical analysis is required);
- the bibliography is extensive and well-presented.

Outstanding (A)

- A mark in this range is given for an accomplished piece of work that offers a thorough, imaginative or highly original but appropriate answer to the question;
- Reading is demonstrated to be comprehensive and going beyond standard course material, bibliography is comprehensive;
- The thesis is written in faultless prose with a convincing argument, structure and synthesis;
- A high degree of originality is shown in argument, methodology or presentation of data;
- The answer is imaginative and offers a novel and effective interpretation of the question;
- In rare cases where a thesis makes an original contribution to sociological knowledge and is written to a publishable standard, recognition of outstanding distinction will be given.