

Prospectus Seminar

PhD Course, two credits, Winter 2009

Instructor

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Office hours

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

Credits

2 CEU credits, 4 ECTS credits

Course Description

The sole function of this seminar is to help students to prepare their PhD prospectus. Therefore the course is not based on predefined readings and assignments but is structured around the research interests of the probationary doctoral cohort. Students present their draft prospectus twice in the class. They are expected to consider the advice and criticism they receive after the first presentation and to improve the draft relying on the feedback. The class discussions will identify methodological concerns that apply to a significant number of participants. In these areas the instructor will recommend readings. The subsequent discussions in the seminar will aim at drawing practical implications from the often abstract and general methodological literature. In order to guarantee maximum openness about one's own weaknesses and a free and candid discussion of the drafts performance is not graded. But in order to get a "pass" students must be present, give two short presentations, and be active in the discussions.

The discussions will focus on the appropriate research designs: definition of the research question, justification of the relevance of the research, on the elaboration of hypotheses,

identification of appropriate methods, the description of the state of the art, concept-formation, operationalization and measurement.

Learning outcome

Ability to conceive, elaborate and defend a research plan

Ability to move between abstracts concepts and tangible empirical evidence

Awareness of the implications of applying different research methods for the same research problem

Background literature

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Collier, David, and Robert Adcock 1999. "Democracy and Dichotomies: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 537-65.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Michael Keating, eds. 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dunleavy, Patrick. 2003. *Authoring a PhD Thesis: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Dissertation*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Elster, Jon, 1998. "A Plea for Mechanisms." In *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, ed. Peter Hedstrøm and Richard Swedberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 45–73.

Evera, Stephen van. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gerring, John. 2005. "Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17 (2): 163–98.

Hancké, Bob 2009. *Intelligent Research Design. A guide for beginning researchers in the social sciences*. Oxford University Press.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Locke, Lawrence F. Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, Stephen J. Silverman 1993. *Proposals that work: a guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Morton, Rebecca B. 1999. *Methods and Models: A Guide to the Empirical Analysis of Formal Models in Political Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sartori, Giovanni 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64 (4): 1033-53.
- Silbergh, David M. 2001. *Doing dissertations in politics. A student guide*. London: Routledge.
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Applications of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Course outline

Week 1.

General introduction, definition of the principal criteria, survey of interests of students

Week 2—9.

Presentation and discussion of the first drafts of prospectuses

Week 10-12

Presentation of second drafts, discussion of changes