

MA THESIS PACKAGE.

The final assignment for the course consists of a single PDF to upload into the assignment box called “MA Thesis Package” in MyCourses by Friday 15 Sept. Your single PDF document should contain the following elements:

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE THESIS.

Write a short description (max 1/2 page) of your MA thesis idea. What is it about? What topic(s) will it cover? How do you see the topic unfolding in the thesis?

TIP: Imagine that (instead of an academic text) you are writing the synopsis of a film. How does your “film” evolve? Arguably, your MA thesis will also be a story, or a collection of stories.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

Write a series of research questions (3-5) that encapsulate what it is that you would like to explore. Spend some time evaluating them. Are they concise enough? Can you really aim at answering them? Should you try to narrow it down/rethink them? You could look at the “Research Questions” slides in MyCourses to refresh your mind about some (general) aspects of writing research questions.

TIP: Many of you read Georges Perec’s *Approaches to What?* In the Manifesto course (TAAP 1). Remember that for Perec not always the “biggest” questions are the best; down to the culture of the headlines! he said...he also said that there are not unimportant questions. You filmmakers/artists are very good at looking at small things, those ones that many don’t care about, and make them really worth looking at.

MIND MAP.

Include a mind map for the topic of your thesis. What do you feel is at the center of it? And the closest ramifications? When do things start going a bit too far, too loose, too much for an MA thesis? Use this as a graphical/schematic representation of the most important aspects of your thesis. Is it achievable?

TIP: Try to imagine different things at the center of your mind map and see how it might change the emphasis/direction/scope of your research.

REFERENCES AND BRIEF LITERARY REVIEW.

Include a list with at least 5 works (it might include essays, articles, books, artistic works, etc.) Include a short review of 3 of those works. Three or four sentences suffice for each. Try to convey the main idea of the works you choose. You can also include some quotes from those works that feel relevant to you.

IMAGINARY INTRODUCTION.

Write an “imaginary introduction” of 2-3 pages to your MA thesis. Write this exercise as if it were a real introduction chapter in your thesis. You may not know enough about your thesis topic yet but imagine how you could introduce your starting point and the aims you have in your thesis. Write the introduction in the style that you want, as if it was the actual beginning of your thesis. Try to cover the following aspects (in the style you want):

- *What made you interested in this topic?*
- *Why is this topic relevant? To whom it might be relevant?*
- *Introduction of your research questions.*

You could also consider:

- *Introduction to the areas of knowledge you will address in relation to your research question/s.*
- *Explanation of your methodology: how are you going to conduct your research and answer your research questions?*

Usually, the introduction is written in the end of the process but trying to answer these questions is a good way to test your topics and ideas, realize if your questions are still too wide, imagine what type of answers you might find and to whom they would be relevant, which can help you in formulating your research approach.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Let's face it. Writing the thesis will feel overwhelming at times. You will lose the focus and the direction. You will even forget what the heck you were writing about. For that is important to find ways to break the monster task into manageable actions, concrete tasks that you could do to keep advancing your research. Think about the things that you definitely need to do to advance, see if you need to break those tasks into smaller ones, and find a strategy to carry them out.

Include three or four (very) concrete actions that will help you to resume your research after the course.

TIP: Have a look at the methodology slides in MyCourses. Check the “Analysing qualitative data/material” slide: describe, identify, examine, compare, interpret are useful verbs here. Also check the “Reflection” slide for some further tips: evaluating, putting in dialogue, wider societal contexts...