

26E99905 Master's Thesis Seminar (online)

(6 cr)

SYLLABUS

Spring, Period 3, 2023

| Instructor's contact information | Course information |
|---|---|
| <u>Coordinator and contact person for the course:</u> Responsible teacher: Saija Katila E-mail: saija.katila@aalto.fi Course assistant: Baolin Yang E-mail: baolin.yang@aalto.fi | Status of the course: Advanced Academic Year, Period: 2022-23 Location: Fully online Language of Instruction: English Course Website: |

Please note that the Master's Thesis Seminar is not an independent course, but is connected to the student initiating their work on their Master's Thesis. Thus, do not enrol to the seminar unless you plan to start working on your Master's Thesis at the same time.

1. OVERVIEW

The Master's Thesis Seminar supports students in their thesis work during the advanced stages of their studies. The aim of the online seminar is to support the student in producing a Master's thesis of high academic standard by introducing her/him to the process and challenges of writing a Master's thesis. During the seminar the student is expected to develop a research proposal based on which the thesis will be written. This will take place under the individual supervision of the student's thesis supervisor, who will be assigned during the seminar. The seminar is intended as a kick-off for the thesis writing process. Early on in the seminar, students will contact their supervisor and establish a working supervisory relationship.

The online seminar consists of videos and assignments followed by an independent study period. During this time, students will finalize a longer version of the research proposal.

The course offers also three voluntary group tutoring meetings online for those who have a need to discuss their thesis seminar or thesis process related concerns.

2. PREREQUISITES

Completed Bachelor's studies and thesis or equivalent. It is strongly recommended that students enrolling for the Master's thesis seminar have completed or are intending to participate in the methods courses (21E00011 Doing Qualitative Research, 26E02900 Doing Quantitative Research) at the same time/directly after the seminar.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course introduces students to the Master's Thesis work by covering the fundamentals of the research process and requirements for a thesis. Upon successful completion of this course, you should:

- know what a good Master's thesis is;
- be able to independently develop a research proposal in the area of your specialization; and
- be able to conduct independent scientific research under supervision in a timely manner.

4. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The seminar will be graded based on the following assignments:

- Assignment #1: analysis and evaluation of existing thesis (20 % of the final grade)
- Answering the webropol survey concerning topic-supervisor in time (pass/fail) whether you are attending the course for first time or retaking the course
- Assignment #2: first draft of individual research proposal (20 % of the final grade)
- Assignment #3: memo of supervisory meeting and steps to be taken (pass/fail 10 % of the final grade)
- Assignment #4: final research proposal (50% of the final grade)

The final grade (0 to 5) is based on cut off points below:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| 0-50 points = | 0 |
| 50-59 points = | 1 |
| 60-69 points = | 2 |
| 70-79 points = | 3 |
| 80-89 points = | 4 |
| 90-100 points = | 5 |

All assignments have to be completed and returned in time and all assignments need to be passed with a grade of 1/5 in order to get a final grade for the course.

Note that turning in the assignments is considered the acknowledgement of guidelines on scholastic honesty and academic integrity (see section 9).

5. ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1:

Analyse and evaluate an existing thesis relevant to your topic/methods/interests/ in terms of what was good and how could the thesis be improved. First, describe the study and how it relates to your research interests. Then verbally evaluate it using the Master's Thesis Evaluation Rubric as your evaluation tool (the rubric is located in the materials folder of the course page). Please produce one piece of text without subheadings or bullet points. **Make sure you evaluate the thesis in concrete terms through the content so that reader can understand what was done in the thesis.** In the end reflect, what did you learn from reading this (and other) theses? The rubric can be found in the materials folder. The length of the assignment is max 800-1100 words excluding references.

Assignment 2:

Develop an individual research proposal, which includes your research setting and problem/objective(s), research questions, conceptual definitions, and ideas concerning your theoretical framework and data collection plan (more detailed instructions in the materials folder). Make sure you follow academic

writing standards in writing the text i.e. every concept you use/claim you make regarding literature needs to be supported by reference(s). The length of the proposal is 800-1000 words excluding references. **NOTE: Supervisors will be appointed after assignment 2 is turned in, and all students have answered the webropol survey regarding current supervisory status. Note: all students will be allocated a supervisor by the faculty in case the student does not have one. After you have been notified of your supervisor, contact your supervisor immediately to return assignment 3 in time.**

Assignment 3:

Contact your supervisor and present the first draft of the research proposal to her/him. Then write a memo of 1) what was discussed, 2) what you learned, 3) what kind of steps you intend to do to improve your proposal and 4) what is the timeframe for the improvements. The length of the memo is 300-400 words excluding references.

Assignment 4:

Write a full-length research proposal based on the feedback from the supervisor and the course teacher. The length of the proposal is 4500-5000 words excluding references (i.e. approximately 15 pages). Instructions for writing the proposal can be found in the materials folder. Please return by (1) uploading it to the MyCourses return box and (2) emailing it to your supervisor who will be evaluating the proposal.

Technical instructions for all the assignments

Please use:

- Times New Roman 12
- line spacing 1,5
- margins 2,5
- Harvard referencing system <http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

Please provide

- your name, student number, assignment number and the word count on the first page of your assignments

Kindly observe that course assignments 1-3 are to be written in English only, and assignment 4 in the language of the thesis i.e. in English (or in Finnish in some rare cases). Assignments 1-3 will be graded by the course teacher(s) and assignment 4 by the supervisor.

6. READINGS

A master's thesis approved at Aalto Biz for the assignment 3. Articles relevant for your topic.

7. SCHEDULE

ASSINGMENT DUE DATES

| Assignment | Due date |
|--------------|----------------|
| Assignment 1 | 24.1. at 16.00 |
| Assignment 2 | 31.1. at 16.00 |
| Assignment 3 | 14.2 at 16.00 |

| Assignment | Due date |
|-------------|---------------|
| Final Paper | 7.3. at 16.00 |

VOLUNATRY TUTORING MEETINGS (MyCourses, zoom)

| Tutoring meeting | Date |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Meeting 1 | 17.1. 16.00-18.00 * |
| Meeting 2 | 7.2. 16.00-18.00* |
| Meeting 3 | 21.2. 16.00-18.00* |

*I will be in the zoom meeting room only for 15 min, if no one shows up. So, if you have something you want to discuss, please come in time.

8. COURSE WORKLOAD

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Assignments | 160 h |
| Total | 160 h (6CR) |

9. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/ensaannot/Aalto+University+Code+of+Academic+Integrity+and+Handling+Violations+Thereof>

In Finnish:

<https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pagelid=1183861>