

Master's Thesis Seminar 2

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Susanna Suurla
University Teacher & Doctoral Candidate
Aalto ARTS, Department of Film
susanna.suurla@aalto.fi

Today's topics

- Course content and learning outcomes
- Schedule and content of the second seminar year
- Catch up on your own thesis progress
- Scheduling for your own presentations
- Mini - Lecture: Towards a research question
- Task for next time

Course content and learning outcomes

- Master's Thesis Seminar 2 supports students in the writing and presentation of their MA written thesis.
- The seminar helps students to define their research questions and to choose research methodologies adapted to their own area of study and the goals of their research.
- The seminar will cover methods of citation and referencing for academic writing.
- Students will practice giving feedback to each other's work contributing to strengthening the research community of the department.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, students are able to:

- Formulate their MA thesis research question.
- Design a research methodology suitable for their MA thesis work.
- Apply methods of citation and referencing for academic writing.
- Assemble part of their MA thesis work.
- Assess and revise their MA thesis work as well as the thesis work of their peers.

Workload, assessment methods and criteria:

- Contact teaching 22h, independent study 32h.
- The course will consist of lectures by faculty and potential visitors, discussions, feedback, peer-review sessions and independent study time.
- Attendance, active participation in class and the completion of the course assignments are required in order to gain credits for the MA seminar.
- There will be an option to make extra assignments to compensate the missed sessions. This has to be approved by the teacher responsible for the course.
- Grading: 0-5 (Seminar 1 pass/fail)

Schedule and content – AUTUMN

- 11.9.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: MA seminar year 2 kick-off
- 25.9.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: Research Methods
- 16.10.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: Methodology and theoretical frameworks
- 13.11.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: Referencing & use of reference materials
- 27.11.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: Reasoning & argumentation

Schedule and content - SPRING

Taught jointly between MA 1 & MA 2 groups

- 29.1.2024: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: Styles of academic writing + thesis structure
- 19.2.2024: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112: Writing practices & Q&A on pre-assignments for intensive week

INTENSIVE WEEK:

4.3.-8.3. 9-17 (exact schedule and syllabus TBC later in spring)

Catch up on your own thesis progress + your wishes:

- what is the status of your thesis currently (possible changes, progress etc.)?
- what questions have emerged since the intensive week?
- what kind of support would you like to gain from the seminar?
- Is there a topic not covered in the schedule you hope would be included in the seminar program?
- other issues or questions?

Student Presentations:

- It is advisable that each of you gives a presentation about your thesis topic this year.
- The thesis does not need to be near ready and you can present your preliminary ideas only, or your progress thus far.

Student Presentations:

- The purpose is to help you in finding ways to present and discuss your thesis topic in an orderly manner, & support the eventual thesis presentation.
- In all presentations you should also have a student respondent who comments on the presentation.

Schedule/slots for student presentations:

Autumn

- 13.11.2023:
- 27.11.2023:

Spring

- 29.1.2024:
- 19.2.2024:

Towards a research question

what is a research question...

how does it help...

...in planning & conducting your research

WHAT IS A RESEARCH QUESTION?

Our answers:

An ever shifting question that changes each time I learn more

A tool that is hard to grasp and make accurate enough

An effective framing device

A motive for research

“punainen lanka” of research and writing... about research

Starting point of research but usually changes along the way

WHAT IS A RESEARCH QUESTION?

The question that the research sets out to answer

- Often addresses an issue or a problem, which, through analysis and interpretation of data, is answered in the study's conclusion

WHAT IS A RESEARCH QUESTION?

- An essential element of the study, guiding the choices made and aspects examined = guiding framework
- Seeks to improve knowledge on your topic

Quantitative research questions:

- Precise
- Typically begin with “what” or “how many”
- Not answerable with yes/no responses
- can be categorized into three types:
 - Descriptive
 - Comparative
 - relationship

Qualitative research questions:

- More adaptable, non-directional, and flexible
- generally aim to “discover,” “explain,” or “explore”
- can be categorized as:
 - Contextual
 - Descriptive
 - Emancipatory
 - Generative
 - Exploratory
 - Explanatory
 - Etc..

HOW TO FORMULATE A RESEARCH QUESTION?

- The research question you choose relates to the how you plan to conduct your study: *where and what kind of information you are looking for?*
- This in turn refines your research question

A good research question:

- Makes your prior theoretical assumptions more explicit and indicates what you want to know most and first
- Narrows down a broad topic of interest into a specific area of study
- In general, the more narrow and specific the question is, the better

Finding a good research question

- Can often be an iterative process.
- The more you know about your topic the easier it is to formulate a question
- The question should also be something that you will be able to answer in your master's thesis.

The Path to a Research Question: From Broad Topic to a Specific Question



Things to consider

- Time (*how much time do you have to do your research?*)
- Resources (*how much time, effort, money, knowledge and skills do you need?*)
- How you plan to answer this question (*what methods will you use?*)

Things to consider

- Aim of research (*what kind of knowledge you wish to produce?*)
- The problem/question you wish to answer (*what part of the problem/question can you answer to with your research?*)

These factors also help you in creating a feasible question.

TASK for next time

Read this online article: <https://guides.ecuad.ca/mfa/researchquestion>

Additional links:

<https://research.com/research/what-is-a-research-question>

<https://www.monash.edu/library/help/assignments-research/developing-research-questions>

<https://blog.wordvice.com/how-to-write-a-hypothesis-or-research-question/>

Think about what you want to know through your research/thesis work and **formulate a 1-2 sentence question that best describes what you wish to know.**

Think also about your motivation and what your question argues for.

Prepare to present your question and the reasoning for your question to others in the next meeting 25.9.