


# Master's Thesis Seminar 1

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## INTRODUCTION



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# Course Content

The purpose of the Master's Thesis Seminar 1 is to assist students *brainstorm, develop, research and formulate* the topic of their MA written thesis.

# Course Content

The course will help students to design and plan their research, as well as familiarizing them with research methodologies and resources.

The course consists of lectures, discussions, feedback, peer-review sessions and independent study time.

# Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are able to:

- Discuss their ideas/topics for their MA thesis.
- Indicate potential research methodologies suitable for their research.
- Identify theoretical frameworks relevant to their thesis topic.
- Employ diverse research databases and resources.
- Construct a basic literary/project review for their topic.
- Sketch their research questions.

- The course enhances skills related to thesis writing and dialogue amongst the students, building a common culture for understanding, analyzing, presenting and critiquing thesis work.
- During the course, you will also exchange ideas and provide feedback to one another.
- You will present and develop your first thesis plan draft according to University guidelines.

# Assessment Methods and Criteria

- 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 scale: Pass/Fail

# Workload

- Contact teaching 22h, independent study 32h.
- Independent study: small tasks between lectures and a larger writing assignment (= thesis plan) before and during the intensive week
- Credits 2 cr

## Autumn 2023

- **2.10.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112 Projekti M**  
Introduction to the MA Seminar in English
- **16.10.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112 Projekti M**  
Thesis guidelines & finding a topic
- **6.11.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112 Projekti M**  
Introduction to artistic research
- **20.11.2023: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112 Projekti M**  
Steps for writing a thesis plan



# Spring 2024

*Taught jointly between MA 1 & MA 2 groups*

- **29.1.2024: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112 Projekti M - 0112**

Styles of academic writing + thesis structure

- **19.2.2024: 15.15–17.00, Väre, 0112 Projekti M - 0112**

Writing practices & Q&A on pre-assignments

## **4.-8.3.2024 Intensive Week**

Monday – Friday 9:15 – 17:00, exact schedule given late February / early March

# Your Wishes

Things you wish to learn of or know more of during the course, research interests, topics of interests, such as methods, certain theoretical approaches etc.

How to generate my own opinion, not to just gather theories and ideas others have written about.



THESES IN YOUR  
MAJOR & AALTO



# Thesis guidelines in student guide:

<https://www.aalto.fi/en/programmes/masters-programme-in-film-and-television/thesis>



# INFORMATION SOURCES



# Aalto Docs publication archive

<https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/>

Consists of materials produced in the university:

- BA, MA and doctoral theses
- journal articles, conference publications and research materials
- majority of the publications are available online (as PDF's) and the full-text search is available

- access to some materials is restricted, such as all BA theses and some of the MA theses as well.
- Aaltodoc also contains metadata of the restricted texts
- you can access the full-texts from the computers at the Learning Center Library

# Other useful information sources

- Your major's own library (access via student assistant/teaching staff)
- Aalto Learning Centre Library database, Aalto Primo:  
<https://primo.aalto.fi>
- Theatre Academy Library database, Uniarts Finna:  
<https://uniarts.finna.fi/>
- Search tools and databases of scholarly literature:  
<https://scholar.google.com/>, <https://www.elsevier.com/>,  
<https://www.researchgate.net/>
- Journals of artistic research: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/>,  
<http://ruukku-journal.fi/>



**Finding a topic:**  
discussion points

## What is a good topic?

- Something you care about: passion, motivation, inspiration, (makes you smile).
- A topic you have your own opinions & ideas about
- Something you can research in depth, makes you an expert on the subject, enables to learn new things
- Broad enough so you can write a lot, but specific enough for clarity and research
- Is relevant to others
- Allows to be creative

Ideas for a topic

How AI will change production design thinking

Relationship between stage design and production design / or production design and architecture

## How to work on a topic from 'another' area?

- Search for materials and get to know the field/information/books
- Courses related to the topic
- Collaborate with someone from another area

## When is a topic too broad?

- No definite scope
- not possible to do in a limited time frame
- Does not need too advanced research skills = fits the level required in MA

## How can a topic have many possibilities?

- The question does not have a yes/no answer, but multiple answers instead of one
- It can be addressed in many ways
- Something that evolves over time
- Connects to own art practice, and as you work you can search for more possibilities/answers to your question

## How can a topic can 'find you'?

- By finding a common interest through your research/work
- Daydreams & ideation, intuitive aha moments
- Collect inspirations, collect daily thinking -> generate something interesting from there
- Discussing with friends & colleagues
- Look for inspirational materials
- STAY OPEN!

# **Defining your project**

# Defining your project

*Things to consider BEFORE starting*

Why have I decided to do some research?

- You have to do the research because ... you have to.
- You have found a topic that fascinates you and you really want to research that.



*How to stay motivated and remain interested in my research?*

What to do if I lose the motivation?

- Find a working method that suits you
- Ask for advice, talk to others
- Try different ways to work (learn to know yourself!)

## *Things to consider WHEN starting*

- Take enough time to think about the issues involved, search and read something that concerns your topic, get to know some main aspects related to it.

Ask and answer these following questions:

**WHAT?**

- *What is your research about?*

**WHY?**

- *Why do you want to do the research? What is its purpose?*

## WHO?

- *Who will be your participants? who is the research for?*

## WHERE?

- *Where are you going to conduct your research?*
- *E.g. If you're going to conduct interviews or focus groups, where will you hold them?*

## WHEN?

- *When are you going to do your research?*
- *Is the project possible within your own / your participants time scale?*

## After answering these five questions, define your project:

- Sum up in one paragraph what you are going to do/ask /research.
- What is your topic/main question?
- Why does it matter?
- What is the context?
- How do you plan to approach the analysis?
- Ask other people to read and comment your project idea.
- Use peer support: Do others understand what you want to do? =  
Let them ask questions, try to answer → answering questions is  
often the easiest way to make an understandable research plan.

“Becoming a successful researcher is a continual learning process in which we all make mistakes. So don’t worry if your first project doesn’t run as smoothly as you might wish.

*Instead, remember that undertaking a research project can be fascinating, rewarding and exciting*

# Sources

- Johanna Oksanen, Research practices lecture material
- Sofia Pantouvaki, MA seminar lecture material
- Catherine Dawson 2007. *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. How To Books Ltd
- Tua Helve, doctoral candidate, lecture material 2020

# Task 1 for next time 6.11.

Familiarize your self with aalto docs:<https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/> or aalto primo:  
<https://primo.aalto.fi/>

- Pick 2 MA theses from your own field and browse through them for next time (since production design only has a few options, feel free to look at others as well)
- The main idea is to become familiar what type of theses have been done in our programme.
- Prepare to introduce the thesis to our group briefly in our next meeting :
  - *What is the topic*
  - *How is the research conducted in the thesis*
  - *What is the aim of the thesis?*



# Thesis Examples

Most of recent theses are available at aaltodocs.

Examples of theses available in English:

**Design for Performance:** Oscar Dempsey, Fabian Nyberg, Maria Ensterä, Anders Karls

**Production Design:** Eve Koivurinta, Bjarke Aalto, Lena Bennedsen, Aki Tarkka, Elina Eskelinen (BA), Hung Nguyen.

**Costume Design:** Katri Nikkola, Laura Malinen, Heli Salomaa, Elina Ström, Tjasa Frumen, Csilla Szlovak, Maria Vidál, Ingvill Fossheim, Susanna Suurla

More thesis works (especially older ones) can be found at the programmes own library in Väre, contact the teaching assistant for access.

# Task 2

(For next time 6.11.2023)

Think of a topic or subject you are interested in and prepare to present *the core idea in one or two sentences (draft statement)*:

Compose a simple sentence or two in which you state your area of curiosity and explain why the topic is significant, relevant, and worthy of study.