

# 26E99905, Master's Thesis Seminar, 6 ECTS

## SYLLABUS

(24.8.2016)

Instructor's contact information	Course information	
<b>Saija Kaila</b> ( <a href="mailto:saija.katila@aalto.fi">saija.katila@aalto.fi</a> ) Office E3.17 (ARKADIA BUILDING) Office Hours (By appointment)	Status of the course	<b>Advanced</b>
	Academic Year, Period	<b>2016-17; Period 1</b>
	Location	E-341 (Arkadia)
	Language of Instruction	<b>English</b>
	Course Website(s):	
	MyCourses:	
	<a href="https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=11497">https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=11497</a>	

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

### 1. OVERVIEW

The aim of the 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 under the individual supervision of the student's thesis supervisor. Individual thesis supervisors will be assigned during the seminar. The seminar is only meant to support the thesis writing process.

The seminar consists of three introductory lectures after which the student has independent study period during which a longer version of the research proposal will be finalized. During this process the student is to contact her/his supervisor and establish a working supervisory relationship.

### 2. PREREQUISITES

Completed Bachelor's studies and thesis or equivalent. Note that it is recommended that the student participates in a relevant methodology course roughly at the same time as he or she participates in the Master's Thesis seminar.

### 3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The students are expected to learn how to produce a Master's thesis of high standard. To achieve this objective, the student will engage in evaluating the quality of academic research, seeking supervision

from their assigned supervisors, and independently developing their own research proposal in the area of their specialization.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The seminar will be graded 0-5. Attendance in the seminar lectures is mandatory. The course evaluation is based on the following:

- Assignment #1: analysis and evaluation of existing thesis (20% of the final grade)
- Assignment #2: first draft of individual research proposal (20% of the final grade)
- Assignment #3: memo of supervisory meeting and steps to be taken (10% of the final grade)
- Assignment #4: final research proposal (50% of the final grade)

#### 5. ASSIGNMENTS

##### **Assignment 1 (10%):**

The student is to analyze and evaluate an existing thesis relevant to his/her topic/ methods/interests/level of ambition. First describe briefly the study and how does it relate to your research interests. Then evaluate it using the Master's Thesis Evaluation Rubric as your evaluation tool. Assess 1) What was good? 2) What could be improved? 3) 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 1200-1300 words.

##### **Assignment 2 (20%):**

The student is to develop an individual research proposal which would include one's research problem/objective(s), research questions, conceptual definitions, and ideas concerning one's theoretical framework, data collection and methodological choices. The length of the proposal is 1200-1500 words. Instructions can be found in the materials folder.

##### **Assignment 3 (10 %):**

The student is to contact the supervisor and present the first draft of the research proposal to her/him, and 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 400-800 words.

##### **Assignment 4 (50%):**

Based on the feedback from the supervisor and the course teacher the student is to write a full length research proposal. The length of the proposal is 4500-5000 words (i.e. approximately 15 pages). Instructions for writing the proposal can be found in the materials folder.

##### **Technical instructions for all the assignments**

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

Kindly observe that course assignments 1-3 are to be written in English only, and assignment 4 in the language the thesis will be written i.e. in English (or in Finnish).

Assignments 1-3 will be graded by the course teacher and assignment 4 by the supervisor.

## 6. READINGS

To be specified by the instructor. Mainly this will be reading a master's thesis approved at Aalto Biz for the assignment due for Seminar #2.

## 7. PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Session	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due Date
Seminar #1	15.9.2016 16:00- 19:00	Introduction to thesis process, posing research questions		
Seminar #2	22.9.2016 16:00- 19:00	Building a research proposal		Assignment 1 <b>21.9. at 23.00</b>
Seminar #3	29.9.2016 16:00- 19:00	Reading and writing		Assignment 2 <b>26.9. at 23.00</b>
				Assignment 3 <b>20.10. at 23.00</b>
				Assignment 4 <b>17.11. at 23.00</b>

## 8. COURSE WORKLOAD

Classroom hours	9 h
Class preparation	9 h
Assignments	132 h
<b>Total</b>	<b>160h (6 op)</b>

## 9. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof:

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

<https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pagelId=3772443> (In Finnish)

## 10. OTHER ISSUES

As the seminar consist of a relatively few lectures, the attendance of the seminar meetings is mandatory.

It is strongly recommended that students enrolling in the Master's Thesis seminar have either completed or are concurrently working on a relevant methodology course (21E00011 Doing Qualitative Research or 26E02900 Doing Quantitative Research).