

26E99905, Master's Thesis Seminar, 6 ECTS

SYLLABUS

(20.8.2018)

| Instructor's contact information | Course information | |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| Hannu Seristö (hannu.seristo@aalto.fi) Office Hours: By appointment | Status of the course | Advanced |
| | Academic Year, Period | 2018; Period 1 |
| | Location | E127 |
| Teaching assistant: Mia Leppälä (mia.leppala@aalto.fi) | Language of Instruction | English |
| | MyCourses: | |
| | https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=19955 | |

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 enroll 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 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 kickoff for thesis writing process. Early on in the seminar, students will contact their supervisor and establish a working supervisory relationship.

The seminar consists of three introductory lectures followed by an independent study period. In this time students will finalize a longer version of the research proposal. Students can furthermore make use of the voluntary progress seminar in period 4, where they can present their work and receive feedback from the course teacher and fellow students.

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 currently participating in the methods courses (21E00011 Doing Qualitative Research, 26E02900 Doing Quantitative Research).

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
- be able to conduct independent scientific research under supervision

4. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The seminar will be graded based on the following the assignments:

- 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)
- Assignment #5: post to the discussion forum (0% of the final grade, but needs to be passed)

The final grade (0 to 5) is based on cutoff 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 and all assignments need to be passed with a grade of 1/5 in order to get a final grade for the course. Attendance in the seminar lectures is mandatory.

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

5. ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1:

Analysis and evaluation of an existing thesis relevant to your 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:

Development of an individual research proposal, which includes your research setting and problem/objective(s), research questions, conceptual definitions, and ideas concerning your theoretical framework, data collection and methodological choices. The length of the proposal is 1200-1500 words.

Assignment 3:

Contacting your supervisor and presenting 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 400-800 words.

Assignment 4:

Writing 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 (i.e. approximately 15 pages). Instructions for writing the proposal can be found in the materials folder. Please return by (1) uploading to the MyCourses return box and (2) emailing to your supervisor.

Assignment 5:

Writing a post to the course discussion forum in MyCourses. During the seminar you are expected to either write a post containing a meaningful question or reflection on the thesis seminar or respond to your fellow students' posts. You are expected to write at least four to eight sentences.

Technical instructions for all the assignments

Please use

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

Please provide

- the word count on the first page of your assignments

Kindly observe that course assignments 1-3 and 5 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, and 5 will be graded by the course teacher and assignment 4 by the supervisor.

6. READINGS

A master's thesis approved at Aalto Biz for the assignment due for Seminar #2. Articles relevant for your topic.

7. PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

| Session | Date | Place | Topic | Assignment Due Date |
|------------|--------------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Seminar #1 | 12.9.2018 9:00-11:45 | E-127, Arkadia | Introduction to thesis process, posing research questions | |
| Seminar #2 | 3.10.2018 9:00-11:45 | E-127, Arkadia | Planning a research proposal | Assignment 1 2.10. at 23.00 |
| Seminar #3 | 10.10.2018 9:00-11:45 | E-127, Arkadia | How to review literature and write | Assignment 2 9.10. at 23.00 |
| | | | | Assignment 3 1.11. at 23.00 |
| | | | | Assignment 4 & 5 15.11. at 23.00 |
| Seminar #4 | to be decided | to be decided | Progress seminar | |

8. COURSE WORKLOAD

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Classroom hours | 9 h |
| Class preparation | 9 h |
| Assignments | 132 h |
| Total | 160h (6 op) |

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>

<https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=1183861> (In Finnish)

Welcome to the course!