

Bachelor Thesis Seminar—Writing Group

Code: M-354

Term: Fall 2022

ECTS credits: 6

Lessons per week: 120 min

Instructor: Mgr. Dagmar Kusá, PhD.

Form of study: Seminar

Meets: Fridays 10:00—12:00 in Learning Lab

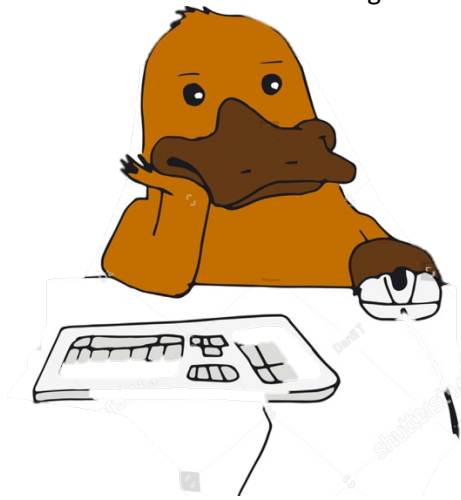
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Google classroom code: rnocptm



Dear class,

You are now entering your third and final year of your studies, and this project is the flagship of your educational journey at BISLA. Or as Stevie Ray Vaughan said, 'tis your pride and joy. The thesis you are writing is not just another assignment you were given, it is hopefully a story you have chosen to tell about the world, about something you care deeply about. It is also, unlike other assignments, a thoroughly collaborative assignment, especially with your advisor—which means it is also an introduction into an academic world of research and writing. It is also your first official publication that will be out there in the world for all to see, no pressure.

You are embarking on this project during much turmoil in the world—democracy is backsliding falling into disfavor, people trust each other, political institutions and media less and less, societies are more and more divided, and there is a war next door that will bring its own dire consequences on our economies and relations. It is not an easy time to do social sciences or humanities research, but such research is evermore important.

Whether you become an academic researcher or not, this project and this class should help you become a better researcher and writer, inquisitive and creative thinker, and an empathic and helpful colleague to others, no matter what path life will send you on after BISLA. Farewell and prosper, and have each other's back!

Dagmar.

Goals of this class:

- The main practical goal, of course, is to complete a draft of your bachelor thesis.
- The class also aims to help you find and finetune your writing process, writing habits, and habits in general,

- Help master and sustain motivation for your topic through writing regularly,
- Learn to use a writing group—offering and receiving feedback to perfect the quality of written work, learn to lean on your colleagues and thrive from being vulnerable and open to others,
- Realize the relevance of your writing and use it as a resource,
- Found the relevance in core values that are meaningful to you

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes Students should:	Corresponding Study Program Learning Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master the academic writing of a long paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proficient use of the English language in academic and professional settings • Producing academic papers at an advanced level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to conduct an independent research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply quantitative and qualitative social science research methods • Work independently, demonstrate initiative, self-organization, and time management • Gather, organize, and present evidence, data, and information from a variety of sources, ability to work with research data and databases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to formulate a precise research hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a reasoned argument and exercise critical judgment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be experienced in receiving and giving constructive feedback 	Be able to work in diverse teams (interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international) Engage in constructive dialogue, ability to navigate and resolve conflicts Being self-reflective of one own strengths, weaknesses, and needs

Process: How We Do

- Each week, you will be required to bring 2—5 (not less and not more) pages of new text that you want to go over with your colleagues in small groups. The main part of the work process thus rests on your writing regularly and bringing your writing into class. You can also use **Friday afternoons—BISLA Typing Platypi writing group** (each Friday from 13:30 to 15:30) to focus on this type of writing. If that is not an option, I encourage you to establish a small writing circle of your own—the key is that it takes place regularly, just as if it were another class.
- We will do a lot of writing in the class, however, not all of it will be content writing. We will use different writing techniques to improve writing skills and the process of writing overall.
- Each class will start with an ensemble—all of the writers meet together at the beginning and end of each class (at least the first and last ten minutes) to reflect and plan,
- Sharing and responding—much of the work in class will happen in small groups that will be set at the beginning of the semester, where you will review each other’s writing, give feedback, brainstorm, and perfect your research and writing along the way.

Evaluation: Labor-based Grading Contract

Labor-based grading contract is a type of collective social contract that we together arrive at during the first class together. It stipulates conditions for grades that we all agree to—that is, what constitutes an A grade, what constitutes a B grade, etc. These conditions will be stipulated in Grading Contract, which will be collectively negotiated and signed in the first class.

You will monitor your progress by paying attention, on a weekly basis, to how much time do you spend on various tasks related to the thesis process, especially reading and writing, and with what level of engagement. This will not only help you assess your work process but also learn a bit about what kind of researcher and writer you are and finetune your writing habits. You will find the PROGRESS TRACKER on the Google Classroom.

The grade in this course generally has little to do with the overall quality of your final written product – your thesis—which will be evaluated separately by your thesis advisor and the thesis opponent. Rather, it is a function of your consistency, investment into your writing, and collegiality.

Readings

Baglione, L. 2020. *Writing a research paper in political science. A practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods. 4th*, London, UK : CQ Press, an imprint of SAGE.

Bolker, J. 1998. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. Owl Books. Henry Holt and Company.

Clear, J. *Atomic Habits. An Easy and Proven Way to Make Good Habits and Break Bad Ones*.

Eco, U.: *Jak napsat diplomovou práci?*

Katuščák, D. 2007. *Ako písať záverečné a kvalifikačné práce?* Bratislava: Enigma.

Kirby, S. L., Greaves, L. & Reid, C. 2010. *Experience Research. Social Change Methods Beyond the Mainstream*. Toronto: Toronto Press Inc.

Pinker, S. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in 21st Century*. Penguin.

Scott, G. M. and Garrison, S.M. 2006. *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual, 5th ed*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Single, P.B. (2010) *Demystifying Dissertation Writing: Streamlined Process from Choice of Topic to Final Text*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

Zinsser, W. *On Writing Well. The Classic Guide to Writing Non-fiction*. HarperCollins.

Prerequisites

Bachelor Seminar M-Term—submitted and approved thesis proposal by the Academic Council

1. September 23

Planning session

Reflective writing—Where are you at right now? What do you want to tackle in this class in common sessions that you think all of you can benefit from?

Goal setting—group, individual

Write up the Grading Contract

Focus groups: Break into groups of three

Ensemble: Process writing

Handouts: OUTLINE for writing, Work and habits tracker

Assignment: Plan. Put together your proposal, notes from texts or interviews, texts you will read, your research journal. Write up a road plan of what you will do first, second, third...
Work with a detailed outline of your thesis

2. September 30

Ensemble topic: Ways of responding and sharing

Strategies of responding to writing in a writing group

Focus groups: Review plans, agree on the first chunk of text you will write and bring to your group

Focus group: Speaking to a page – start a new section of what you will write next

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: write 2–3 pages of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

3. October 7

Topic: Motivation + creating atomic habits

Focus groups: Review the assignment – “center of gravity” and “summary and sayback”

Focus groups: freewriting on motivation

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment Write 2-3 pages of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

4. October 14

Topic: Theory building. Themes, key concepts, relations.

Tony Buzan and mind mapping

Ensemble: Process writing

Focus groups:

Assignment: finalize a chapter

5. October 21

Ensemble topic: Outlining –microstructure of the (next) chapter. Relevance of writing.

Focus groups: review the draft of a chapter

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: **write 2–3 pages** of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

6. October 28

Ensemble topic: Using sources in writing

1st hour: writing without sources

2nd hour: integrate sources

Ensemble: Process writing

7. Reading Week

Assignment: finalize a draft of a chapter

8. November 11

Ensemble topic: Life after BISLA

Focus groups: feedback on the draft of a chapter

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: write 2–3 pages of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

9. November 18

Ensemble topic: CVs

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: write 2–3 pages of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

10. November 25

Ensemble topic: Personal statements

Focus groups

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: produce a CV and/or a personal statement

11. December 2

Ensemble topic: Editing

Focus groups: CVs and personal statements

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: write 2–3 pages of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

12. December 9

Ensemble topic: Formatting

Focus groups

Ensemble: Process writing

Assignment: write 2–3 pages of text for focus group peer review. BRING TO CLASS NEXT FRIDAY.

13. December 16

Topic: BISLA House style

Ensemble: Process writing

Focus groups

Assignment: Work on the conclusion, introduction, and/or abstract of your thesis. Bring to class next Friday.

14. December 23

Ensemble: Process writing

Focus groups: **Introductions, conclusions, abstracts**

Plan the process of finalization of the thesis, remaining to do's, things to discuss with the advisor, time plan with deadlines

SUBMIT A DRAFT OF THE THESIS BY DEC 23 to me and to your thesis advisor.