

What's a Thesis all About?

I. DEFINING, DESIGNING AND DELIVERING A RIGOROUS PIECE OF RESEARCH

DEFINING



Your general research area or research interest



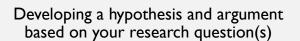
Your specific object: a relevant issue or topic within your general interest.



Your research question or questions regarding that object.

FRAMING







Identifying the theoretical frameworks that relate to your research question(s) and hypotheses – the authoritative literature in your field or sub-field.



Applying those frameworks to your research object (the relationship between theoretical frameworks and their specific application)

DEVISING





AN APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY TO SELECT, COLLECT, AND ORGANIZE (CLASSIFY) DATA PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA



Quantitative



Statistics and statistical analysis (large scale surveys and data bases)



Qualitative



Participant Observation (ethnography)



Interviews



Discourse and text analysis

THE THESIS

The Thesis should show that students have developed expertise in their research area (knowledge of their object of research), the methodological skills to engage in the research, and the capacity to apply relevant theoretical frameworks through rigorously unfolded argument about a research object and question. The Thesis, in other words, involves a structured argument about a problem/puzzle/issue of academic and general relevance, informed by theory and backed by empirical data.



II. STRUCTURE

Thesis Writing and Presentation

BASIC STRUCTURE



Table of Contents



An abstract of 300 words (to be written after completion of text). Brief summary of object, argument and results.



A general introduction covering the object, the research question and argument (hypothesis), with an outline of subsequent chapter contents.



A literature review with a discussion of the methodology chosen and justification of the data selection process



An evidence chapter that unfolds the main contents of the data used for the study, followed by an analysis and assessment of the relationship between evidence, theory and hypothesis



Conclusions

WRITING THE THESIS



Identifying a research object of academic and broader social interest.



Developing a research question or research questions, and formulating a hypothesis



You then develop a core theme or argument, comparable to a leading melody in a piece of polyphonic music. That core theme must be filled with content (polyphonies, in music). The "melody" will carry you logically from one chapter to the next. So keep it in mind when writing your chapters.



Advice: Do not seek to write the Thesis in one shot. Write each chapter as if it were an academic article, while always keeping your overall melody in mind. Don't start with the introduction, but with one of the other chapters.

THE INTRODUCTION

The Introduction should set out the object of the research, the relevance of the object (why the subject is important to the academic debate and broadly to society), the research more question(s) and argument(s) made, and engage in a brief discussion of the literature/theory used to back the argument – more fully developed in the literature review. It should give a clear and succinct statement of the aims and objectives of the thesis, and contain an outline of the chapters in the dissertation (the topics covered in each chapter). The introduction should make your assumptions and normative commitments explicit to the reader.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter situates your work in an established body of theory (different schools of thought). It should evidence knowledge and mastery the literature in your specific research domain, and highlight the work that is relevant to your research and that founds or backs up your argument. It must also highlight different views and argue why the theoretical framework(s) chosen is/are more appropriate than others. The Review should include a methodology section which makes explicit the methods used in your work (primary and secondary sources, quantitative and qualitative methods, etc.), the identification of variables, measurement, method of analysis, and so forth.

CASE STUDY, EVIDENCE, DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS

This chapter presents and discusses/analyses the evidence gathered on a case in IR, IPE, or related fields of international social theory. Depending upon your topic and issue-area, this can be in the form of detailed quantitative models, hypothesis testing through data and descriptive statistics; or qualitative techniques: content analysis, textual analysis, case study descriptions, participant observation; or studies based on historical trends (historical sociology). The chapter presents the data gathered in a logical and coherently ordered way, leading to research results: the outcome of the research.

CONCLUSION(S)

The conclusion(s) chapter outlines the theoretical and/or policy conclusions that may be drawn from the research. It should discuss remaining questions/issues that may require further research.