

Guidelines BA and MA theses

You want to write a BA or MA thesis in the field of comparative political economy or public policy? Great, I will be happy to supervise your work! Here are a few key points to consider before you contact me.

To decide whether I am a suitable supervisor, I need information. So do not simply send me an email with a possible title but rather submit a research proposal. This research proposal should address the following questions:

- What is the research question (in general, you should be able to formulate the research question in one sentence)?
- Why is this research question relevant (what is the big picture)?
- To what extent does your thesis go beyond a simple discussion of the existing literature?
- What literature on this topic is already out there? What kind of literature are you planning to use?
- What theoretical approach are you going to use?
- What is your methodological approach? How do you plan to proceed (e.g. data sources, access, case selection)?
- How do you plan to structure your thesis?

Of course, I do not expect you to submit a huge document and you are not expected to slavishly stick to these questions. I simply need to gain a good impression of what you are up to, which makes answering these questions a good starting point. Similarly, I do not expect a comprehensive literature review. The discussion of a few key references suffices. Overall, try to aim for about five pages for the whole research proposal.

Please note that I am a political scientist. Hence, I expect you to cover the political science literature but I do not mind if you go beyond it. What is more, I am quite fond of sound social science methodology (after all I am teaching it...). So please make sure you think about the important methodological questions. In terms of methods, I do not mind whether you work qualitatively or quantitatively. The research question determines the method and not vice versa.

Once I have received your research proposal, I will read it and (most likely) ask you to revise it (based on my comments). Once the research proposal is ready, we will meet to discuss it even further. If and only if I am convinced that your research proposal holds water, I will give my written consent to act as your supervisor. So bring the form to the meeting but do not bank on getting it signed already at the first meeting. Of course, this procedure implies that there is no point in contacting me five days before the deadline.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Patrick Emmenegger, August 17, 2015