

## WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS

### Content

A research paper must be based on a clear *design*, which lives up to the expectations of a *research concept* (see handout on research proposals). Assignments that do not conform to these requirements might not be accepted, and will certainly receive lower grades. The topic of the paper **must** be discussed with the professor in advance. You **can** also seek feedback for your concept. Make use of the lectures, office hours, and other types of communication (E-mail) to prepare the assignments and to do the necessary follow-up.

The papers should include the following points:

- What is the research question?
- What exactly (which puzzle) is to be examined? (Identification of the dependant variables)
- Which explanatory factors will be considered?
- Which approach/ method is being used?
- How are the variables operationalized?
- Which hypotheses (i.e. relationship between each IV and the DV) are being tested?
- How were the case(s) and the time frame selected?
- Theoretical framework: Which theory/ theories are employed to explain the relationship between the dependent and independent variable(s)?
- Empirical examination
  - Briefly: What is the state of the art?
  - Testing of the hypotheses on the basis of the case(s) by operationalizing the variables
- Summary (= overview/ evaluation of findings and reply to research question)
- Outlook and questions for further research

⇒ For further information on content design and research formalities consult:  
Stephen van Evera (1997): Guide to Methods for Students of Political Sciences.  
Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

## Formalities

- *Front page*: Indicate all relevant information here, including which type of certificate (“Leistungs- or Teilnahmechein”) you intend to receive. Additionally, state the total number of words.
- *Standard*: Typesize 12 pt, line spacing 1.5.
- *For better legibility*: please align the text on the left, italicize foreign words.
- *Length*:
  - BA seminar papers must be approximately 3,000 words long (about 10 pages; front page, index, and bibliography **included**)
  - MA seminar papers must be approximately 6,000 words (about 20 pages; front page, index, and bibliography **included**)
  - You may fall short of or exceed these requirements by a maximum of 5%
- (Only for MA seminar papers:) An “abstract” (about 10 lines) should precede the introduction.
- Make sure to include a paginated index that follows a logical structure with numerated sub-parts (1, 1.1...).
- An alphabetically sorted *bibliography* is to be attached at the end. The bibliography should illustrate the author's ability to conduct independent research. It should include at least ten titles for a proseminar and twenty for an advanced seminar paper.
- Citations and comments are to be included as *footnotes* at the bottom of each page. You can use short references (North 1992) if they are itemized in the Bibliography. Always indicate the sources of quotations and paraphrased passages. For Internet citations, please follow the rules of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Note that according to the MLA, you will have to provide the date on which you accessed the webpage. (See handout on citations for more information).
- Use *abbreviations* to describe repeatedly named organizations or institutions and list them after the table of contents. Avoid using other, colloquial abbreviations (like e.g., i.e., etc.).
- For *Slavic language names* you should either use the German scientific transcription with diacritical signs (a list of scientific transcriptions can be found in the “Duden”) or the Anglo-American transcription (e.g. the one used by the Library of Congress) without diacritical sign. Exceptions: Quotations and popular English forms (e.g. Moscow instead of Moskva).
- Charts, graphs and visualizations should be incorporated into the text (not attached as an appendix).

## Submission

- Please stick to the deadlines. Papers that are submitted after the deadline can usually not be considered. The due date during the summer term is August 15 and March 15 during the winter term.
- Please submit your research paper as a .doc file via email to: [shkabpol@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:shkabpol@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

### Criteria for Evaluation

- The evaluation of the assignments follows formal as well as content-based criteria. On average, a neither very accomplished, nor very poor assignment will receive a grade between 2 and 3.
- From a maximum of 5 points (equivalent to the grade 1), points will be deducted according to the following scheme:
  - Missing or ambiguous research question: 0.5 – 1 point
  - Missing or ambiguous variables: 0.5 – 1 point
  - Missing operationalization: 0.5 points per variable
  - Missing or shaky hypothesis: 0.5 – 1 point
  - No indication of the theory and/ or method: 0.5 points each
  - Going above/ below the word limit by more than 5%: 1 point
  - Poor language and/or orthography depending on severity: 0.5 points – no grade

⇒ **Please do not plagiarize.** Any attempt will automatically result in a failing grade for the assignment and can even lead to expulsion from the university (see handout on plagiarism).