

Academic Skills in Political Science

<u>Semester:</u>	Winter 2015/16
<u>Programme:</u>	Bachelor in Political Science
<u>Lecturer:</u>	Mirijam Böhme
<u>Time and Place:</u>	Monday, 10-12 a.m., F21/02.18
<u>Start:</u>	12 th October 2015
<u>Enrolment:</u>	September 1 st until October 25 th via FlexNow! (If you face any difficulties please contact me)
<u>Note:</u>	The seminar will be taught in English



Overview

In this seminar you will be introduced to the foundations of Political Science research. During the semester I will lead you through the most important cornerstones of research practices. We will start by discussing what Political Science actually is; what we do, why we do it and what the specifics of the Bamberg program are. We will then move on to learn how to find and manage scientific literature, what the standards of scientific research are and how to make use of it when you write your own essays. Next, we will learn how to find research questions and how to answer those questions with solid arguments. We will also talk about possible research designs in Political Science.

The aim of this seminar is to teach you the basic academic skills you will need to successfully study Political Science. After this course you should be equipped with the set of tools that enable you to conduct your own research in future seminars.

Literature

The literature for this course will be made available through the Virtual Campus. The password will be provided during the first session. See the reading list below for detailed information.

Grading

In order to successfully pass the course, students will be required to attend the sessions regularly and to prepare the indicated literature. The course will be graded as passed when students have attended at least 80% of the sessions.

Speaking Hours

Speaking hours are by appointment only. In order to make an appointment please write me an email (mirijam.boehme@uni-bamberg.de) or come to me before/after the session.

Reading Guide

12.10.15 What is Political Science?

In this first session we will get an overview of what it means to do Political Science. Where does the discipline come from? What are the questions we address? Why is it important that we do it? And what do you think it is that Political Science does?

Literature:

Watts, Duncan J. (2011). Everything is Obvious: Once You Know the Answer. New York: Crown Business, Preface and Chapter 1.

19.10.15 Political Science in Bamberg: What we do

As we have learned last session, Political Science is a broad discipline. Naturally, not every university does the same but they have quite unique focuses. This week we will have a look at what the Bamberg profile looks like and what you can learn while you are studying here.

Literature:

A short summary of every fields' research and teaching focuses will be provided.

26.10.15 Library tour

Today you will get a library tour, explaining to you all the possibilities of gathering literature and data at the local library. This includes an introduction to the most important databases available here.

02.11.15 Literature research & management

In this session we will practice how to find adequate literature. You will have the opportunity to apply your new knowledge from the library tour by completing your own literature research in small working groups. We will then discuss your results and I will introduce you to useful ways of managing literature.

09.11.15 How to read a text

You will read a lot during your political science studies. In this session we will go through different reading techniques that will help you understand texts more quickly as well as to get the most out of reading them. We will practice those techniques and discuss them together.

Literature:

Edwards, Paul N. (2008). How to Read a Book (Version 5.0). School of Information, University of Michigan:

<http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf> (09.2015).

16.11.15 The praxis of good scientific work

There are certain standards you need to stick to in scientific studies. Today we will talk about these standards and make sure you know how to ensure them in your own work. This includes talking about some formal rules, citation and linguistic standards.

Literature:

DFG (2013). Safeguarding good scientific practice.

23.11.15 How to write an essay

Today we will discuss the general points concerning your future essays. How do you secure successful essay writing? We will talk about how to organise your work, how to structure your thesis: the Do's and Don'ts of essay writing.

Literature:

“tba”

30.11.15 How to find and formulate a research question

At the beginning, one of the most daunting tasks seems to be to find a research question for your essays. It needs to be of interest for you but it also needs to matter in the political science discourse. In this session, we will talk about guidelines that will help you to find interesting and good research questions.

Literature:

Booth, Wayne C.; Colomb, Gregory G. and Joseph M. Williams (2008). Asking Questions, Finding Answers, In: Booth, Wayne C.; Colomb, Gregory G. and Joseph M. Williams: The Craft of Research, pp. 29-67.

07.12.15 Foundations of scientific argumentation

Once you have found your research question, it is up to your argumentation to convince the reader of your work. In order to make a strong point your arguments need to be bullet proof. Today we will learn how to structure and phrase those arguments.

Literature:

Booth, Wayne C.; Colomb, Gregory G. and Joseph M. Williams (2008). Making A Claim And Supporting It, In: Booth, Wayne C.; Colomb, Gregory G. and Joseph M. Williams: The Craft of Research, pp. 103-170.

14.12.15 Research designs in Political Science

Political Science is still a broad field and has a great variety of possible research designs. I want to introduce you to some of those possible research designs. We will also discuss how to choose between those designs and what you need to watch out for when you conduct your research.

Literature:

“tba”

11.01.16 Presentations

Apart from writing essays you will also need to hold presentations during your studies. I will guide you through important points to consider when presenting in front of a small crowd. I will also give you some useful tips to structure your PowerPoint presentations and outlines. We will practise this by preparing and giving small presentations in the last part of the session.

18.01.15 Competences for the job market

In this last session we will discuss job opportunities for political scientists from Bamberg. There is a great variety of possibilities where they can start to work. With your study focuses and internships you lay the basis for where you want to work in the future. In this session we will discuss some of the opportunities as well as what you will have to do for it.