



Thesis and Paper Questionnaire

Author / Verfasser:in:

Degree program / Studiengang:

Seminar (if applicable) / Seminar (falls zutreffend):

You may not be able to fill out all questions when you start thinking about your thesis / term paper / ... – just fill out all questions to the best of your current knowledge. Some of the questions are explained in more detail on the last page of this document. You can answer in German or English.

Focus and special interests in your studies / Schwerpunkte und Interessen im Studium

Research question/ Forschungsfrage

Working Hypothesis / Arbeitshypothese

How will you answer your research question? (Research Design, Methodology, Cases) / Wie planen Sie Ihre Forschungsfrage zu beantworten (Forschungsdesign, Methoden, Fallauswahl)

Preliminary Structure / Geplante Struktur der Arbeit



Relevant Literature / Relevante Fachliteratur

For BA and MA theses: Motivate your research question (2 paragraphs) / Für BA und MA Arbeiten: Warum ist die Forschungsfrage relevant?



Terminology

Research question: A research question is the question you will answer with your research. While this may sound simple, finding a good research question is key to writing a good paper and often requires reformulating the question several times. Research questions should be **focused**, so while you might be interested in a very broad topic, it is best to narrow this down to a more specific question that you can address in the limited time you have. This often means focusing on certain aspects of a larger topic. Research questions should be **researchable** with primary or secondary sources, be that texts, datasets or respondents you collect data from – so ideally, you have an idea in mind what material would help you answer your question. Finally, the most important feature of the question is that it should be **answerable** by your research: try to think of the potential answers to your research question you might find as a space of potential answers. Thinking about how you would recognize which of these answers holds true will help you decide on a research design with which you can answer your question.

Working Hypothesis: The working hypothesis is your preliminary assumption about which potential answer to your research question might be true based on your current knowledge. You may often find that this hypothesis does not hold, once you look at your sources but deciding on one (or sometimes several) hypothesis will help you build a theoretical framework and organize your thoughts into an argument for your hypothesis.

Research Design, Methodology and Cases: (Comparative) political scientists draw on a wide spectrum of methodologies. Typical research supervised by the chair will draw on empirical material (e.g. texts, datasets, ...) to find answers to research questions. To be systematic, you should think about how you plan to analyze this material - for example with qualitative content analysis, statistical methods etc. In many cases, you may also need to choose one or more cases (e.g. countries, parties, regions, ...): Comparative Politics is based on the idea that we can gain additional knowledge about the causes and effects of phenomena by comparing different units. If this applies to your research question, we should clarify which cases are best suited to answering your research question (for example because they are typical or extreme cases or because they are very similar on certain aspects). Even if you plan to focus on a single case, it is useful to think about what makes this case relevant.

If you do not have any experience with thinking about different research designs and potential cases, there is a short document on writing papers available on the webpage of the chair.