CSOn4000 Thesis Project

Scope
0/2/0, 12 ECTS

Objectives of the course
The Thesis Project is the first of a pair of courses focused on the preparation and implementation of the thesis. The project is supervised by individual teachers from the department. Students typically enroll in the course in their penultimate semester of study. They do so by prior agreement with one of the lecturers from the Department of Sociology, who either offers the topic of the thesis directly or expresses the willingness to take the lead on the topic proposed by the student. The supervisor may accept or refuse to supervise the thesis. In the case of a refusal, the learner would approach another lecturer; therefore, the selection of the supervisor should start early. No later than the second week of the semester you must have chosen a supervisor, and no later than the fourth week of the semester you must have chosen a topic. The supervisor may decline to supervise the thesis due to topic mismatch or overcapacity. If the student fails to obtain a thesis advisor by the deadline, they will notify the department chair within three working days of the deadline. The Head of Department will then assign a supervisor and thesis topic to the student without delay. The Head of Department decides on any change of the topic or supervisor of the thesis on the basis of the student's request. There is no automatic entitlement to change the topic or supervisor.

The Thesis Project is followed by a Thesis Writing Seminar in the following (last) semester.

Learning Outcomes
Students apply the general principles of independent research activity and the creation of professional texts (especially in terms of social science research methodology, rules of authorial ethics and formal principles of creating professional texts). After completing the course, student will be able to develop and design a master thesis project, which is methodologically feasible and manageable to complete in one semester.

Teaching methods
Self-study, consultation.

As part of self-study, learners
-   study the document "Instructions for Writing Final Theses," which they can obtain from the IS;
-   choose a supervisor no later than the end of the second week of the semester;
-   focus on the study of academic sources relevant to the thesis (literature review on the topic) and sources generally focused on the production of professional texts (particularly in cultural sociology);
-   prepare the document "project proposal" for the thesis.

Consultation is a key part of the thesis project. The learner has the right and obligation to actively consult with the supervisor on the progress of the project. The frequency of consultations depends on individual agreement with the supervisor. The contact consultation

includes both in-person meetings and email-exchanges, the details of which are arranged directly with the supervisor. Projects that are produced without regular contact with the supervisor and/or projects where there is reasonable suspicion of plagiarism or other breaches of academic work ethics cannot be accepted as eligible for credit.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be a useful tool for assistance for a work on a master thesis project but it is not accountable for conducting research and writing – the ultimate responsibility for thesis writing lies with the student. Students can use the AI tool as a brainstorming partner to exchange ideas while developing the theme. AI can also give good initial overview of existing approaches or existing literature on a theme. However, the use of AI cannot replace current research sources such as library or databases available through the university library. These research sources are more reliable. Generally, students should not trust any AI outputs that they cannot trace back to original credible sources! Students can use an AI platform for a grammar check and for editorial improvements, but using an AI to write a portion of a thesis project constitutes plagiarism.

Students must acknowledge how they used AI in the process of working on their thesis project in the short introduction to thesis project.

The supervisor leads the project and guides the learners through the process of its creation, or points out problems in the overall direction of the project. The supervisor is contacted by the learner at pre-agreed intervals or points in the project work so that major deficiencies can be addressed in time, i.e., the supervisor has sufficient time to identify them and the learner has sufficient time to correct them.

Revisions of the proposal must be uploaded into the course's homework vault in the IS and they need to include a "cover letter" ahead of the uploaded document, a brief summary of the main changes in the document, how the student has implemented the suggestions and addressed the concerns of the supervisor. If the student fails to meet the agreed timetable and submits the project at the last minute, it is not the responsibility of the supervisor to read or comment on the text. Instead, supervisors are obliged to respond to relevant queries from students within a reasonable time. It is not the supervisor's responsibility to edit or correct the project.

Methods of evaluation
The course is completed by a passing grade. The credits are awarded by the supervisor/thesis supervisor after accepting the thesis project submitted to the IS submission room by the deadline set by the thesis supervisor. The conditions in terms of the overall structure of the document will be specified by the thesis supervisor, but generally it must comply with the following rules:

1. In the Cultural Sociology program, we expect the master thesis to take the form of a theoretically informed empirical study (cf. Reed 2011), which is the prevalent type of professional text produced in contemporary cultural sociology
- Empirical studies can take the form of a primary or secondary data analysis

- Most empirical works in cultural sociology employ a qualitative methodology, but a quantitative or mixed-methods approach is also possible after consultation with the supervisor
- The thesis topic needs to be connected to the current sociological and cultural sociological discourse, through a review of existing literature and the theoretical framework used
- It is also possible to write a theoretical thesis, addressing theoretical problems in cultural sociology and offering conceptual solutions, but only after prior consultation and agreement with the supervisor

2. The proposal must contain a formulation of the research *topic*, the research *problem(s)* and/or research *question(s)* that the thesis will address, with references to relevant and current academic sources. The style of references must follow ASA style guidelines (5th edition).

3. The proposal must include a review of relevant literature, either in a separate section or embedded in an argument which leads to the formulation of the theoretical framework used.

4. The proposal must contain a description of the data, the process of data collection and the research strategy (methodology) used by the student.

5. The proposal must include the overall working structure of the thesis (titles of individual parts of the thesis - chapters, subchapters, etc.).

6. Finally, the proposal must contain a list of sources used in the project proposal (use ASA style guidelines).

- The student might also provide a list of sources relevant to the project but not used in the proposal, which should be accompanied by an annotation explaining where and for which purpose individual works and groups of works will be used in the thesis.

The total scope of the project is at least 20 standard, double-spaced pages (12 font).

Credit load composition:

- contact consultation (including email exchanges) with the supervisor (approx. 15 hours)
- search of literature and other resources (approx. 15 hours)
- study of literature and sources (approx. 200 hours)
- project development (approx. 70 hours)

Required literature
- Babbie, E. 2020. *The Practice of Social Research*. 15th Edition. Wadsworth Publishing Company, pp. 491-514 (24 pp.)
- Edles, L.D. 2002. *Cultural Sociology in Practice*. Malden; Oxford: Blackwell.
- Reed, I. 2011. *Interpretation and Social Knowledge. On the Use of Theory in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Flick, U. 2014 (ed.). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage.