



Guidelines for Writing a BA or MA Thesis

We look forward to supervising your final BA or MA thesis at the Chair of Political Theory. Please study the following guidelines and information carefully before contacting Professor Schuppert or the lecturers of the chair with your specific topic proposal.

Prerequisites for Writing a BA or MA Thesis at the Chair of Political Theory

If you would like to write your BA or MA thesis at the Chair of Political Theory, you should have familiarized yourself with different topics from the field of political theory and the history of political thought.

Thus, you should fulfill the following requirements:

- **BA students** should have completed a general seminar (*Hauptseminar*) in Political Theory (old study regulations) or an advanced seminar (*Vertiefungsseminar*) and a research-based advanced seminar (*forschungsorientiertes Vertiefungsseminar*) in Political Theory (new study regulations).
- **MA students** should have completed the introductory module (*Modul des Grundlagenbereichs*) in Political Theory.

Additionally, you should write a first **abstract** for your thesis before contacting the head or the lecturers of the chair with your topic proposal. The abstract should include your **research question** and give an overview of your **main arguments** and **outline** of your thesis. You should also briefly sketch out your **methods** and attach a tentative **list of sources/bibliography**.

After your topic proposal has been accepted, it is advisable to attend the **colloquium** of the Chair of Political Theory before or during the writing process to critically discuss your arguments or a first draft with other students and to receive constructive feedback from the lecturer.

Please also make sure to pay close attention to the **specific deadlines** of your study program for the **official registration** of your final BA or MA thesis. An overview of all relevant dates and deadlines for writing your BA or MA thesis can be accessed here: <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/wiso/studium/studienorganisation-pruefungen/studienrelevante-dokumente/dokumente.html>

Finding a Topic

The Chair of Political Theory especially welcomes topic proposals for the following research fields:

- History of political thought (especially the history of Republicanism and the discussion of marginalized and underrepresented political theorists and thinkers)
- Climate justice and climate politics
- Territorial rights and natural resources
- Political, social and economic processes of transformation
- Alternative theories of political economics, post-capitalism
- Contemporary patterns of change in democracy and democratic theory
- Foundations of political theory / contested concepts and terms in political theory
- Social inequality / overcoming social inequality, sexism, racism etc.
- Ethics of risk
- Decolonialism
- State and power

Whilst this list provides a rough overview of the areas of research that the Chair of Political Theory is mainly concerned with and should help you in finding an appropriate topic, it is not intended to be exhaustive. Since the field of Political Theory offers many more possible areas of inquiry, you might also choose a topic that does not match the

research fields from the list above. Please do not hesitate to contact the head or the lecturers of the chair with your individual topic proposal.

If you encounter any difficulties in **finding an appropriate and feasible topic** for your BA or MA thesis, it might be helpful to recall the topics you have discussed in seminars on political theory and the history of political thought. The following questions could then help you to narrow down a topic and formulate a good research question:

- **Which topics/areas of inquiry** that I have engaged with in seminars on political theory and the history of political thought **interest me the most?**
- Do any **open questions/unresolved issues** come to my mind when thinking back to class discussions and the texts I have read thus far?
- Which **perspectives/assumptions/arguments** from the literature could I critically examine? Which **concepts/constructs/terms** from the field of political theory would I like to analyze/question/reconstruct? Are there any **particular texts or theorists/philosophers/thinkers** I would like to engage with more closely?
- Would I be interested **in testing the empirical validity of a theory** and can I think of **empirical cases** that might be suitable for this purpose?

General Guidelines

Overall, the general guidelines for writing term papers at the Chair of Political Theory also apply to BA or MA theses.

You should use an **appropriate font (e.g. Arial or Times New Roman) in 12pt** and use **1.5 spacing**. The standard settings for margins should be followed and paragraphs should be fully justified (*Blocksatz*). You should also include **page numbers** (beginning on the first page containing full text).

The first page of your BA or MA thesis should be a **cover page** that includes the following information:

- Your full name, enrolment number, study program, the semester you are studying in, your University of Potsdam email address
- Title of your thesis, date of submission, word count (if required)

- Name of supervisors, term (winter or summer) and academic year you are writing your thesis in

You should include a **table of contents**.

You have to include a **Works Cited Page/Bibliography** at the end of your BA or MA thesis, in which you list all the sources that you have used in an alphabetical order. It is recommended to use a reference management software. The University of Potsdam offers a campus license for **Citavi**, which can be accessed here: <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/zim/angebote-loesungen/software-campuslizenzen/campuslizenz-citavi> Mac users might be interested in considering **Zotero** as an alternative.

You are free to choose which of the established **citation styles** you would like to use for your BA or MA thesis. You may use either **in-text references or footnotes**, but please make sure to remain consistent in the citation style you use throughout your thesis.

The last page of your BA or MA thesis should be the **declaration of academic honesty** (*Eidesstattliche Erklärung*) that you have to sign and date.