



Helpful Hints for a successful course of study at the Department 03:

Term/seminar papers

1. Introductory remarks

Below, you will find some useful information on how to write a seminar paper, which may be useful for a successful semester at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy. Before you start writing, please review the requirements for the seminar paper as a form of examination. In addition, please speak with your examiners and request additional guidelines.

A term or seminar paper is a form of research-based learning. The objective is to develop a basic understanding of theories and methods, to reflect on the possibilities for their application, and to demonstrate in the seminar paper that you have reached this objective. To be successful, it is essential that you precisely describe the examined problem, formulate and pursue a scientific thesis, are consistent in your use of terms and concepts, and use the latest research literature. The seminar paper is closely related to the topic of the seminar and must be previously coordinated with the instructor during the instructor's office hours.

2. Formal aspects

Please observe the formal requirements that are summarized below.

Length: about 15 pages

Cover sheet: List your name and contact information, your degree program, the title of the paper, semester, name of the course and the name of the instructor,

Table of Content: Number the headings, include page numbers,

Text: Font size: 12 pt, spacing: 1.5-spaced,

Indent longer quotations (more than two lines), use footnotes or endnotes,

List of references/bibliography: provide complete information on the author, title, place and year, use uniform citations rules.

3. Content

Working scientifically is not the same as compiling quotations and references and citing them one by one, instead it is an independent analysis of the topic and the ability to come up with a synthesis. You are not asked to present your own personal opinion, but to weigh and substantiate, comprehensively and with differentiation, controversial contents and positions based on the used literature. First and foremost, you are expected to learn techniques for scientific work, including how to develop a line of reasoning, outline the current state of research in the field, correctly and comprehensively report on the literature, reduce large amount of content materials to extract relevant information and to convincingly support your own research thesis.

The seminar paper consists of an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. Each of these parts should be subdivided into chapters. You can work with sub-chapters, but you should keep the number of organizational levels manageable (max. 3 levels).

In the introduction, you acquaint the reader with your thesis. You can define temporal or spatial boundaries of inquiry, impose limitations on the selection of the source materials, focus on a specific example or field of application, or you can specify a method or theory that you intend to use. It is also possible to focus on a topic because it is novel or because it is a thought experiment. Aside from outlining the topic or thesis of your work, the introduction should also describe the structure of the paper (chapters).

The main part of your paper should contain answer(s) to the thesis or question using a strict line of reasoning. It is important that your arguments and thoughts are logically comprehensible. You must define specific terminology used and explain the theories you are referencing. The different chapters should logically build upon each other and be connected using transitions.

The conclusion should contain a summary of the content and reflect on your own approach. In addition, you may want to provide an outlook for future research.

Term or seminar papers are graded based on these factors:

- Level of independent work,
- Factual accuracy,
- Structure/argumentation,
- Level of methodological competence,
- Language,
- Formal criteria.

4. Quotation rules and plagiarism

All source materials that were used to write the term or seminar paper must be included in the list of references/bibliography at the end of the paper. Other persons'/authors' ideas, arguments or thoughts (including online sources) must be referenced as sources.

For example,

Hubert Zimmermann (2017) Balancing sustainability and commerce in international negotiation: the EU and its fisheries partnership agreements, Journal of European Public Policy, 24:1, 135-155, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1146324> (accessed march 6, 2019).

We also urge you to consult our “Helpful Hints” on how to handle source materials!

The following signed statement must be added to the term or seminar paper:

I assure that I have written this paper independently and without outside assistance. I have clearly identified any sources that I extracted from other works, either verbatim or by paraphrasing. This paper was not used in any other course in fulfillment of a testing requirement, and it has not been published.