

Department of Politics
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL FORM

Please upload this form to the Moodle site for your dissertation, which you can find at moodle.bbk.ac.uk .

Name:

E-mail address:

MSc or MRes programme:

Full-time or part-time?

Title of proposed dissertation

Description of subject area

What scholarly literature will you be examining?

What primary research material might you use?

Have you identified or spoken with a potential supervisor? If so, who?

Two questions you must be able to answer about your proposed dissertation

- What scholarly literature will you be examining?
- What primary research material will you use?

First example: The Decline of Democracy in Emerging Powers: Explaining the Turkish and Mexican Enigmas

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Theory
- Chapter 3 – Turkey
- Chapter 4 – Mexico
- Chapter 5 – Conclusion
- References

Chapter 2 – Theory – Scholarly literature

- 2.1 Theories of Democratisation - Lipset
 - Sets up the puzzle: emerging powers are getting wealthier; why aren't they steadily getting more democratic?
- 2.2 Failures of democratisation
 - Electoral abuses
 - Lack of judicial independence
 - Weakness of civil society and media
 - Diamond, Schedler, Levitsky and Way
- 2.3 Decline of democracy?
 - Przeworski and Limongi, Peerenboom: At a certain level of wealth, backsliding from democracy should no longer occur
 - Neoliberal economics weakens civil society and social organisation (Putnam)
 - Economic recession can produce backsliding (Ulfelder and Lustik)

Ch 3 Primary research material on Turkey

- Detailed examination of..
 - AKP party, failure of EU accession, Syrian crisis, Kurdish question..
- Sources used
 - Mainly specialised academic literature on these developments
 - This literature does not address the author's question (why backsliding on democracy)
 - Secondary literature (re-)used as a primary resource to address a different question

Primary research material in chs 3 and 4

- Specialist journals: *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, *Turkish Studies*
- Freedom House country reports
- Financial Times and other media sources
- Data: World Development Indicators (Gini coefficient)

Second example: Real freedom for all? A critique of the basic income proposal within the political theory of the contemporary left

- Introduction
- Chapter One: Critique of *A Capitalist Road to Communism*
- Chapter Two: Critique of *Real Freedom for All*
- Chapter Three: Critique of *Inventing the Future*
- Conclusion

Scholarly literature:

A Marxist critique – central role of production in social relationships and self-realisation

- Adorno, Hegel, Horkheimer, Marx

Primary research material:

- *A Capitalist Road to Communism*
- *Real Freedom for All*
- *Inventing the Future*

Additional sources used in developing the critique:

- Contemporary critics of basic income, both academic and popular (Arneson, Coote, Hassel)

Focusing on a question: three steps

- Subject area
 - Countries/ policies/ episodes you want to focus on
 - ‘Angle’ – democracy, geopolitics, defence..
- Research question
 - What is interesting/ puzzling/ surprising about the case, the comparison, the proposal..
- Hypotheses or arguments
 - What the scholarly literature suggests you look for
 - Often presented at the end of the literature review

At this stage, we ask you to identify the subject area. You should also try to formulate your research question but it may well change. Hypotheses/ argument will come later.

Preparing for and writing a dissertation is not a linear process

- It is often a good idea to focus on the primary research material first – check what is available on your subject area
- If you have an argument you want to make, think about how you will develop it step by step
- Scholarly literature will help you formulate your research question, but..
 - Don't do a massive literature review; be selective
 - Keep thinking about your research question and your research material as you read
- Writing up: Expect to (re)write your introduction last