

Dissertation Writing Workshop  
American Studies - PhD Program  
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*Class hours:* TBA

## Overview

This workshop exposes the students toward common structures of a dissertation according to its contribution to knowledge producing enterprises. The first week of lecture engages students with discussion on the nature of explanation in social sciences. Subsequent weeks are structured as exposure to classic examples of different types of contribution a dissertation/a book offers to its readers and how its writer presents the book.

## Weekly Workshop Schedule

### Week 1 - The Nature of Explanation

What is the task that a dissertation set to accomplish? This lecture provides students with the big picture orienting them toward the essence of a dissertation. The kinds of possible contribution of a dissertation toward knowledge producing enterprise is explicated. In addition, the lecture discusses what a research puzzle is and what kind of explanation is appropriate in answering the puzzle.

#### Readings

1. Mabry, Linda (2008), "Case Study Research", in Alusutaari, Bickman, Brannen (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 214-28.

### Week 2 – Example of Data + Conceptual Contribution: Geertz's *The Religion of Java*

One common contribution of a dissertation is new data as well as a new concept (or a set of concepts) illuminating the problem at hands. This week lecture familiarizes the students with a classic work of Clifford Geertz on Javanese religion and its inductive, grounded study. It is expected that students will understand Geertz' scholarly contribution as well as the structure of its presentation.

#### Readings

1. Geertz, Clifford (1976), *The Religion of Java*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

### **Week 3 – Example of Data + Theoretical Application: Hefner’s *Civil Islam***

Another common contribution of a dissertation is demonstrating that an existing theory “travels” to a new context, meaning that it can explain another case outside of its initial scope conditions. This week lecture reads Robert Hefner’s classic work on muslims and democratization in Indonesia. Students will learn how Hefner applies a theory of civil society and democratization originating from Western Europe’s experience to Indonesia’s muslim majority context.

#### **Readings**

1. Hefner, Robert (2000), *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
2. Carrothers & Barndt (2000), “Civil Society”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 117 Winter, pp. 18-29.

### **Week 4 – Example of a New Theoretical Contribution: Slater’s *Ordering Power***

A most valuable contribution a dissertation can offer is a new theory explaining an important social science problem. This week lecture engages students with a discussion on theory building exercise and provide an example of Dan Slater’s dissertation (later published as a book) on a new theory explaining why some authoritarian regimes proved more durable than others.

#### **Readings**

2. Slater, Dan (2010), *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.