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COURSE OVERVIEW

The course is an independent study where the student independently designs and conducts a scientific research project. The student is expected to formulate a qualified research problem, choose appropriate collection methods, process a comprehensive theoretical and empirical material and report on their analysis, results and conclusions in a scientific manner. The research process is conducted in consultation with a supervisor appointed by the Centre. The supervisor's task is to provide constructive feedback and guide the student through the work process. However, the responsibility for both the implementation and the completed work rests on the authors themselves.

Work at CMES straddles several disciplinary boundaries and trans-disciplinarity is part of both our research and teaching activities. It is therefore understood that theses would reflect the diverse disciplines that are involved in the study of the Middle East or even be the product of synthesis across disciplines. In view of this, the following guidelines are intended to provide our general expectations of what a thesis should contain and achieve; the ultimate shape of a thesis is decided by the student in conjunction with their supervisor.

In the MA thesis course, the student conducts a research project and writes their thesis with the support of their supervisor, the student presents and defends their thesis, discusses other students’ theses at the thesis examination seminars as well as attends mandatory seminars. For more information on the thesis examination seminar see page 5-6.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to:

Knowledge and Understanding

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the field of Middle East studies including both broad knowledge in the field and substantial in-depth knowledge in certain areas of the field as well as in-depth understanding of current research and development work, and
- demonstrate in-depth methodology in the main field between Middle Eastern Studies.

Skills and Abilities

- demonstrate the ability to critically and systematically integrate knowledge, analyse, assess and manage complex phenomena, issues and situations, even with limited information,
- demonstrate ability to critically, autonomously and creatively identify and formulate research problems, plan and adequately implement qualified tasks within given time frames, thereby contributing to the development of knowledge in the field,
- demonstrate the ability, in both national and international contexts, to express and discuss in a clear and written manner their conclusions and the knowledge and arguments that underlie them in dialogue with different groups, and
- demonstrate the skills required to participate in research and development work or to independently work in other qualified activities.

Evaluation Ability and Approach

- demonstrate the ability to make assessments based on relevant scientific, social and ethical aspects in the main field of Middle Eastern Studies, and demonstrate awareness of the ethical aspects of research and development work,
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of science, its role in society,
and demonstrate the ability to identify their need for additional knowledge and to take responsibility for their knowledge development.

MANDATORY SEMINARS

The aim with the seminars is to support students in their writing process. If a student cannot attend one of the seminars due to illness or a sudden event that the student cannot help, a makeup five-page paper should be submitted to the course coordinator no later than three working days following the date of the seminar. The paper should discuss the seminar topic and its application to the student’s thesis. Missing two or more seminars will result in the student deferring to the next semester’s examination, which will take place in the autumn 2019.

The seminars will take place in the seminar room at CMES, between 9:00-12:00, and will be scheduled as follows:

- January 24: Research Question
- January 31: Literature Review
- February 14: Conceptual Framework
- February 28: Findings and Analysis
- May 16: Examination Procedures

SUPERVISION

In most cases, it is the third semester advisor that supervises the Master’s thesis. Supervision may be conducted individually or in groups. If relevant, students may be organized in peer groups, reading and discussing each other’s theses as they progress. Twenty hours of supervision are designated for each thesis. This includes both individual and group supervision. Supervision hours are to be used up until the term after the student was first registered for the course. Exceptions may be made if special reasons exist.

Please note that the Master’s thesis must be written individually. Pair or team projects are not allowed. Plagiarism is taken very seriously and every thesis is monitored for plagiarism through an electronic plagiarism detection system called “Urkund.” A thesis that does not fulfil the academic and formal standards outlined in this guide could be considered as meriting a fail.

Supervision schedule is to be agreed upon the student and their advisor. Please note that advisors decide on the draft submission dates to suit their own work schedule. In addition, meetings with peer groups and other activities may be planned by the supervisor. Below, however, is a recommended schedule:

- 18 February: Draft 1 submitted to supervisor
- 4 March: Feedback from supervisor
- 18 March: Draft 2 submitted to supervisor
- 1 April: Feedback from supervisor
- 15 April: Draft 3 submitted to supervisor
- 29 April: Feedback from supervisor
THESIS FORMAT

The required length of the Master’s thesis is 15 000 (minimum) to 20 000 words including footnotes, text, and bibliography (possible appendices and enclosures excluded). In unique cases a thesis may extend to a maximum of 25 000 words including footnotes, text, and bibliography; this can only be approved by the supervisor. The font should be Times New Roman 12pt, with 1.5 spacing. The thesis has to be submitted as a word document.

The student decides on the typography for the thesis, but the document has to include the following elements.

- Title page (provided separately)
- Abstract
- Table of contents
- Introduction
  - Present background, formulating the topic, aim and clearly formulated research questions, as well as explanation of the relevance to the discipline and disposition of your thesis.
- Methods
  - Discuss general aim of chosen methodology/tools and explain how this fits the purpose of your study. Remember to discuss advantages and disadvantages of methodological decisions and ethical reflections on the methodology.
  - Focus on publications from researchers within your fields of interest. You should transparently account for how you use your method, how you deal with obstacles, encounters and biases. This is also where you discuss ethical issues and how you dealt with them. For ethical guidelines see Appendix B.
- Theory
  - Discuss the theoretical framework you are following while critically reflecting on advantages and disadvantage as well as justify your choice of theories. Why are these theories most adequate for your purpose?
- Previous research/Review of Literature
  - Provide an overview of previous research relating to your topic. You should do an independent and argumentative qualitative assessment of these studies. Position yourself in relation to previous research. Enhance or develop previous research, choose a different approach (methodological or theoretical) or present if your aim is to fill a gap.
- Findings and Analysis
  - This is the main component of your thesis, and this is where your empirical discoveries and theories of you drew upon. You can reflect on whether your aim is fulfilled in the analysis or in your conclusions section.
- Conclusion
  - Make sure that you answer the question(s) that you have chosen for your thesis. You also need to reflect on the significance of your findings for a larger audience.
- Reference List/Bibliography
- Optional: Appendices and enclosures
REFERENCES, CITATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

- The thesis must follow the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS).
  - Choose one of the two options allowed within CMS, either author/date or footnote.
  - Most common referencing and citation problems are covered in the Chicago-Style Citation Guide (see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
  - The Reference List/Bibliography must be exhaustive and list all works cited in the thesis. Only cited works are to be included in the Reference List/Bibliography.
  - Quotations longer than five full lines are to be converted into block quotations (12 pts, 1 cm indentation, quotation signs omitted).
  - Ellipses in quotations are to be marked with three ellipsis points in brackets: [...] 
  - Titles in the text as well as in notes and bibliographies are treated with quotation marks or italics based on the type of work they name.
    - Book and periodical titles (titles of larger works) should be italicized.
    - Article and chapter titles (titles of shorter works) should be enclosed in double quotation marks.

THESIS EXAMINATION

Deadline for submission of theses for examination is May 15, 2019 at noon. An electronic version of the thesis in standard format (word document) should be emailed to dalia.abdelhady@cme.lu.se and dalia.abdelhady.lu@analys.urkund.se. In addition to the submission deadline, here are other important dates:

15 May   Thesis deadline at noon
28-30 May Examination Seminars, CMES seminar room
10 June   Written feedback from examiner
17 June   Final draft submitted to examiner and Kristina Robertsson

An examiner will be appointed for each thesis shortly after submission. The advisor and examiner of a thesis will never be the same person.

THE EXAMINATION SEMINAR

The course is examined by a specially appointed examiner who assesses the thesis project, defence of the thesis and completed opposition during the examination seminar. The thesis work is defended at an opposition seminar which takes place between May 28-30, 2019. During the seminar, the student orally presents and discusses their essay, significance and results, and receives the examiner's comments. At the opposition seminar, the student reviews another thesis project. The quality of the opposition is weighted in the final grade for the course. In order to partake in the seminar, a student must submit their thesis by May 15, 2019 at noon.

The thesis will be registered in the open access database on the server of Lund University. Students choose the level of publication themselves.
The student has three mandatory roles during the seminar:

- Submit your own thesis for discussion (as respondent);
- Discuss a fellow student’s thesis (as discussant); and
- Take active part in the discussion of all theses submitted in your seminar group.

**Seminar Rules**

- The responsibility for the seminar rests with the examiner
- The discussant and respondent must be active throughout the course of the seminar. Please note that inactivity during the seminar by a respondent, discussant or group participant may call for submission of a written assignment.
- The examiner may interfere in the discussion to point out strength and areas for improvement in the thesis that may have escaped the opponent or the other students.
- The opposition has to be carried out in a positive and constructive spirit, and must identify strength and areas for improvement in the thesis.
- Upon the conclusion of the seminar, the respondent receives an indication from the examiner whether his/her thesis will pass or fail.

**Seminar Procedures**

- Each thesis is assigned one hour for discussion.
- The examiner is the seminar leader. It is essential that the examiner keeps track of time. (Below general time frames are provided as an indication)
- The examiner opens the seminar by introducing the discussant and respondent, and underlining the importance of dialogue.
- The discussant opens the discussion by stating the title of the thesis and the name of the author/respondent (1 minute).
- Then the respondent has a chance to very briefly announce corrections that are essential for an accurate understanding of the content of the thesis (0-2 minutes).
- The discussant proceeds with a short summary of the thesis. Here the discussant summarizes the purpose, questions, method and result of the thesis (3-5 minutes).
- Then the respondent has a chance to make corrections or clarifications, if she/he feels the discussant may have misunderstood or misrepresented the summary of the thesis. The point of this is to assure that discussant and respondent agrees on the content of the thesis before the critical dialogue commences (0-3 minutes).
- The critical dialogue is led by the discussant and is the main part of the procedure. It is essential that the discussant has prepared carefully for the seminar, including reviewing theoretical arguments and sources, checking referenced works etcetera. The discussant also has to plan the discussion with regard to the time designated. It is not fair to the respondent if significant parts remain uncovered during the seminar, due to a poorly disposed discussion. The discussant’s role is to engage in a deeper and critical discussion of the thesis, as regards the formulation of problem, theory and concepts, methods and analysis and must actively invite the respondent to answer. The discussant must thus review the thesis qualitatively, and ask whether the purpose, research questions, theory, and method correspond. Are the questions answered? Are the theoretical concepts applied to the collected data in a satisfactory way, etcetera? (30-40 minutes).
- Time is also being allotted for other students in the seminar (who are expected to have read the thesis) to make comments about all theses in their group. Such comments are given after the discussant has terminated to critical dialogue (5-10 minutes).
- If time permits the seminar leader can initiate a discussion about a specific theme or
question in the thesis.

GRADING

The grade for the thesis course as a whole is based on the assessment of the thesis, the performance as a discussant, and active participation the seminars.

Grading Scale: Fail, E, D, C, B, A. The highest grade is A (Excellent) and the lowest passing grade is E (Sufficient). The grade for a non-passing result is F.

Grading Criteria:

F (Insufficient): The thesis does not fulfil basic requirements.

E (Sufficient):
The thesis is complete and organized more or less in accordance with the directives, but modest in terms of discussing relevant examples, posing scientific questions, or using appropriate methods or data. There might occur mismatches between the research questions asked and methods used. There might occur weaknesses in the outlining of problems, data or concepts and the work may contain few if any concrete examples from relevant theoretical, philosophical and/or empirical studies. The work may contain certain factual or formal errors or partly be based on opinionated, unsubstantiated claims. The thesis makes limited if sufficient use of references to the prescribed literature. While the work contains proper citations in the text, central references may be missing. There may occur certain deficiencies and inappropriateness in the choice of facts, data, methods and means of presentation, such as a presentation of literature, theories and findings that are based upon circuitous logic.

- Keywords: complete, relevant, modest, proper but limited references, sufficiently organized, basic quality of language

D (Satisfactory):
The thesis is complete and adequately organized, but somewhat limited in scope, or superficial in terms of the discussion of relevant examples, the posing scientific questions, the discussion and use of methods or the collection and presentation of data. The work is properly carried out and contains no serious flaws as concerns form or content, although there might occur weaknesses in source criticism and choice of literature. As a whole, the thesis makes use of appropriate sources and adequately relates to the prescribed literature, with proper citations in the text, but there may occur problems with the structuring of the assignment, and the various parts of the work may not form a coherent whole. The author may not have presented a precise idea of the significance of the problems, concepts, results or examples discussed, and the content of the thesis provides little independent discussion of the prescribed literature.

- Keywords: complete, relevant, adequately organized, proper and adequate references, limited connection to wider research, some degree of independence, satisfactory language

C (Good):
The thesis forms a coherent, functioning whole and fulfils basic requirements for a scientific paper. It is well-structured and well-written, progresses in a logical manner and arrives at clear and relevant findings. The thesis is based on a conscious and well-defined methodology, and contains elements of independent and critical discussion. The work is solidly connected to
research and describes the content of the entire prescribed literature in an appropriate way and key sources are included with proper citations in the text. The work contains no significant weaknesses in terms of formal issues or use of language.

- Keywords: complete, relevant, coherently organized, methodologically well-defined, solidly research connected, somewhat independent and critical, well-functioning language

**B (Very good):**
The thesis provides a thorough, independent discussion of the subject matter at hand. The point of departure is well-defined and connected to theory. Apart from describing the general content of the prescribed literature in its entirety, the work contains several independent, applied, analytical observations or mature and critical evaluations of sections of the literature. References are extensive as well as chosen and applied in a versatile and appropriate manner, with strategic and well-placed citations. The thesis is written coherently and the use of language is more or less flawless.

- Keywords: thorough, independent, complete, analytical, critical, extensive and strategic references, more or less flawless structure and language

**A (Excellent):**
The thesis provides an exhaustive, innovative and thoroughly critical discussion of clearly defined scientific problems, demonstrating a profound understanding of the subject matter at hand. It critically and comparatively discusses demanding subject matters, complex data or advanced theoretical models applied in a systematic synthesis of theories and findings, which arrives at the formulation of fruitful and independently formulated scientific problems or analyses of tentative results. The thesis is solidly integrated within a wider research context and the structure as well the use of language is flawless.

- Keywords: exhaustive, innovative, thoroughly critical, displaying profound understanding, advanced subject and theory, synthesizing, flawless structure and language

**SUGGESTED READINGS**


APPENDIX A: ETHICAL GUIDELINES AND STUDENT SAFETY

Students at the CMES MA Program in Middle Eastern Studies must carry out their master’s thesis projects in accordance with the ethical guidelines as recommended by The Swedish Research Council. A number of ethical principles must be respected with regard to data collection and interviews. Students must also heed certain safety issues described below, especially so during field work abroad. Should you have any questions, please contact your CMES advisor and/or the Director of Studies for advice.

Please remember that you are a graduate student and that the master’s thesis is an examination thesis and part of your studies. Informed consent must be obtained from respondents and others who are participating in your project. (With respect to the participation of children/adolescents in a study, informed consent must also be obtained from their parents/guardian.) Always introduce yourself, your master student status and affiliation, and thesis topic, when making contact with scholars and interviewees.

This means that you need to inform your respondents about the following:

- Their role in the study;
- The conditions for participation;
- Ways in which the data will be gathered (to tape interviews or take photos thus also requires that you ask for permission and consent);
- That participation is voluntary;
- That participation can be terminated by the respondent at any time and with no consequences;
- That the participants will be guaranteed anonymity;
- That the collected data will be treated confidentially and stored safely;
- That the collected data will only be used for the master’s thesis project;
- That the Master’s thesis may be published at an open-access website managed by Lund University Library.

Again, always guarantee your respondents’ anonymity. If you want to quote scholars or officials, always ask for permission. You can only use/quote unpublished materials and written documents that you have obtained if you have also received permission to use them in your thesis.

If you study a private company you need to ask its permission. Never work undercover. Never offer money, substantial gifts, or other advantages to people you interview or get in touch with during your thesis project. Small presents might be appropriate as tokens of appreciation for help in some circumstances.

Students must not carry out fieldwork in areas/countries for which the Swedish Foreign Ministry has issued travel warnings.

1 Good Research Practice (The Swedish Research Council, 2011). The guidelines are available online at:
http://www.vr.se/download/18.3a35c20d133a0f0c1295800030/1340207443948/Good+Research+Practice+3.2011_webb.pdf
APPENDIX B: PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is defined as integrating the words or ideas of another work into your thesis and presenting them as if they were your own. An allegation of plagiarism is serious. Even if an isolated section of your work is subject to allegation of plagiarism, the thesis in its entirety is at risk of being dismissed as fraudulent and you will be given a failing grade for the course. Grave cases of plagiarism may lead to suspension from Lund University. It should be emphasized that plagiarism may be unintentional or intentional. Allegations of flagrant plagiarism include:

- copying another student’s work;
- copying another person’s work, published in a book, journal or website;
- asking another person to write you thesis for you;
- downloading the complete text from the Internet;
- buying the text from the Internet;
- paying for someone to do the work for you.

However, plagiarism also includes using another person’s words (through carelessness or lack of skill) without proper acknowledgment. This may be consequential of any or several of the following circumstances:

- you do not know that you must not copy anyone’s words directly;
- you do not have the skill for expressing another person’s ideas in your own words;
- you do not know the correct processes for indicating that you are using another person’s words or ideas;
- when you take notes from a book or journal, you copy out some sections and do not make this clear in your notes. Later when you re-read the notes, you forget that they are not your words or ideas;
- you forget to acknowledge another person’s words or ideas;
- you do not have time to include the acknowledgments and list of references;
- you feel your written work is not good enough;
- you borrow your friend’s notes, not realizing that some of the words are plagiarized.

Read the Lund University’s guidelines and regulations at http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/current-students/academic-matters-support/academic-support-centre/avoiding-plagiarism