



ICIR 402 Senior Thesis

Course Description and Aims

This course provides individual students with the opportunity to undertake and write up research on a particular topic related to International Relations and Global Affairs that has been chosen by the student in consultation with their supervisor. Students will go through the processes of identifying and formulating a viable research topic and questions, reviewing the relevant literature, collecting and analyzing data on their chosen topic, and then writing a thesis that presents their findings and conclusions on that topic.

The opportunity; use; of carrying out empirical research projects under the close supervision. To demonstrate initiative; creativity; systematic problem-solving; persistence; attention to detail. Students will prepare a thesis proposal in consultation with their prospective supervisor. Students will evaluate; analyze; create a unique contribution to an academic discipline of their choosing under supervision.

Instructor

The chosen Thesis Supervisor of the student. Students can approach any MUIC Social Science Division full time or part time faculty member to become their Senior Thesis supervisor. They must submit a thesis proposal by Week 6 of the preceding semester and get approval from their prospective supervisor. In addition to their supervisor, students need to choose a second reader for the Senior Thesis. The second reader must be a MUIC Social Science Division full time faculty member.

Assessment

Written Thesis	70 %
Thesis Defence	20 %
Weekly Journal	10 %

Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Identify an appropriate research topic in the field of International Relations and Global Affairs;
2. Formulate research questions that are relevant to their research topic;
3. Identify, use, and critique the academic literature relevant to their research topic;
4. Locate, interpret and evaluate data relevant to their research topic; and
5. Construct, present and defend an argument about or solutions to the questions posed by their research topic.

Course Structure and Timeline

For the Senior Thesis course, students are required to work independently under the supervision of their instructor in order to produce either a research-based or discursive and analytical piece of writing. The Senior Thesis must be completed in the duration of their last semester of study. It is essential that students develop a clear framework for their work before registering for their thesis and they should consequently approach potential supervisors in their penultimate semester at MUIC. Students are expected to identify a clearly focused theme and start conceptualizing their approach and analytical framework before contacting prospective supervisors. They are required to submit a thesis proposal by Week 6 of their penultimate semester. After submitting their proposal, students may be asked to make revisions at the discretion of their prospective supervisor and resubmit the proposal before the end of their penultimate semester. Once their proposal has been accepted by their prospective supervisor, students should pre-register their senior thesis with the SSD secretariat using the relevant registration forms.

While working on their thesis during their last semester, students are required to submit brief weekly reflection reports about the progress of their work to their supervisor and to attend a number of regular supervision meetings throughout the semester. These meetings will be scheduled with their supervisor at the start of their last semester.

Please notice that there is a strict deadline for the submission of the final draft of the thesis. In addition, students are requested to defend their work in a public seminar at the end of their last semester.

The following timeline should be adhered to:

Penultimate semester at MUIC:

Weeks 1-6: Start formulating questions that you would like to address in your senior thesis; start conceptualizing a framework and writing your thesis proposal.

Please note that if you plan to publish your thesis (or parts thereof), in collaboration with your supervisor, you are expected to obtain MU-level ethical clearance via the applicable procedure at one of the Mahidol University Institutional Review Boards (IRB), which may take up to three months to be fully processed.

Week 6: Submit your thesis proposal to your prospective supervisor.

Weeks 7/8: Your thesis proposal will be reviewed by your prospective supervisor.

Week 9: Meet your prospective supervisor to receive feedback on your proposal.

Weeks 10/11: Revise your proposal (if necessary) and resubmit to your prospective supervisor.

Weeks 12/13: If your proposal is accepted, submit the pre-registration form (with your prospective supervisors' signature) to the SSD secretariat and make sure to formally register the course during the following registration period via SKY+.

Last semester at MUIC:

Weeks 1-10: Submit a reflection report on the progress of your work at the end of each week.

Week 1: First consultation meeting with your supervisor: discuss your framework and the suggested structure of your thesis, as well as the prospective timeline for submission of particular sections of the thesis.

Week 4: Second consultation meeting with your supervisor: feedback on parts of your thesis that you have previously submitted (e.g. literature review, methodology etc.) and discussion of intermediate results of your analysis and/or empirical results.

Week 8: Third consultation meeting with your supervisor: discuss the results of your analysis and/or empirical data and possible changes to your structure and framework.

Week 10: Submit a first draft of your completed thesis for review to your supervisor.

Week 11: Fourth consultation meeting with your supervisor: discuss feedback to your first draft and necessary revisions/additions to your thesis.

Week 12: Submit the final draft of your thesis to both your supervisor and your second reader.

Week 13: Public thesis defense.

Guidelines and Requirements for the Thesis Proposal

The dissertation proposal should convey in a clear and concise manner what your research is about and convince your prospective advisor that you have identified a research question, that your research is contributing a new perspective to the existing literature, that your research is relevant and worth doing, that your suggested methods for data collection or analysis are appropriate, and that the project is feasible in respect to scope and practicality.

The dissertation proposal should be between 3-5 pages long and consist of these components:

1. Title

The title should summarize the whole project in a few words. You are likely to change and revise the title as you conduct your research, but you should try to mention some of the keywords of your dissertation project, e.g. subjects, concepts, situations and/or time frames.

2. Introduction and background

The introduction and background section should give a broad overview of the topic and, if necessary, introduce some technical or specific terms relevant to your project. After you have provided a general introduction to the subject, you then need to narrow down your specific research topic and explain briefly why it is worth investigating. State very clearly and explicitly what the

key research questions and aims and objectives of the project are. Explain also what the limitations of your project are.

3. Literature review

In this section, you should demonstrate that you are familiar with the existing academic literature on your topic, that you have critically reviewed it and that you have identified a gap in the existing work on your topic.

4. Research design and methods

In this part, you should explain how you are going to approach your research project and why you have decided to choose that approach. Explain, for instance, whether you are going to take an empirical or interpretive approach, what kind of sampling methods you are going to employ, what kind of data types you are planning to collect, etc. Justify your research design by giving reasons for your decisions.

If your research involves human participants, you should demonstrate that you have addressed both possible risks posed by your research and the potential benefits it offers. Moreover, you should suggest ways to protect your research participants' privacy (e.g. consent forms, confidentiality, anonymity, etc.).

5. Potential implications of your research

Describe briefly what you see as the implications of your research. In other words, what do you consider the key potential contributions that your research can make to the academic field?

6. Reference list/Bibliography

The research proposal should include citations where appropriate and have a full reference list at the end. Be consistent with your referencing style.

Guidelines and Requirements for the Written Thesis

The written thesis represents the final result of the research process that was suggested in the initial proposal. Just like the proposal, the thesis will have a title, an introduction and background section, a literature review, a section on research design and methods, and a reference list. In addition to those parts, the completed thesis will also include an analysis/background section and a conclusion. The final thesis should demonstrate that you are able to clearly articulate a research question or research puzzle, that you can work independently, that you are able to identify and critically review relevant sources, that you can analyze information and that you are able to convey your findings in a clear and structured way. The length of the written thesis should be between 8,000 and 10,000 words, excluding any footnotes and the bibliography.

Generally speaking, the completed thesis should consist of the following parts:

1. Title

The title should summarize the scope of the thesis and include some of the keywords of the project.

2. Introduction and background

Please refer to the relevant section in the Guidelines and Requirements of the Thesis Proposal above.

3. Literature review

Please refer to the relevant section in the Guidelines and Requirements of the Thesis Proposal above.

4. Analysis and discussion

The analysis and discussion section of your thesis is the central part of your work because it is here that you are going to make your key points. You should present what you found in your data, how you have interpreted your results, how they can be contextualized and why they are relevant to the research questions.

5. Conclusion

Make sure you allocate enough time for writing the conclusion. The whole point of gathering data and analyzing it is to come to some conclusions that answer your research questions and that draw out the implications of your work. The conclusion section will be shorter than the analysis and discussion section. It should not introduce any new material or arguments. You will need to clearly state the answer to your main research question and to summarize and reflect on your research. In addition, you may want to suggest directions for future work on the topic. You should always highlight and clearly explain what your research has contributed to knowledge in your field.

6. Reference list/Bibliography

Please refer to the relevant section in the Guidelines and Requirements of the Thesis Proposal above.

Assessment Methods and Criteria

The Written Thesis

The written thesis accounts for 70 percent of the total mark of the Senior Thesis project and is assessed according to the four criteria outlined below, with the percentage weighting for each criterion indicated in brackets. Each criterion will be marked on a scale of 1-100 using the standard MUIC marking and grading scheme.

Please note that any instances of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary action being taken against the student in accordance with MUIC policy. For details of academic offences and the disciplinary procedure, please refer to this link: <https://muic.mahidol.ac.th/eng/programs/graduate-program/graduate-current-students/academic-regulations/>.

1. Topic Conception & Research Question (30%)

This criterion assesses the ability of the student to a) identify an appropriate research topic in the field of International Relations and Global Affairs, b) formulate an original research question that

addresses an important issue related to that topic, c) situate their research in the relevant academic literature on that topic, and d) indicates the significance of their research for the field.

2. Argument & Analysis (30%)

This criterion evaluates a) the originality, significance and clarity of the main argument of the written thesis, b) the suitability of the analytical, theoretical and/or methodological frameworks employed in developing the main argument and the student's effective use of said analytical, theoretical and/or methodological framework, and c) the extent to which the main argument is supported by logical reasoning and convincing evidence.

3. Organisation, Structure & Clarity (20%)

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the written thesis has a clear and appropriate structure, with a logical progression to its different sections. It also measures the correct use of grammar, spelling and terminology, along with the clarity of sentence construction and the layout of the written thesis as a whole (i.e. the appropriate use of headings, sub-headings, underlining, bolding or italicizing for emphasis etc.). If figures, tables, graphs, charts or maps are used, then their clarity is also assessed under this criterion. Lastly, it assesses whether each of the different sections of the written thesis is an appropriate length and whether the written thesis meets the word count requirements.

4. Research & Sources (20%)

This criterion assesses the extent to which the written thesis is based on appropriate, reliable, and sufficient primary and secondary sources, and whether the information from said sources is presented accurately. It also assesses the extent to which the selected citation style is used correctly and consistently, both in the main body text of the thesis and in the accompanying reference list or bibliography.

Thesis Defense

The thesis defense consists of 20 percent of the total mark for the Senior Thesis project and is assessed using the criteria outlined below, with the percentage weighting for each criterion indicated in brackets. As with the written thesis, each criterion will be marked on a scale of 1-100 using the standard MUIC marking and grading scheme.

1. Content & Argument (40%)

This criterion evaluates the student's ability to summarise the main argument of their written thesis in an accurate and concise manner and to support said argument with sufficient reasoning and relevant evidence.

2. Organisation & Presentation Skills (30%)

This criterion assesses the extent to which the thesis defense has a clear and logical structure. It also evaluates the student's a) oral presentation skills (i.e., speaking clearly at an appropriate pace and with an appropriate tone), b) body language (e.g., maintaining eye contact with the audience, standing or sitting in an appropriate manner, use of hand gestures for emphasis etc.), c) use of correct academic language and terminology, and d) use of AV equipment (e.g., use of presentation software, images, sound and/or video clips) to engage the audience.

3. Response to Questions & Suggestions from the Audience (30%)

This criterion evaluates the student's ability to answer the questions of the audience satisfactorily and to respond to the critiques and feedback of the audience by clarifying, defending, and/or amending their arguments in an appropriate manner.

Weekly Journal

The weekly journal consists of 10 percent of the total mark for the Senior Thesis project. The student is required to submit a brief report reflecting on their progress each week of the semester from Week 1 to Week 10. The submission of each report is worth one percent.