POL 497, Senior Thesis
Department of Political Science and International Relations, Fall 2018

I. COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor:	Prof. Bernd Bucher	
Instructor's Email	bbucher@fus.edu	
Office Hours:	Monday, Thursday	14:00 – 15:00h
	Wednesday	15:00 – 16:00h
Class location	MV Classroom 1	
Class meeting times	Wednesdays	10:00 – 12:45h

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to familiarize students with the tools they need to successfully complete their BA thesis. The course will address questions of research design and the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of specific methodologies. The course will also provide a forum to discuss the research projects of the BA candidates.

III. RATIONALE

This course is central for those majoring in international relations and provides the research tools necessary to succeed in future academic endeavors.

IV. COURSE GOALS

This course seeks to familiarize students with the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of doing social scientific research. We will particularly focus on qualitative research and questions of research design.
At a broad level, course aims to:
- Develop critical thinking and analytical skills.
- Practice synthesizing information from classroom discussions, reading assignments and individual research.
- Develop professional skills such as conflict resolution, and advocacy.

V. SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

The primary goal of this course is for students to acquire the skills needed to successfully write and defend a BA thesis. Upon completion of this class, students should be familiar with the main methodological discussions in the discipline and have the ability to critically reflect on the merits and limitations of qualitative methods.

VI. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

The required readings will be made available on moodle.

VII. ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The course grade list be calculated on the basis of the following assignments:

Preliminary topic presentation   **10%**
- 5 – 10 minute presentation   60%
- rough outline   20%
- reference list   20%

Topic presentation   **15%**
- 10 minute presentation

Literature review   **10%**
- 3 pages

Partial thesis draft   **55%**
- Title page and abstract   10%
- Framework chapter   60%
- Annotated Bib (8-10 sources)   10%
- Detailed outline   20%

Class participation   **10%**

VIII. ASSESSMENT DETAILS

POL 497 is the pre-requisite for POL 499

In order to be able to take POL 499 (and thus complete requirements in the spring), you need a C- or better in POL 497.

If you receive below a C-, you may not enroll in POL499 in spring, but you will have the opportunity to enroll in POL499 in summer. Your thesis deadline will then be October 14 2019.

- If you are a *combined major*, you still have to complete a methods + thesis capstone requirement, but you need only do it once. As stated in the course catalogue: *It is the student's prerogative to choose the main disciplinary focus [*and methods course*]. The thesis committee will include faculty from both disciplines. If the capstone requirement is pursued in another subject area, then appropriate substitutes from among the POL course offerings need to be completed.*

- If you are pursuing a double major, you need to fulfill all requirements for each individual major. Thus, you are expected to do a thesis for your IR/PS major though the topic may be related to your other area of expertise. You should discuss your plans with Prof. Bucher and the department chairs of each major as soon as possible.

XIX. GRADING POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Examinations are given letter grades according to the following numerical scale:

A: 94-100	B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D+: 68-69	F: 0-59
A-: 90-93	B: 84-87	C: 74-77	D: 64-67	
B-: 80-83	C-: 70-73	D-: 60-63		

The course grade is an average of examination letter grades according to the following grade points:

A: 4.0	B+: 3.3	C+: 2.3	D+: 1.3	F: 0.0
A-: 3.7	B: 3.0	C: 2.0	D: 1.0	
B-: 2.7	C-: 1.7	D-: 0.7		

X. HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE (POLICIES / REQUIREMENTS)

Regular attendance and active participation is required. Should a student be absent more than three time, he /she will not pass the course without completing additional assignments that document mastery of the topics covered in the classes missed.

Continuously working on your thesis project will be key to completing the thesis project on time. This course is designed to support this process. As such, doing the course readings and reflecting on how they relate to your own thesis will help with the thesis process generally.

Please note:
The use of entertainment devices is strictly forbidden during class. Laptops are permitted only for taking notes. Using a laptop for other purposes (e.g. Facebook, email, chatting, etc.) will result in dismissal from class and will impact the participation grade.

XI. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: STATEMENT ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

A student whose actions are deemed by the University to be out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives or the spirit of good conduct as fostered by the University and Swiss community, may be placed on Disciplinary Probation or become subject to dismissal from the University. Cheating is a dishonest action out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives and spirit of the University. Furthermore, cheating reflects negatively on one's personal integrity and is unjust to those students who have studied.
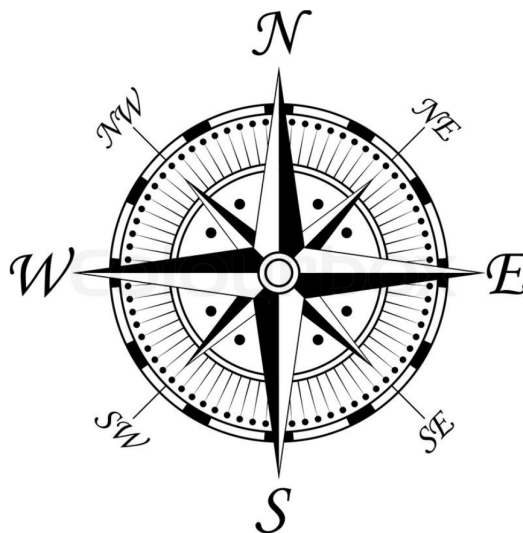See the Academic Catalog for full statement (page 199): http://www.fus.edu/files/FUS-academic-catalog-2018-2020.pdf

Plagiarism is not a trivial offense, but taken very seriously by the entire department. If you plagiarize in your thesis, you run the real risk of being dismissed from the University without graduating.

XII. RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Using the library and its resources is essential for your thesis project. As for the resources you need specifically for this course, please refer to moodle for readings, guidelines and course forms.

XIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

General information:
While not indicated for every class, we will usually start our classes with a discussion of the current challenges we face in the thesis writing process. As such, we will have the opportunity to address thesis related questions at any point of the course.
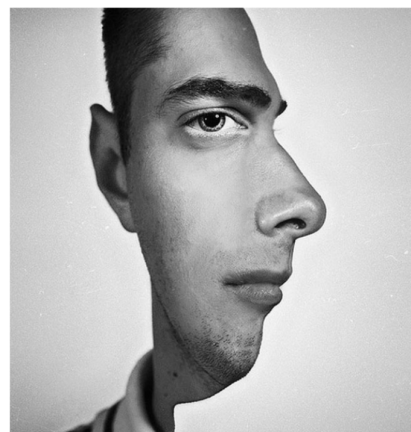
Week 1   Introduction to the course

29.8.2018   To start the semester we will begin to discuss what a BA thesis is and what is it not. Clearly writing a BA thesis can be a daunting task. As such, we will start with breaking the process down into manageable steps and clearly outlining what our departmental expectations are. We will have the opportunity to address these matters throughout the semester and we have also provided you with a number of guidelines (see the IRPS.Thesis.Guidliness on moodle).

Research as a community based practice...

We will begin to discuss the following aspects:

- Parts of a thesis
    - What belongs in the introduction?
    - Literature review / state of the art
    - The theory chapter
    - Methodological considerations
    - Application / Empirics
    - Conclusion
    - Reference list

- Thesis formalities
    - Quoting and plagiarism
    - Layout and specific FUS requirements

- The writing process
    - How to get started
    - Finding and using literature
    - What to write first
    - Drafting and revising
    - Planning the process

- Deadlines and thesis writing requirements

Week 2   Preliminary topic presentations

5.9.2018   In week two you will be asked to give a 5-10 minute presentation of your topic.

Clearly you will still have a number of unanswered questions regarding your topic and at this point you might be unsure about the general trajectory of the thesis.

But to get things off the ground, it is essential to make a start in outlining what you are generally interested in and what your specific research question might be. As the projects progresses, the research question will be refined and adapted.

Next to the presentation of your preliminary topic, please draft a rough outline of your project. The rough outline should indicate what you will need to study in order to answer your research question and will provide you with a sense of the scope of your project. Please refer to the IRPS.Thesis.Guidelines for details.

You are also required to hand in a reference list of the literature you have so far consulted.

Overall this round of presentations will allow us to identify common ground among projects and specific challenges that we might want to address over the course of the semester.

Week 3   IR theory with a focus on methodology I

12.9.2018   We will look at some of the grand IR theories from a methodological perspective. This will make visible that different theoretical starting points have specific implications for studying empirical phenomena. We will begin with a focus on positivist / rationalist theories:

Realist thinking
-         Systemic and reductionist theories
-         Levels of analysis
Liberal thinking
-         The role of interdependence
-         Testing theories against each other

There are no reading requirements for this week. Should you decide to draw on realist of liberal theories in you thesis, you might find the 'further reading' list at the end of the syllabus helpful.

Week 4   Causal Reasoning

19.9.2018   In this class we will address some of the basic methodological implications of taking a positivist research perspective. We will start out with discussing the theory ladenness of observation and research before considering questions of measurement, reliability and validity. We will then discuss the concept of causality, different types of comparative and single case research designs.
Please read the following parts of: Toshkov, Dimiter (2016) *Research Design in Political Science*. London: Palgrave.

-	Role of theory in the research process:	56-67; 77-83
-	On measurement, reliability and validity:	117-119
-	Causality	153-158
-	On comparative designs:	258-269
-	Single case studies:	297-307

Potential further reading:

As hypothesis / theory testing is central to positivist science, you might want to take a look at the debate on the democratic peace in the 1990s. This scholarly exchange brings some of the methodological challenges to the fore that arise when we try to provide empirical evidence.

See the 1994 Fall issue of International Security:

- Layne, Christopher (1994) Kant or Cant? The Myth of the Democratic Peace. International Security 19(2): 5-49.
- Spiro, David E. (1994) The insignificance of the Liberal Peace. International Security 19(2): 50-86.
- Owen, John M. (1994) 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace', *International Security* 19(2): 87-125.

Week 5   IR theory with a focus on methodology II

26.9.2018   This week we will discuss constructivist approaches to IR with a focus on anarchy, ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Reading:

For a discussion of social constructivism, read the chapter by Friedrich Kratochwil (80-99), in Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (eds) (2008) Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Should you decide to draw on constructivist theories in you thesis, you might find the 'further reading' list at the end of the syllabus helpful.

Week 6   Constitutive Reasoning

3.10.2018   In this class we will address the central differences between constitutive and causal reasoning in research. Doing so leads us to a discussion of the role of language and the relationship of the observer in research processes.

Please read:

- Pages 84-101 in: Torfing, Jacob (1999) *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek*. Oxford: Blackwell?
- Pages 17-54 in: Hansen, Lene (2006) *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge.

To better understand in which ways realism and liberalism are fundamentally different from constructivist approaches you could have a look at:

- The contribution by Donnatella della Porta and Michael Keating (19-49), in: Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (ed) (2008) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wendt, Alexander (1998) 'On Constitution and Causation in International Relations', Review of International Studies. 101-117.

   You might also find the following contributions helpful:
- Klotz Audie/ Lynch, Cecelia (2007) Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations, New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Milliken, Jennifer (1999) The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods, in: European Journal of International Relations 5(2): 225-254.

Week 7   Peer-review Session

10.10.2018   Based on your preliminary topic presentation, prepare a 2-3 page document which outlines your:

- Central research question and
- How you plan to proceed (methodology / case selection)

→   We will repeatedly exchange the outlines, read and give feed-back to mutually improve our projects

(Some) Questions to address in the peer-review session:
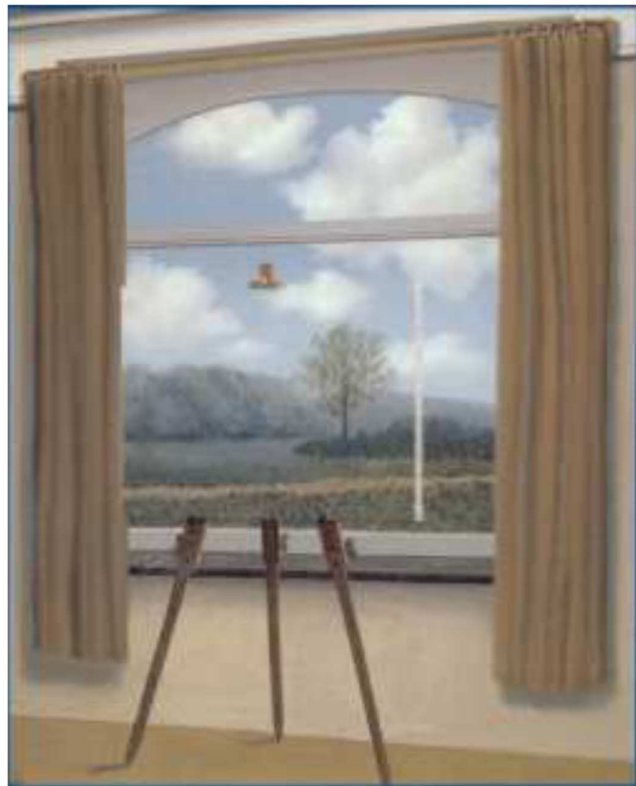
- Is the question clear and unambiguous?
    - Which resources will be needed, are they available?
    - Can this question be answered in the time available and with the resources available?
- Can a hypothesis be derived?
- Is the case selection biased?
- What is problematic about the design?

Week 8   Topic presentations

17.10.2018   In week eight you will have the opportunity to present the progress you have made so far working on your thesis projects.

i)   Please give a **15 minute presentation** that includes:
- The 'final' research question and a brief comment on the relevance of the question
- A basic outline of the research design you expect to use in the writing process

Week 9 and 10 AT

Week 11   'Darkest Austria' and methodology

7.11.2018   After travel we will ease our way back into the course by watching a mockumentary that parodies popular anthropological and ethnological accounts of Africa in the 1980s and '90s. Rather than sending European experts to Africa where they scientifically uncover the hidden meanings of before unknown practices, the documentary 'Darkest Austria' sends African experts into the little known European region of Austria. As it turns out, Austria is a puzzling place which only begins to reveal its secrets once scientists begin to do proper field research.

We will use this documentary to talk about the methodological difficulties we encounter when studying the unknown and foreign.

Week 12   Library Session (Protocol and 3 books / sources to order)

14.11.2018   As the relevance of research questions are tied to the research that has been done on a topic so far, we will use week 12 to explore the library for additional sources.

Please hand in a **3 page literature review** (1,5 spaces, 12 NTR) that situates your thesis within a broader academic debate by **21.11.2018**.

A literature review should:

-        provide an overview of the research done on your topic so far
-        indicate a research gap that your thesis addresses or a debate to which it adds

Week 13   Finalizing the course requirements

21.11.2018   As you will have to submit the assignments listed below by December 14, we will discuss the specific course expectations, managing the research process and re-drafting.

1)   **Title page and draft abstract**
Please refer to the IRPS.Thesis.Guidelines which outline what needs to be included on the title page and how it should be structured. Your title may still change (slightly) after this point, but you are encouraged to formulate a thesis title and possibly a sub-title that
a)   clearly indicates what your thesis is about
b)   invites to read the thesis

The abstract needs to clearly present your basic research question and why it is important. Please keep your abstract to 200 words.

2)   **Framework chapter**
The framework chapter needs to contain
a)   a revised version of the literature review
b)   a section on the theoretical and / or conceptual basic assumptions underlying your project. As thesis projects differ, so will theoretical and conceptual considerations. We are here looking for a discussion of the basic perspective you wish to adopt and the concepts that guide your research.
c)   Adopting a perspective is important, but does not address how you plan to specifically answer your research question. Building on the methodological discussion of the course, please reflect on how you plan to do your research.

The framework section should not exceed 15 pages (1,5 spacing, 12 NTR).

3) Please include an **annotated bibliography** (top 8-10 sources)

4) **Detailed outline** (3-5 pages)
A detailed outline should go beyond a draft of a table of contents in that it more clearly indicates the specific steps which need to be taken in completing the thesis. See IRPS.Thesis.Guidlines.

Week 14   Writing workshop
28.11.2018   For this session please bring laptops and / or your thesis texts.
We will again exchange our texts and allow the reader time to critically analyze the text and give specific feed-back
Then please work on your text on the basis of the feed-back or repeat the review process.

Week 15   Writing workshop continued, recap and next steps
5.12.2018   Next to continuing our work on our thesis projects, we will use this last class to reflect on methodology and questions of research design. Most importantly, we will have an opportunity to talk about the next phase of thesis writing and the challenges we will face in the spring semester.

14.12.2018   Course assignment deadline
While there will not be a final exam for this course. December 14th 12:00 will be the deadline to hand in your:
- title page and draft abstract
- framework chapter
- annotated bibliography
- detailed outline

Please hand in your assignment to turn-it in on moodle.
Handing in late will result in losing a full letter grade every 24 hours.

Please indicate at this time who your readers will be. Make sure to actually talk to all three readers beforehand about your project and to get their explicit approval. Please hand in the signed reader confirmation form (see the IRPS.Thesis.Guidelines).

XIV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Above and beyond the additional literature listed in the section above, you might find the following readings helpful.

Further thematic readings:

Realist thinking

Freyberg-Inan, Annette, Ewan Harrison and James Patrick (eds) (2009) Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation. Baltimore: JHUP.

Jervis, Robert (1998) Realism in the Study of World Politics. International Organization 52: 971-91.

Mearsheimer, John (2001) The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. New York: W.W. Norton.

Morgenthau, Hans J. (1986) [1948] Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace. 6th ed. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. New York: Alfred. A. Knopf.

Rose, Gideon (1998) Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. World Politics 51(1): 144-72.

Schweller, Randall L. 2006. Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Walt, Stephan M. (1987) The Origin of Alliances. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979) Theory of International Politics. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Liberal thinking

Baldwin, David A. (ed.) (1993) Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate. NY: Columbia University Press.

Doyle, Michael (1986) 'Liberalism and World Politics', *The American Political Science Review*, 80 (4): 1151-1169.

Hoffmann, Stanley (1991) The New European Community: Decisionmaking and Institutional Change, co-edited with Robert O. Keohane, (Westview Press, 1991).

Ikenberry, John (2001) After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Keohane, Robert (1986) Neorealism and Its Critics. New York: Columbia University Press.

Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye (1977) Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition. Boston: Longman.

Milner, Helen and Andrew Moravcsik, eds. (2009) *Power, Interdependence and Non-State Actors in World Politics: Research Frontiers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Moravcsik, Andrew (1997) "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics" *International Organization* (Autumn 1997).

Russett, Bruce and John R. Oneal (2001) Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations. New York: Norton, 2001.

Russett, Bruce (2011) Hegemony and Democracy. London: Routledge.

Constructivist thinking

Barkin, Samuel J. (2003) 'Realist Constructivism', *International Studies Review* 5(3): 325-342.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* New York: Anchor Books.

Guzzini, Stefano (2000) 'A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 6 (2): 147-182.

Guzzini, Stefano and Anna Leander (eds) (2006) *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his critics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hopf, Ted (1998) 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security* 23 (1): 171-200.

Onuf, Nicholas (1998) 'Constructivism: A User's manual', in Onuf, Nicholas, Kubalkova, Vendulka and Paul Kowert (eds) *International Relations in a Constructed World*, pp. 58-78. Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe.

Kratochwil, Friedrich V. (2008) 'Constructivism: what it is (not) and how it matters', in Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (eds) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, pp. 80-99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Michel, Torsten (2009) 'Pigs can't fly, or can they? Ontology, scientific realism and the metaphysics of presence in international relations', *Review of International Studies* 35(2): 397-419.

Searle, John (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality*. New York: The Free Press.

Searle, John (2009) *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weldes, Jutta, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall (eds.) (1999) Culture of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Wendt, Alexander (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wight, Colin (2000) 'Interpretation All the Way Down? : A Reply to Roxanne Lynn Doty', *European Journal of International Relations* 6(3): 432-430.

Wight, Colin (2006) *Agents, Structures and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zehfuß, Maja (2002) *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Methodological reading recommendations:
Davis, James W. (2005) *Terms of Inquiry: On the Theory and Practice of Political Science*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (ed) (2008) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feyerabend, Paul (2008) *Against Method (3rd edition)*. London and New York: Verso.

Guzzini, Stefano and Anna Leander (eds.) (2006) *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his Critics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hansen, Lene (2006) *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hollis, Martin and Steve Smith (1991) *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus (2011) *The Conduct of Inquiry in international Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. London and New York: Routledge.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Onuf, Nicholas (2013) *Making Sense, Making Worlds: Constructivism in Social Theory and International Relations*. London and New York: Routledge.

Pears, Richard and Graham Shields (2016) *Cite them Right: The Essential Referencing Guide (10th edition)*. London: Palgrave.

Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (eds.) (2006) *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, New York and London: M.E. Sharpe.

Klotz, Audie and Cecelia Lynch (2007) *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations*. Armonk and New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Kuhn, Thomas (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd edition)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakatos, Imre (1978) *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes, Philosophical Papers Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Torfing, Jacob (1999) *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Toshkov, Dimiter (2016) *Research Design in Political Science*. London: Palgrave.

Wood, Linda A. and Rolf Kroger (2000) *Doing Disoucrse Analysis: Methods for Studying Action in Talk and Text*. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.