<h1 style="text-align:center">Guideline for Writing Term Papers and Theses</h1>

<p style="text-align:center">Chair of International Relations
Zeppelin University</p>

<p style="text-align:center">*November 2024*</p>

Formal Requirements

The same formal requirements apply to term papers and theses:

- Formatting: Use a suitable font (Arial/Times New Roman), font size 12, 1.5 line spacing, justified alignment, standard margins, and include page numbers.
- Cover Page: The cover page must include your name, student ID number, study program, semester, ZU email address, title of the paper, submission date, and word count. For theses, also include the names of your first and second supervisors.
- Include a table of contents, bibliography (listing only works cited in the text), and appendices if necessary.
- The specified page count applies to the main text and excludes the cover page, table of contents, bibliography, and appendices.
- Include a signed declaration of originality.

We recommend using <u>reference management software</u> (e.g., Zotero, Mendeley, Citavi). Citavi is available via a ZU campus license (Windows only). Zotero and Mendeley are free alternatives.

<u>Citation style</u> can be either American or classic (with footnotes), but it must be consistent throughout your paper.

All external ideas (direct quotes or paraphrased text) must be <u>cited</u>. Failure to do so will result in the work being classified as plagiarism and graded as insufficient.

Please submit term papers as a PDF by the end of the specified deadline. Name the file as follows, *course_term_yourlastname*, and email it to both the Chair (maria.debre@zu.de) and papers@zu.de.

Research Proposal and Structure of Research Papers

To write a seminar or thesis paper, schedule an appointment with us and submit a 1–2 page research proposal at least 48 hours in advance.
The proposal should outline your project and serve as the basis for providing feedback and guidance. It also acts as a roadmap for your work.

<u>A research proposal should address the following five key components:</u>

1. Research Question and Relevance

A clearly defined research question is central to your research design. It should be scientifically and practically relevant, and specific enough to answer within the paper's scope. Avoid overly general, ambiguous, or purely descriptive questions.

2. State of the Art and Contribution

Review the current state of research to contextualize your work within the academic discourse. Highlight the added value of your investigation and ensure your literature review directly relates to your research question. Avoid name-dropping without meaningful connection.

3. Theoretical Framework

Define key concepts and their relevance to your research question. Discuss expected causal relationships and mechanisms, and explain how the phenomena under study are interrelated.

4. Methodology

Explain how you intend to operationalize and measure your theoretical expectations and relationships.

- <u>Operationalization</u>: Operationalize central concepts by specifying concrete indicators that can be measured in the empirical analysis. This does not necessarily need to involve numerical data or quantification. You can also explain which words or phrases can be used to identify concepts within the framework of qualitative content analysis or which events in the context of process tracing allow for conclusions about a causal mechanism. This enables precise investigation and contributes to the validity of your results.

- <u>Research Design</u>: State whether you will conduct a case study, a comparative analysis of two cases, or a large-n study, and justify your choice.

- <u>Case Selection:</u> Specify which cases or samples you will examine and why they are suitable for your research question.

- Data Collection and Analysis: Outline your methods for data collection (e.g., interviews, surveys) and analysis (e.g., qualitative content analysis, statistical methods), and explain how they will help answer your research question.

Also make sure to reflect on potential weaknesses of your approach and how you plan to address them throughout the different sections.

5. Work Plan

Outline a realistic timeline that includes the key steps of your research project, such as literature review, data collection, analysis, and writing phases. A clearly structured work plan helps monitor progress and ensures that all aspects of the project are completed on schedule.

Structure of your Research Paper:

The points above should also be reflected in your final research paper. We recommend the following structure:

1. Introduction: Research problem, research question, and relevance.
2. Literature Review: Current research on the topic and your contribution.
3. Theoretical Framework: Theoretical approach, key concepts, and expectations regarding causal relationships and mechanisms.
4. Research Design: Case selection, data collection, and analysis methods.
5. Empirical Analysis: Presentation, evaluation, and interpretation of the data.
6. Discussion and Conclusion: Theoretical and practical implications, answering the research question, reflection on limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Recommended Literature

A very structured summary of contributions on research design in political science, considered the standard German guide:
Gschwend, Thomas & Schimmelfennig, Frank (2007). *Forschungsdesign in der Politikwissenschaft: Probleme – Strategien – Anwendungen.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

The international classic on questions of qualitative research, though partly controversial due to its positivist approach:
King, Gary, Keohane, Robert, & Verba, Sidney (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

A very accessible and practical explanation of how to approach and write individual parts of a research project. Our insider tip!
Baglione, Lisa A. (2019). *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods* (4th ed.). London: SAGE.

An excellent introductory book on academic techniques, especially recommended for undergraduate students in their early semesters:
Stykow, Petra et al. (2010). *Politikwissenschaftliche Arbeitstechniken.* Paderborn: Fink (UTB).

One of the best and most widely used introductions to case selection in qualitative research designs:
Gerring, John (2007). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

An authoritative and very comprehensive collection of contributions on methodology from international experts, particularly suited for advanced students:
Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, & Collier (2009). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evaluation Criteria for Theses

Theses will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Sufficient	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Research Question	The research question is clearly formulated in the introduction and logically connected to the research problem.	Formulation of a meaningful and well-justified research question that is logically connected to the research problem.	Formulation of an analytical and socially relevant research question.	Formulation of a socially relevant and innovative research question.
Research Contribution	Description and justification of the selection of sources, as well as a summary of relevant prior academic research on the topic.	Engagement with relevant literature and concepts to highlight the author's contribution.	Presentation of the potential contribution to the literature in a reflective and convincing manner.	Clear positioning of the work as an independent, original contribution to the research field.
Analytical Framework	Description and definition of relevant concepts and logical linkage between them.	Establishment of a solid connection to political science theories and concepts.	In-depth engagement with and independent application of theoretical relationships and concepts.	Innovative application of theoretical perspectives to new research fields or further development of concepts.
Research Design	Transparent description of the data used and case selection appropriate to the research question.	Use of a relevant social science research method and critical reflection on it.	Use of a relevant social science method with increased complexity.	Expert-like application of a relevant social science method.
Empirical Analysis	Presentation of findings in a clear and logical manner.	Coherent interpretation of the data, ensuring that conclusions are logically comprehensible.	Independent and critically reflective analysis of the data.	Deep analysis of the data, including convincing discussion of alternative explanations.

Criteria	Sufficient	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Conclusion	Brief summary of the work and an answer to the research question.	Summary with reference to the research question and critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the work.	Critical reflection on the work and development of open research questions for further study.	Critical reflection and presentation of ideas for further research, including discussion of theoretical and practical implications for theory and political practice.
Structure	All parts of the work are adequately connected.	Systematic linkage of the individual parts.	Careful, thorough, and focused elaboration.	Coherent argumentation flow and convincing structure.
Language	Grammatically correct language.	Grammatically correct language with an appropriately objective academic style.	High linguistic quality in predominantly academic style.	High linguistic quality in excellent academic form.

Formal Requirements

Adherence to formal requirements (length, consistent citation style, bibliography, cover page).