

International Law

Academic year 2020-2021

Research Design and Methodology

DI109 - Printemps - 6 ECTS

Wednesday 14h15 - 16h00

Course Description

This is a compulsory course for first-year PhD students in international law. In this course, we will consider what the purpose is of doing a PhD in international law and different ways of going about doing PhD research. The course will be assessed via class participation, a written paper outlining the PhD research, and an oral presentation of the PhD project. The course will prepare students for their MPT and familiarize them with academic research.

> PROFESSOR

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> ASSISTANT

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Syllabus

Course objectives:

Three questions are central to this course:

- What is a PhD in international law?
- Why would one do a PhD in international law?
- How can one go about doing a PhD in international law?

The objectives of the course are for students to reflect upon these questions and prepare them a successful PhD journey and beyond. While the course is broad in covering general guidelines for research, writing, oral presentations, academic publishing, engaging with various perspectives and approaches, etc., students will be able to develop and discuss their own particular research projects throughout the course.

Course assessment:

This course will be assessed as follows:

- 20% - class attendance and participation

- 40% - 4000-word paper outlining your PhD project
- 40% - oral presentation of your PhD project

Detailed information and guidelines for each of the assessment components will be made available in class and on the Moodle page at the start of the course.

Course materials:

Students are expected to read the following book:

Patrick Dunleavy, *Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Specific chapters of the book are assigned to particular weeks, as indicated in the syllabus. Further recommended readings and class exercises will be included on Moodle for each session.

Overview of sessions:

1. **Introduction(s) and overview of the course** – 24 February 2021

2. **PhD in International Law: What, Why, How?** – 3 March 2021

Questions that we will address in today's session:

- What are you going to do in the next four years?
- Why are you going to do that?
- How are you going to do it?

Readings:

- Dunleavy, Chapter 1

3. **Formulating a research question(s) and a thesis** – 10 March 2021

This session will include a discussion of audience, originality, and manageability. Students will do a mindmapping exercise during this session.

Readings:

- Dunleavy, Chapters 2, 3 & 4

4. **Approaches to a PhD in international law** – 17 March 2021

The following questions will be addressed in this session:

- What sources will you use?
- What strands of literature will you rely on?
- Will you do field research? Will you do surveys? Discourse analysis? Qualitative? Quantitative? How does the research question(s) you articulated last week inform your choice of methodology?

5. **Writing I** – 24 March 2021

In this session the basics of good (legal, academic) writing will be introduced and discussed. Students will be asked to read writing samples and answer the following questions:

- What are the research question(s) and the thesis?
- What kind of methodology does the author adopt?
- Who is the audience?
- What do you think is good / not so good about the writing style?

Readings:

- Dunleavy, Chapters 5, 6 & 7

6. **Writing II** – 31 March 2021

Students will be required to bring to this session a 2-page (maximum) summary of their proposed PhD research. Time in class will be spent reading and commenting on each other's writing.

7. **What does a finished PhD look like?** – 14 April 2021

Students will be required to read a completed PhD thesis prior to this class, and we will discuss your thoughts and comments during the class.

Readings:

- Dunleavy, Chapters 8-9

8. **Surviving the PhD, and is there life after the PhD?** – 21 April 2021

This session will cover time management, discipline, working with supervisors and peers, and thinking about what to do after the PhD and how to best prepare yourself for that.

9. **Oral presentation skills** – 28 April 2021

In this session, we will discuss and practice oral presentation skills. These skills will be put to the test in the final presentations.

10. **Presentations of PhD projects** – 5 May 2021 - 2 June 2021

[Precise dates and times for the final presentations will be confirmed at the start of the semester. I plan this to be a two-day event and to invite faculty from the International Law department as well as 'older' PhD students.]