

Prof. Dr. Michael Minkenberg

Seminar Tutorial

How to Write an Outline Proposal for a Research Paper/Master's Thesis

Check list for an outline proposal:

1. Lead to the topic of the research paper: why chosen, why relevant?
 2. Brief description of the topic (and demarcation from related issues which will not be discussed)
 3. Brief and preliminary critical review of the literature and status of research on the topic
 4. Reasons for the focus of the paper/thesis
 5. Derivation and discussion of the **major argument** (in German: "Fragestellung") of the paper/thesis - this is the key to success!
Clarification: the argument needs to be precise and clear, needs to fit the scope of the paper. An argument is something that someone can reasonably disagree with.
 6. Elaboration of the major argument: the reasoning behind, the various facets (and what is interesting, looks relevant but is excluded)
 7. Derivation and formulation of a hypothesis to be tested/a thesis to be discussed, "smaller" questions and arguments as components of the major argument
 8. Clarification of central terms, academic concepts
 9. Description and explanation of the approach chosen, discussion of methodology
 10. Explanation of the organization and structure of the paper/thesis
 11. Survey of relevant material to be used and reasons for selection
 12. Preliminary table of contents
 13. Preliminary bibliography
- Scope:* about 2 pages for research paper, about 10 pages for masters thesis (including name, address of author, email address, working title of paper/thesis) plus preliminary bibliography
(more details in Klaus Schlichte, *Einführung in die Arbeitstechniken der Politikwissenschaft*, Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999, S. 29-47, 87-106)