

# COURSE SYLLABUS



## Thesis Seminar

**Course code:** HSS 389

**Term and year:** Fall 2025

**Day and time:** Tuesdays 8.00-10.45

**Instructor:** Gerald Power, PhD

**Instructor contact:** gerald.power@aauni.edu

**Consultation hours:** Wednesdays 14.00-15.00

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Advanced
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	COM 102
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	Required/elective

### 1. Course Description

HSS 389 introduces students to the purpose, structural elements and process of writing a Bachelor's thesis. It takes students through the stages of thesis writing: determining a relevant research question, writing a focused thesis statement, supporting that thesis theoretically and methodologically, as well as revising and editing drafts in accordance with the conventions of academic writing. Students will also learn to critically evaluate and incorporate sources, to construct a sound argument as well as to use accurate citation format. The goal of the course is for students to acquire and develop the skills necessary to efficiently produce a Bachelors' thesis of high academic quality.

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the various components of a thesis and how they are connected.
- Determine a relevant and proper research question for B.A. level research.
- Determine a relevant and proper thesis statement to answer that question.
- Determine the relevant theory and methodology to inform the thesis statement.
- Find and properly incorporate quality resources into their argument in support of the thesis statement.
- Produce an overall quality foundation for further research with their thesis.
- Engage in constructive small-group peer revision and editing.
- Critically read, write, and think.

### 3. Reading Material

All materials are available on NEO

#### **Required Materials**

*The School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences BA and MA Thesis and Graduation Examination Requirements and Guidelines (2024).*

Browne, M. and S. Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions*. New York: Pearson, 2015.

#### **Recommended Materials**

Bryman, Alan. *Social Research Methods*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. [also in Library]

Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesis*. Boston: MIT Press, 2018. [in Library]

Lester, J. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. New York: Pearson. 2015.  
[https://farname.ir/upload/posts/1396-08/James\\_D\\_Lester\\_Writing\\_Research.pdf](https://farname.ir/upload/posts/1396-08/James_D_Lester_Writing_Research.pdf)

Paltridge, Brian and S. Starfield. *Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7<sup>th</sup> edn. New York: MLA, 2009. [Library]

Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2016.

Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide. *The Chicago Manual of Style Online*. (2018). Chicago: The University of Chicago.  
[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

Pinker, Steven. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. London: Penguin, 2014.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 7<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2019 [older edition in Library]

Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) "Research and Citation"  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

Turabian K.L, W.C. Booth, G.G. Colomb, and J.M. Williams (2013). *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations*. 9th ed. University of Chicago Press.

#### 4. Teaching methodology

The course is taught in a combination of short lectures, readings, individual research, class discussion, small group interaction and individual presentations, as well as incrementally written works culminating in the final project: The Thesis Proposal. Part of class time will be dedicated to individual live and remote consultations.

All assigned readings must be completed before class, and students must be prepared to discuss the readings during the class discussion.

#### 5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Session 1 2 Sept.	<b>Topic:</b> Introduction <b>Description:</b> Introduction to the course; syllabus review; and first discussion of AAU's thesis requirements.
Session 2 9 Sept.	<b>Topic:</b> Overview of thesis components and Research Question <b>Description:</b> 1. Discussion of the components of the academic thesis, including literature review, theories and methods; chapters; sources, etc. 2. What makes a good thesis topic and how to formulate research questions
Session 3 16 Sept.	<b>Topic:</b> No class <b>Description:</b> Students will attend the Graduating Student Workshop on 19 September hosted by Steve Borg, 'Getting Started, Starting Early'. Room and time to be confirmed.
Session 4 23 Sept.	<b>Topic:</b> No class <b>Description:</b> Students will attend the Graduating Student Workshop on 26 September on the administrative side of the thesis. Room and time to be confirmed. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Source Identification and Description: by 17.00CET
Session 5 30 Sept.	<b>Topic:</b> Thesis Proposals, including the Literature Review <b>Description:</b> What is expected and how to deliver
Session 6 7 Oct.	<b>Topic:</b> Theory and methodology

	<b>Description:</b> A discussion of these two elements, and how they can apply differently according to social science or humanities context
Session 7 14 Oct.	<b>Topic:</b> Personal Consultation Day <b>Description:</b> One-to-one meetings with students concerning their Draft Thesis Proposals (due next week)
Session 8 21 Oct.	<b>Topic:</b> Peer Group Day <b>Description:</b> Working in group to review interim plans submissions and provide feedback to peers. The peer group session is a graded assignment. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> 1) Draft Thesis Proposal (emailed to second lecturer for comment and CC'd to me by the beginning of class: 8.00CET) 2) Bring a printed copy of the Draft to share with peer group.
28 Oct	<b>Mid-Term Break</b>
Session 9 4 Nov.	<b>Topic:</b> Personal Consultation Day <b>Description:</b> One-to-one meetings with students to give feedback on Draft Thesis Proposals and help move the projects forward.
Session 10 11 Nov.	<b>Topic:</b> Update Day <b>Description:</b> Students will prepare a short summary of the state of their research (5-10 minutes) as the basis for discussion. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Presentation of research idea and progress.
Session 11 18 Nov.	<b>Topic:</b> Research Day <b>Description:</b> Individual work and consultations, the instructor will be available for questions during the class hours. Students may work in the classroom or elsewhere.
Session 12 25 Nov.	<b>Topic:</b> Research Day <b>Description:</b> The instructor will be available for questions and discussion, though students can work where they please. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Final Thesis Proposal
Session 13 2 Dec.	<b>Topic:</b> Thesis Submission and Graduation <b>Description:</b> How theses are reviewed and the review form, how to prepare for the defence, how to prepare for the state exams. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> None
Session 14 9 Dec.	<b>Topic:</b> Final Feedback <b>Description:</b> Individualised feedback on final thesis outline. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> signed advisor form by end of the week.

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	0%	Critically read, write, and think	3
Source Identification and Description	10	5%	Find and properly incorporate quality resources into their argument in support of the thesis statement.	1
Personal Consultations	18	20% (2 x 10%)	Understand the various components of a thesis and how they are connected.	1, 2, 3

			<p>Determine a relevant and proper research question for BA level research.</p> <p>Determine a relevant and proper thesis statement to answer that question.</p> <p>Determine the relevant theory and methodology to inform the thesis statement.</p>	
Draft Research Proposal	10	5%	<p>Understand the various components of a thesis and how they are connected.</p> <p>Produce an overall quality foundation for further research with their thesis.</p>	1
Peer Review	10	10%	Engage in constructive small-group peer revision and editing	2
Update Presentation	10	10%	<p>Understand the various components of a thesis and how they are connected.</p> <p>Determine a relevant and proper research question for B.A. level research.</p> <p>Determine a relevant and proper thesis statement to answer that question.</p> <p>Determine the relevant theory and methodology to inform the thesis statement.</p>	2
Final Thesis Proposal	35	30%	<p>Critically read, write, and think.</p> <p>Produce an overall quality foundation for further research with their thesis.</p>	1, 2, 3
Advisor consent form	10	10%	Produce an overall quality foundation for further research with their thesis	3
Journal	5	10%	Critically read, write, and think.	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150 hours</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

### ***Class Participation***

Class participation is not graded, but it is assumed that diligent and motivated students will attend regularly and will engage in discussion and ask questions. In-class presentations Students will share and discuss their work four time during the semester: a class presentation, two rounds of peer review, and a personal update with the teacher.

### ***Source Identification and Description***

The first homework assignment combines individual research with the technicalities of correct citation. Having already considered their research topic and question, each student will create a descriptive list of at 20 sources that will be of relevance to their topic and will

help answer the research question. The list must contain at least 20 sources which are academically acceptable and relevant to the research question(s). The list will be divided into several sub-categories (typically 3-5). Sub-categories can include, for instance, Theory, Methodology, Background, Primary Data, Secondary Data; categories can also be more specific according to the precise nature of the individual research project. For each sub-category students will provide a title, a paragraph explaining how the topic relates to the research question (1-2 sentences) and then will list the chosen sources according to whatever citation style the student is using: APA, Chicago or MLA. **The chosen style guide must be clearly indicated.**

**The assignment must be submitted as a Dropbox assignment the day it is due.**

This assignment is worth 5% of the overall grade.

Assessed area	Percentage
Achieving the technical specifications: length, citation style usage, division into sub-categories	50
Quality and relevance of sources	50

### ***Personal Consultation 1***

According to a schedule, students will discuss their Draft Research Proposal with me on a one-to-one basis, in the week before the Proposal is due. Each consultation will take 10-15 minutes, and can easily be followed by a further consultation at an agreed time. Students are expected to bring a printed draft with brief sections on: the **research question**, the **statement of relevance** and the **thesis statement**. This ought not take up more than one page.

This assignment is worth 10% of the overall grade.

Assessed area	Percentage
Being on-time	50
Being prepared with printed copy of complete draft responses	50

### ***Draft Research Proposal***

The Proposal must contain the research question, thesis statement, statement of relevance, chapter structure, and a revised bibliography (based on the Source Identification assignment). In addition there should be a paragraph on Theory and a paragraph on Methodology. The order of the Proposal is as follows:

1. Research Question (1 sentence)
2. Thesis Statement (1-2 sentences)
3. Statement of Relevance (1 paragraph)
4. Theory (1 paragraph)
5. Methodology (1 paragraph)
6. Literature Review (at least 3 works, 1 page approx.)
7. Bibliography

Students with more classic humanities topics may omit the Theory section, but ought to increase the literature review to 6 pieces (2 pages approx.) and ensure that at least one of the pieces discussed deals with a theory or theories that explains their chosen topic.

The outline should be not exceed 2.5 pages long, excluding the bibliography

The student must meet in person with a faculty member who is knowledgeable in the topic the student wants to write on, discuss the outline together, and get their feedback. As proof of this meeting, the student must CC me in the email when they send their outline before the consultation and confirm the time to meet. This meeting **does not** mean that the faculty member is the advisor of the student. The CC'd email containing the student's outline is considered the student's outline submission to the lecturer.

This assignment is worth 5% of the overall grade.

Assessed area	Percentage
Completing formal requirements, including meeting with second lecturer	50
Relevance, clarity and appropriateness of theory, literature and methodology	50

### **Peer Review**

This is based on the Draft Research Proposal, described above. Students must print out a copy of their outline for each member of their peer group on the day it is due.

Students will be organized into peer groups, and each student will get the chance to discuss their work and get feedback. In the peer group sessions students will present their drafts in turn, and receive constructive comments/criticisms/suggestions from the rest of their group.

Students should share problems they have encountered, solutions to problems they have discovered, quality sources they have discovered which may be useful to their peers, etc.

**If the student does not have their assignment prepared for a Peer Group Day, the student will receive a 0 for Peer Group.** This failure cannot be made-up at a later date, as the tasks are group based.

This assignment is worth 10% of the overall grade.

Assessed area	Percentage
Completing formal requirements: being present and prepared (with printed draft)	50
Communicating draft ideas thoroughly and clearly, staying on topic	25
Offering constructive feedback	25

### **Personal Consultation 2**

According to a schedule, I will give feedback individually to students, the week after its submission. We will also talk about potential advisors for the thesis. Each consultation will take 10-15 minutes, and can easily be followed by a further consultation at an agreed time.

This assignment is worth 10% of the overall grade.

Assessed area	Percentage
Being on-time	50

Ability to discuss your work critically and develop solutions to problems	50
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### ***Update Presentation***

Following the three-pronged critique of the Draft Research Proposal (from peers, instructor and a second lecturer), each student, according to a schedule, will present a 10-minute presentation on their progress and plans. The presentation should summarise the students research goals and approaches, then move to the critiques and comments it received (including the student's own views), before finally outlining some objectives aimed at improving or refining the proposal.

This assignment is worth 10% of the overall grade.

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Being on-time and prepared	50
Ability to discuss your work critically and develop solutions to problems	50

### ***Final Thesis Proposal***

This is to be an improved and augmented version of the Draft submitted earlier in the semester. It is to be comprised of the following elements

1. Title and author's name
2. Research Question (1 sentence)
3. Thesis Statement (1-2 sentences)
4. Statement of Relevance (1 paragraph)
5. Theory (as many as needed)
6. Methodology (as many as needed)
7. Literature Review (at least 6 works, 2 page approx.)
8. Chapter Structure
9. Timeline
10. Bibliography
11. Advisor name and email address

Humanities students may, if they wish, omit the Theory paragraph, but should write a Literature Review of at least 9 works, 2.5 pages approx.)

The final assignment ought to be 11-14 pages (Times New Roman double-spaced). It is to be submitted as a Turnitin assignment by Friday 12 December 11.59.

This assignment is worth 30% of the overall grade.

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
All required sections complete	40
Quality sources, well-integrated with your own original writing. Good grasp and presentation of the topic Accuracy and coherence	60

### ***Thesis Advisor Consent Form***

**Each student is required to find an advisor for their project.** This form should be complete and sent to the instructor by Friday 12 December 11.59. The advisor should also be included in the Thesis Proposal.

This assignment is worth 10% of the overall grade. **It is also a vital requirement for passing the course, and cannot be omitted.**

Assessed area	Percentage
Form complete	100

### ***Journal***

For ten weeks, between Weeks 3 and 12, students will have the chance to submit a short journal entry. This could consist simply of an update about new literature that has been identified or read, or a remark about progress made with some element of the proposal, or simply a reflection on the practice of research. A sentence or two is fine. Students are required to submit 5 out of the 10 possible Journal entries. They are to be submitted as Dropbox assignments on NEO by the end of the relevant week (Friday 11.59). See the individual Dropbox assignments for the dates.

This assignment is worth 10% of the overall grade.

Assessed area	Percentage
Journal complete with relevant content	100

## **8. General Requirements and School Policies**

### ***General requirements***

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

### ***Course specific requirements***

AI use is allowed but under strict parameters. See the following table



## Scale Levels and Descriptions

1	NO AI	<p>The assessment is completed entirely without AI assistance. This level ensures that students rely solely on their knowledge, understanding, and skills.</p> <p><b>AI must not be used at any point during the assessment.</b></p>
2	AI-ASSISTED IDEA GENERATION AND STRUCTURING	<p>AI can be used in the assessment for brainstorming, creating structures, and generating ideas for improving work.</p> <p><b>No AI content is allowed in the final submission.</b></p>
3	AI-ASSISTED EDITING	<p>AI can be used to make improvements to the clarity or quality of student created work to improve the final output, but no new content can be created using AI.</p> <p><b>AI can be used, but your original work with no AI content must be provided in an appendix.</b></p>
4	AI TASK COMPLETION, HUMAN EVALUATION	<p>AI is used to complete certain elements of the task, with students providing discussion or commentary on the AI-generated content. This level requires critical engagement with AI generated content and evaluating its output.</p> <p><b>You will use AI to complete specified tasks in your assessment. Any AI created content must be cited.</b></p>
5	FULL AI	<p>AI should be used as a “co-pilot” in order to meet the requirements of the assessment, allowing for a collaborative approach with AI and enhancing creativity.</p> <p><b>You may use AI throughout your assessment to support your own work and do not have to specify which content is AI generated.</b></p>

Table 1 The AI Assessment Scale

Uses 1 and 2 are permitted (and even encouraged); but not uses 3-5. Students can incur serious sanctions if they transgress this policy.