

IDSVA SYLLABUS

Seminar 901.1: Formulate the Question

Course Number:	901.1
Course Title:	<i>Seminar: Formulate the Question</i>
Dates:	June 26 – June 29, 2025
Format:	Online
Faculty:	Prof. Dejan Lukic; Prof. Silvia Mazzini
TA:	Victor El-Khalidi
Credits:	1

901.1 Course Description:

In this course, we will systematically approach the starting point for a successful dissertation, learning how to choose the topic and formulate the question at its core. This will serve as a foundation for the Dissertation Preparation Courses in the Fall and Spring, during which you will write the introduction of your dissertation.

We will start by introducing the [Dissertation Handbook](#) and Template, which will be valuable companions in the following years. In the morning sessions, each student will share their initial thoughts about the topic and research question of their dissertation. This will occur as a 5-minute informal presentation. It is therefore crucial that each student comes prepared with current ideas about their topic and main research questions.

The feedback of the professors and the participants will be a solid basis for the research each student continues to do during the Summer. In the afternoon sessions, students will present their Independent Study II, while the others will improve their analytical and critical skills by providing feedback, together with the professors.

Learning Objectives:

In the course of the online residency, students will:

1. Improve their critical, analytical and dialogical skills;
2. Practice and improve their presentation abilities;
3. Learn how to formulate a clear, stimulating and original research question;
4. Learn how to choose their Dissertation topic.

Course Requirements:

Students are required to participate in the online residency, to present their papers and to formulate and ask questions after other presentations and lectures. Please make every effort to be present via webcam & audio. Please contact the professors if you know in advance that you will miss a class.

VC etiquette:

- Students are expected to participate via webcam. Being on **video** implements the interactive character of the VC, level of attention of the students, and helps the instructor to engage more actively in their communicative skills. Any exemption should be discussed with the professor in charge before the class takes place and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, if you are travelling or have problems with your connection, ask the professor for permission not to use the webcam or to participate via phone.
- Please make use of the **chat function** only if you encounter technical problems or in order to post information and links that are addressed during the discussion. Avoiding parallel conversations helps develop a shared conversation with all students and the professor.

Attendance policy: students are expected to attend *every* class. Video recordings are available as a make-up resource for missed classes, but they should not be considered equivalent to attending the class in person. Please inform the TA and the professor in advance if you cannot attend the VC.

Assessment and Grading:

The course grade will be based on the average grade of your writing presentations (50%) and the grade for your contributions to Videoconference seminars (50%). Possible extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis in response to special circumstances.

Required Texts:

- 1) Bottery, Mike; Wright, Nigel; Fabrizi, Mark: *Writing a Watertight Thesis. Structure, Demystification and Defence*. Bloomsbury 2023 (PDF available)
- 2) Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesis*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015, Section II <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/how-write-thesis>