KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT

Guidelines for Term Papers in Political Theory

This guide is intended to help you choose a topic and write a term paper in Political Theory. Unless otherwise agreed upon in the respective course, grading will also be based on the following aspects.

Communication and Consultation: Have your topic or research question confirmed in a timely manner, for example via email, after the seminar, or during office hours.

Research Question: Develop a problem-oriented, concrete, and guiding research question. Ensure that it is neither too broad nor trivial and that it expresses a clear and relevant research objective, which you will then address through argumentation and in close alignment with the relevant scholarly literature. Political theory term papers can pursue different types of inquiry:

- *Theoretical-conceptual*: How can a concept, a theory, an aspect of a theory, or a school of thought be more precisely understood, compared, and systematically explored, and what are its central arguments, assumptions, and normative premises?
- *Analytical-critical*: To what extent does a political theory help us understand specific aspects of political reality, critically analyze political developments and problems, or justify normative assessments?
- *Intellectual-historical*: Under what historical and social conditions does a political theory emerge, to which traditions and debates in the history of ideas does it refer, and how does it address social change?

State of Research: Take a position on the relevant field of research in political theory and/or the history of ideas, and, if applicable, on related disciplines. In doing so, identify context-relevant problems, contradictions, anomalies, or gaps, and return to these points during your argumentation.

Outline and Structure: Organize the paper into an introduction (including a methodology section, a hypothesis, and state of the art), a main body, a conclusion, a bibliography, a declaration of authorship, and, if applicable, an appendix. The introduction and conclusion should each account for no more than 10–15 percent of the total word count. Use subsections to clarify the steps in your argument. In the methodology section, briefly explain how you are approaching the text – for example, from a normative perspective or within the history of ideas.

Argumentation and Execution: Demonstrate, through an independent and clear line of reasoning, that you have thoroughly engaged with the texts. Present your arguments in a logical, concise, and coherent manner. Make sure to weigh counterarguments as well. Support empirical claims with evidence and reflect on theoretical premises. Use precise – but not unnecessarily complicated – terms from the primary text and the literature and define key concepts. Be sure to include direct quotations, not just paraphrases.

CHAIR OF POLITICAL THEORY

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Sources: In addition to the primary texts, consult an appropriate amount of research literature. Clearly indicate when an idea does not originate from you. Take care to cite only from academically recognized sources (do not use so-called "gray literature" from platforms such as ResearchGate that has not already been published in relevant academic books or journals). Do not cite Wikipedia, AI chatbots, or other internet sources, as they are not academically recognized sources. It is not permitted to have text generated entirely or partially by AI. Further information on the permissible use of AI chatbots in term papers will be provided in the respective course.

Formal Requirements: Please adhere to the requirements given in the respective course regarding length, time frame, and submission date. You may choose your citation style and formatting freely, provided you apply it uniformly, clearly, and consistently. Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and academic style.

And finally: Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Good luck!

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