

Hausarbeiten (also called ‘Seminararbeiten’): General Information

This information is based on the information provided by Dr. Ulrich Franke on his website

A Hausarbeit is a detailed analysis and consideration of a question, which is interrogated on the basis of a chosen theoretical framework and on the basis of a literature review. With a Hausarbeit, you should show me that you

- 1) have identified a suitable question;
- 2) have identified relevant academic texts to address this question;
- 3) have read and evaluated these texts;
- 4) have identified a specific angle/argument/school of thought/theory from which to address your question.

Additional criteria that I look for are:

- 5) a clearly structured and clearly written text;
- 6) originality of thought and ideas;
- 7) mobilization of interesting, primary material (this is a bonus).

Steps to follow in preparing a Hausarbeit are (based on Dr. Ulrich Franke’s website!)

- Think about your research interest: what you like to learn about more?
- Translate your interest into a research QUESTION as precise as possible. A question has a question mark at the end and so should the title of your Hausarbeit. Please follow this simple rule.
- Identify a strand of literature to which your work should refer. Which authors or debates or schools of thought have written about your topic?
- One the basis of which concept(s), theoretical assumption(s) or argument(s).
- Draft an annotated outline in which you reflect on each major item with one or two sentences (see “On the structure of Hausarbeiten” below).

Hausarbeiten: Structure

Each Hausarbeit should be based on at least 10 academic sources of the size of an article in an academic journal. (A comprehensive overview of academic journals in International Relations can be found [here](#)). Two of the many possibilities for structuring a seminar paper are outlined below:

Version A. Empirical Investigation

1 Introduction

- What is your research interest/topic/question? Why is it relevant?
- Outline the structure of your paper.

2 State of the art (literature review)

- This section explains the body of literature that your Hausarbeit engages. This should not be a list of individual books/articles/authors that you present in turn, but should be topical or thematic, which you cite examples of themes/arguments/topics, which you have read.

e.g. *“this Hausarbeit is based on the literature of critical security studies and on the literature feminist IR studies. Both bodies of literature comprise many authors, themes and arguments. For example, feminist IR scholars have addressed nuclear strategy (ref example), foreign policy (ref example) or intelligence cooperation (ref example). In critical security studies, we see a dominance of interest in discourse analysis (ref example), but also archival research (ref example) or ethnography (ref example). To address my question, I use writings from both schools of thought which have considered the role of visas and passports (ref examples). In particular, the arguments of AUTHOR XYZ and AUTHOR ABC, which state that passports can be divided into powerful and weaker passports, and that the strength of passports is linked to state sovereignty, are applied in the following sections”*.

3 Theoretical framework/presumptions

- Based on which concepts, arguments or theory are you addressing your question?

4 Methodology

- What is your empirical example? Give reasons or its selection.

- Describe the methods you will be using (document analysis, comparison...)

5 Investigation/Findings

- Apply both your theoretical presumptions and your methods to your subject matter.

e.g. *“based on AUTHOR ABC’s argument that there exist powerful and weaker passports, my method is to compare the number of countries, to which different passports offer access. I compare the passports of five countries, which previously were imperial powers with the passports of five countries, which were previously colonized. Using the argument of AUTHOR TGH, that post-colonial sovereignty is weaker than post-imperial sovereignty, I can show that the weaker passports are indeed associated with weaker sovereignty.”*

6 Answering the research question

- Answer your research question and connect your answer to the state of the art.

7 Conclusion and outlook

- Briefly summarize your findings and give an idea of avenues for further research in light of your findings.

8 Bibliography

Version B. Literature Report

1 Introduction

- What is your topic/question? Why is it relevant?

- Outline the structure of your paper.

2 State of the art (literature review)

- This section explains the body of literature that your Hausarbeit engages. This should not be a list of individual books/articles/authors that you present in turn, but should be topical or thematic, which you cite examples of themes/arguments/topics, which you have read.

e.g. *“this Hausarbeit is based on the literature of critical security studies and on the literature feminist IR studies. Both bodies of literature comprise many authors, themes and arguments. For example, feminist IR scholars have addressed nuclear strategy (ref example), foreign policy (ref example) or intelligence cooperation (ref example). In critical security studies, we see a dominance of interest in discourse analysis (ref example), but also archival research (ref example) or ethnography (ref example). To address my question, I use writings from both schools of thought which have considered the role of visas and passports (ref examples). In particular, the arguments of AUTHOR XYZ and AUTHOR ABC, which state that passports can be divided into powerful and weaker passports, and that the strength of passports is linked to state sovereignty, are applied in the following sections”*.

3 Critical appraisal

Evaluate the different arguments, examples and positions on your question that you have read. Which one(s) do you find convincing, and why? Which one(s) do you dismiss, why?

4 Conclusion

5 Bibliography

BA Arbeit: General information and structure

A well-proven suggestion for the structure of theses is the following:

- 1 Introduction,
- 2 State of the art (Literature review)
- 3 Theoretical framework,
- 4 Methodology,
- 5 Empirical example/study
- 6 Answering the research question,
- 7 Conclusion and outlook.

Describe your topic in the introduction and outline the research question, its relevance and the structure of the thesis (1).

Then embed your work in existing academic literature on the topic and set out the answers already given by other researchers. Do not proceed additively, but relate the literature you have processed to each other and work out existing arguments, disagreements, different perspectives and positions (2) (see examples above in the section on Hausarbeiten).

Outline the concepts (in German this may also be ‘Begriffe’) and theories that you want to use in addressing your question. Explain your choice and then explain the way that you understand these concepts and theories. Avoid being descriptive and try to proceed analytically and comparatively. Explain what theoretically informed assumptions you make in order to be able to work on your subject at all (3).

After this step, briefly explain methodology. Make it clear how – in which steps – you want to arrive at well-informed statements about your subject and to answer your research question. See also example above in the Hausarbeiten section (4).

What follows is the analysis of your empirical example, material or case study. This can be done, for example, by first briefly presenting the specifics of the case(s) you are investigating and then explaining how you applied your analytical tools to your subject and what observations you made (5). Towards the end of the paper, you summarize your findings, answer the research question, and connect this answer to the state of the art (6). You then condense your answer into a conclusion. You critically reflect on your own approach and outline new research questions that arise from your findings (7).

Format for written work

Use a common font and size such as Times New Roman 12 pt, 1.5 line spacing, full justification and hyphenation. Quote uniformly, ideally in Harvard style (in continuous text: name year: page number). Please avoid reference formats that use footnotes and list all references in a separate bibliography at the end of the text. Footnotes should be reserved for additional information that does not fit well into the main text.