

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA**  
**Fakulta sociálních věd**  
**Institut mezinárodních studií**

**PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE**  
**(Posudek oponenta)**

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Anna Matějčková

Název práce: What Type of First Lady Was Michelle Obama: Case Study on Michelle Obama as First Lady

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Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce): Lucie Kýrová, MA, Ph.D.

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle):

This thesis is a case study of Michelle Obama and her tenure as a First Lady of the United States. It aims to demonstrate the changes and re-definition of the role of a First Lady during Michelle Obama's term in the White House through analyses of her self-identification (as a mother first), initiatives, strategies to promote those initiatives, and their impact, as well as the limitations posed by society's expectations of the Office of First Lady. As a broader context and comparison, Ms. Matějčková also discusses the work of a former First Lady Laura Bush. The timeframe of the thesis goes from the time of President Barak Obama's presidential campaign to Mrs. Obama's work after her term at the White House ended.

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

The author sets the case study of Mrs. Obama and her shaping of the role of a First Lady within a broader context of women empowerment and society's expectations that have influenced the understanding of the position. The thesis is divided into three major parts, first one offering an analyses of several various aspects, such as family background, education, and professional life on the selection of the First Lady's initiatives and the actions of individual First Ladies that have helped to define (though not officially) the role through history as hostess, champion, and policy advocate. The second part then offers more detailed analyses of the initiatives and strategies the two former First Ladies Mrs. Laura Bush and Mrs. Michelle Obama employed to support them. The author argues that these initiatives and the First Ladies actions helped to re-define, to a degree, the role of the First Lady. Third part then analyses the life and work of both former First Ladies after their tenure in the White House ended. The division of the work is logical, though the arguments of each part and chapters are not always clearly presented. The author effectively uses primary sources, several of which she obtained herself through oral history interviews, supplemented by secondary literature.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

The thesis is written in a relatively good English, however with typos, some mistakes and few unclear sentences. The author's arguments, while present, are sometimes not as clearly stated; they sometimes feel "drowned" in the text. There is some inconsistency in capitalizing "F/first L/lady" and "B/blac." The author diligently sites her sources and her selected citations are appropriate. Though some of them are rather long and a paraphrasing would have been sufficient in some case. The thesis has all the formal aspects it should.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z diplomové práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

The thesis offers a wealth of information on the role of the First Lady of the United States and its ever-changing definition, a topic that has not been explored in depth yet. The author is using unique

primary sources she obtained through interviews with some of the staff of the two former First Ladies, which offer a more intimate views into the inner workings of the Office. Ms. Matějčková certainly showed a great motivation in doing so and has made a good use of these sources and their information. Though the quotes sometimes feel little bit excessive and they could have been shortened or paraphrased. At times, a more critical engagement with them, such as providing additional data to support the information they provide, would strengthen their evidential value.

The whole work would have benefited from more time for revisions. It clearly shows a rushed writing, which often results in unclear or muddled argument statements or a discussion of too many topics at once, which could be confusing to readers; some section would also benefit from having concluding statements. And while the author offers ample examples and evidence for her arguments, she does not always link them back to the chapter's argument or the central argument of her thesis. A solid literature review is missing.

While the focus of the work is on the former First Ladies Mrs. Laura Bush and Mrs. Michelle Obama, a larger historical context and comparisons with other First Ladies, when appropriate, would have helped to strengthened the author's arguments about the changing definition of FLOTUS role and the influence of Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Obama. For example, when discussing Mrs. Bush's role as a "Comforter-in-Chief" after 9/11 (p. 21), the author could have included discussion of other First Ladies and their activities during a time of distress such as the Second World War or the Cuban Missile Crisis. Similarly, Ms. Matějčková argues that Mrs. Obama's strategy to use of celebrities to promote her initiatives was never implemented before (p. 38, 44), however Mrs. Nancy Reagan used celebrities for TV ads in her "Just Say No" campaign. Without a comparison of these campaigns and their strategies, the author's claims of innovative or new approach by Mrs. Obama is unsupported.

Problematic is also her discussion on p. 17 about the dominance of media coverage of FLOTUS' fashion rather than their initiatives. As an example, her primary source talks critically about feminists disparaging such coverage preference, yet criticizing Mrs. Melania Trump for her attire during her visit to a detention center for migrant children – a jacket with "I don't really care, do you?" print. The author only provides brief comment on an "unfortunate" fashion choice for the occasion, but doesn't note contemporary critics, who pointed to the historical ties of the sentence to Nazi Italy of the 1920s. This leaves her discussion about the dominance of fashion coverage of FLOTUSs and the claims of her primary source somewhat incomplete, especially since the following paragraph argues that First Ladies can use this aspect to their advantage and to promote issues they care about by suing "right clothing for the right audience" (p. 18).

Another section that would benefit from having a better historical context is 2.2.2 "Michelle Obama's Narrative." On p. 26, the author uses the concept of "post-identity," but does not truly define it. Better explanation of what it is and how Mrs. Obama uses it as a tool to create a counter-narrative to dominant views of Black women and their historical development would make the argumentation clearer.

Overall, the author selected a very interesting topic and examined its many aspects. In doing so, she showed a great initiative to obtain unique primary sources and thus was able to present little known information. With more time for revisions, the writing would have been better and the arguments and their evidence clearer.

##### 5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

On page 37, you discuss criticism that was leveled against Mrs. Obama for her initiative on college education, which stated the initiative and its goal didn't necessarily applied to all minorities and did not truly solve problems of poverty among African-Americans. In your opinion, is such criticism fair? Can FLOTUS propose policies that would deal with systemic poverty and inequality, given the

officially undefined role? Or are First Ladies limited to “supporting” initiatives by the nature of their position?

Please explain the concept of post-identity narrative and elaborate on how Mrs. Obama has used it to create a counter-narrative to dominant views of Black women. Explain what those views are. (Here you might want to also consider political opponents during the first presidential campaign calling her Barack Obama’s “baby mamma” rather than his wife or the mother of his children).

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA  
(A a B výborně, C a D velmi dobře, E dobře, F nevyhověl):

I recommend this thesis for defense and suggest a grade D.

Datum:

Podpis:

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Pozn.: Hodnocení píše k jednotlivým bodům, pokud nepíšete v textovém editoru, použijte při nedostatku místa zadní stranu nebo příložený list. V hodnocení práce se pokuste oddělit ty její nedostatky, které jsou, podle vašeho mínění, obhajobou neodstranitelné (např. chybí kritické zhodnocení pramenů a literatury), od těch věcí, které student může dobrou obhajobou napravit; poměr těchto dvou položek berte prosím v úvahu při stanovení konečné známky.