

IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator (cc Chiara Amini chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk and fiona.rushworth@ucl.ac.uk)

Please note that IMESS students are not required to use a particular set of methods (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or comparative) in their dissertation.

Student:	Filip Fila
Dissertation title:	Contemporary Public Debate on Religion: Parliamentary Debate on Church Property Restitution and its Taxation in the Czech Republic.

	70+	69-65	60-61	59-55	54-50	<50
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Knowledge <i>Knowledge of problems involved, e.g. historical and social context, specialist literature on the topic. Evidence of capacity to gather information through a wide and appropriate range of reading, and to digest and process knowledge.</i>	X					
Analysis & Interpretation <i>Demonstrates a clear grasp of concepts. Application of appropriate methodology and understanding; willingness to apply an independent approach or interpretation recognition of alternative interpretations; Use of precise terminology and avoidance of ambiguity; avoidance of excessive generalisations or gross oversimplifications.</i>	X					
Structure & Argument <i>Demonstrates ability to structure work with clarity, relevance and coherence. Ability to argue a case; clear evidence of analysis and logical thought; recognition of an argument's limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>	X					
Presentation & Documentation <i>Accurate and consistently presented footnotes and bibliographic references; accuracy of grammar and spelling; correct and clear presentation of charts/graphs/tables or other data. Appropriate and correct referencing throughout. Correct and contextually correct handling of quotations.</i>		X				
Methodology <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>	X					

ECTS Mark:		Charles Mark:	A	Marker:	Ondřej Matějka
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	June 10, 2019

MARKING GUIDELINES

A (UCL mark 70+) = A (Charles mark- excellent): Note: marks of over 80 are given rarely and only for truly exceptional pieces of work. Distinctively sophisticated and focused analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.

B (UCL mark 69-65) = B (Charles mark – very good)

C (UCL mark 64-60) = C (Charles mark – good): A high level of analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Good understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research. 65 or over equates to a B grade.

D (UCL mark 59-55) = D (Charles mark – satisfactory)

E (UCL mark 54-50) = E (Charles mark – sufficient):

Demonstration of a critical use of sources and ability to engage in systematic inquiry. An ability to engage in sustained research work, demonstrating methodological awareness. 55 or over equates to a D grade.

F (UCL mark less than 50) = F (Charles mark - insufficient):

Demonstrates failure to use sources and an inadequate ability to engage in systematic inquiry. Inadequate evidence of ability to engage in sustained research work and poor understanding of appropriate research techniques.

Please provide substantive and detailed feedback!

Comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (at least 300 words):

In his MA dissertation Filip Fila courageously chose a topic both interesting and risky because very much linked to current Czech political context. In fact, the second parliamentary debate that he included into his analysis (around the legislative proposal to tax church property restitutions) ended just a few days before the final deadline for the submission of his dissertation.

Despite those challenges and very practical difficulties in assembling the corpus of his sources, Filip Fila succeeded in delivering an excellent piece of research. Based on a very good orientation in the secularization studies bibliography (namely the work by José Casanova and Grace Davie) and a very good knowledge of current research agendas in this field, the author identified an adequate set of research questions linking local current political debates on church property restitution (and its subsequent taxation) with wider reflection on the position of religion in Czech public sphere.

He also showed awareness of the complicated historical background indispensable to the understanding of the very critical and distant attitudes of the majority of Czech population towards various forms of institutionalized religion even in the beginning of the 21st century.

He has correctly identified suitable methodology for treating the type of sources he analyzed. Thematic content analysis (that he presents critically and also self-reflectively) allowed him to identify the most important issues (that he reformulated as seven position statements in the chapter 6) around which the parliamentary debates were articulated.

He concludes that, in the Czech case, the seemingly useful conceptual framings (believing without belonging, vicarious religion) are not particularly useful to understand developments of one of the most un-churched European countries. Perhaps the most inspiring outcome of his research project is then his (empirically confirmed) observation that in the specific Czech context it is possible that an act seen as beneficial to the churches be secularly tinted.

To sum up: it is a well-researched, theoretically and methodologically sound study, the only irritating element is the Czech abstract that needs a more thorough language correction.

Specific questions you would like addressing at the oral defence (at least 2 questions):

Filip Fila correctly observes that even though Czechs indeed do show very weak belief in fundamental aspects of religion, they nonetheless demonstrate a non-negligible affinity for what has been dubbed alternative religiosity. Has he observed any references to this „alternative religiosity“ in the parliamentary debates he analyzed?

Is it possible to develop the reflection on the differences (if there are any – and more specifically if they are observable in the parliamentary debates on church restitutions) between Czech anti-clericalism and anti-Catholicism?

In the concluding pages (p. 70) the author remarks that in further research the existing most frequent conceptualizations in the field of sociology of religion could be enriched with new frames – more relevant to the Czech case. Could he develop a little bit more his idea of “believing in non-belonging”?