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 <u>not</u> 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 *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.*		66				
Analysis & Interpretation *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.*		66				
Structure & Argument *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.*		66				
Presentation & Documentation *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.*	70					
Methodology *Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.*			60			

ECTS Mark:		**Charles Mark:**	B-C		**Marker:**	Barbora Spalová
Deducted for late submission:		**Signed:**				
Deducted for inadequate referencing:		**Date:**	10. 6. 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_):

1. Originality of the research

I highly appreciate the very idea of Filip Fila to work with the transcripts of the parliamentary debates on church pro perty restitutions and its taxation. It is used only seldom as a source of data although the archive is open and maintain the data about relatively long period of our contemporary history. In this regard it could be very fruitful to enlarge the corpus and to analyse the "arguments" used in 1990 and 1991 when the first restitution bill about church properties was discussed (In 1990 and 1991 the Federal Czechoslovak Assembly adopted the so-called enumerative law (Act No. 298/1990 Coll.), under which certain assets (typically monastic buildings, but not their associated agricultural land) were returned to the various legal entities affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church.)
The crucial question is what about do these data speak? The author starts with the assumption that the parliamentary debates speak directly about the relation state – society – religion. It is certainly somehow true, but there are numerous levels of mediation between the debates in parliament and religion – society relation which should be understood and scrutinised (see below).

2. Methodology of the analysis

   The transcripts of the debates are analysed thematically in some relation to the political party of the speakers. At the end the author says that such party use dominantly an "argument" in the debate. For example KSČM members say that "churches are at odds with the people". I understand that this basic categorisation of the privileged topics by assigning them to some groups of the speakers is needed, but I think that this kind of analysis don't care about the dialogical character of these data. All the cited "arguments" are reaction to other statements in the debates in polemic or supporting manner. The cross referencing to what was said in other debates (the parliament has its own often activated memory) is usually not used to describe the relation of religion and society but to support or compromise political actors. Therefore I think that the analysis of dialogical networks (Leudar & Nekvapil) would be much more suitable and could be really named "linguistic approach" (as author says but doesn´t do).

3. Theoretical framework

   If we realise that the data speak more about the instrumentalisation of the society – religion relation for the purpose of the political battle it puts under questioning also the theoretical framework which is constructed by the context of European secularisation (Casanova, Davie), vicariousness of the traditional churches religiosity in Europe (Davie) and shift to postsecularism (Habermas). But what was said in debates cannot be taken as realistic description of the role of religion in the society and therefore it is ambiguous to say that the separation process will lead to secularisation and not to desecularisation, even it this interpretation I find very inte-resting. Generally the parts of the text don't fit very well together – why to speak about alternative religiosity in theoretical part when it is not at all mentioned in the analytical part; the numerous research questions are not fully addressed, they are also not included in conclusion comparison. Regarding to the data I wonder if it would be more appropriate to speak about postatheistic society than postsecular?

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

1. Many times in your text you speak about the importance of Czech national history, or history of religions in Czech lands, for the contemporary situation and deep secularisation of the society. This longue durée impact of religious history may be documented, but certainly it would be very hard to document it in the parliamentary debates. What is very present in the debates is use and misuse of social memory (Halbwachs). Could you describe this work of different actors with different social memories in order to achieve the political goals?

2. I have the impression that your research question "How prominently do the arguments in both debates touch on religion in it of itself ?" (p. 30) was not really answered (If I do understand the question). Can you try to summarize it for both analysed debates?