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	60-64	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.*		x				
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.*			x			
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 arguments limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.*				x		
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.*	x					
Methodology *Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.*			x			

ECTS Mark:	B/C	**UCL Mark:**	64/65	**Marker:**	Richard Mole	
Deducted for late submission:		0		**Signed:**	*Richard Mole*	
Deducted for inadequate referencing:		0		**Date:**	7 June 2019	

MARKING GUIDELINES

A (UCL mark 70+): *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/C (UCL mark 60-69):
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/E (UCL mark 50-59): 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.

D/E (UCL mark 50-59): 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):
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

Comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (_at least 300 words_):

Best features

The dissertation draws on a broad range of sources, which are well synthesised. The secondary sources are supplemented with primary sources in the form of two laws and accompanying parliamentary debates, which shows your ability also to conduct research in Czech. The aims of the dissertation are set out clearly (although I have issues with the way they were framed – see below). The thesis is well written in academically appropriate English and it is well structured. You demonstrate a sound understanding of different approaches to the study of religion. You explain your methodology clearly (although I have issues with the approach taken – see below) and place your examination of the laws in a broader social and political context. The taxonomy of themes you produce are presented clearly.

Suggestions for improvement

The main problem with the dissertation is that it is overly descriptive. The taxonomy of themes you produce are presented clearly but this only takes one so far. The research questions (of which they are too many) could not produce analytical answers. You needed to analyse more systematically the ways in which the participants in the parliamentary debates sought to attach particular meaning to themes, concepts and actors so as to create moral hierarchies and thereby legitimise their own positions and delegitimise those of their opponents. This was implicit in some of your claims but needed to be brought out more clearly. This would have made the thesis more analytical. Critical Discourse Analysis would have been a better method to adopt, and your reason for not choosing it ('it presupposes that analysed language has certain effects in society') is confused. Critical Discourse Analysis can be used to analyse discourses in a range of contexts, not just society in its broader sense. There are numerous examples of CDA being used to analyse parliamentary debates. Your attempt to use theory is commendable but you spend a lot of time presenting theories (_vicarious religion_ and _believing without belonging_), which you do not then use. You dismiss _believing without belonging_ 'due to the fact that the thesis did not research the Czech citizens' (p. 70). But if you knew at the start that you were not dealing with citizens, why discuss this approach at all?

Overall, this was a well-researched and well-written dissertation but the balance between description and analysis was titled too much towards the former.

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

1. You dismiss _believing without belonging_ 'due to the fact that the thesis did not research the Czech citizens' (p. 70). But if you knew at the start that you were not dealing with citizens, why discuss this approach at all?

2. Why did you choose Thematic Content Analysis over Critical Discourse Analysis?