

# IMESS DISSERTATION



**Note:** Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator (cc Julia Korosteleva [j.korosteleva@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.korosteleva@ucl.ac.uk) and Marta Kotwas [m.kotwas@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.kotwas@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.

<b>Student:</b>	Miranda Hankey
<b>Dissertation title:</b>	Faith in Politics: Ramzam Kadyrov, Islam, and Hegemony in Chechnya.

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Poor
<b>Knowledge</b> <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		
<b>Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b> <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	
<b>Structure &amp; Argument</b> <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 arguments limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>		x	
<b>Presentation &amp; Documentation</b> <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		

<b>ECTS Mark:</b>	B	<b>UCL Mark:</b>	68	<b>Marker:</b>	Dr Felix Ciută
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>			-	<b>Signed:</b>	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>			-	<b>Date:</b>	07.06.15

## 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.

**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.

CONTINUES OVERLEAF  
**PLEASE PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE AND  
 DETAILED FEEDBACK!**

**Constructive comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (*at least 300 words*):**

This is an excellently researched and engaged dissertation, whose author shows an obvious interest in and commitment to the topic. It covers well the empirical and methodological literatures, and handles proficiently the conceptual and theoretical elements it addresses. The dissertation structure is clear and coherent throughout. Although the historical section tends to rely on a rather limited literature (one or two sources at times), the dissertation is very well referenced, and benefits from a clear and direct writing style.

In terms of improvement, there are several areas that require attention

1. The most impressive characteristic of the dissertation – its very broad scope – is at the same time its key weakness. While all the elements included in the structure of the argument are interesting and relevant, the dissertation bites considerably more than it – or any such dissertation – can chew. The result is a rushed survey of empirical data in every section, which not only feels overly descriptive, but due to the inevitable word count constraints, can only produce analytical statements that lack the depth and nuance that at the start seemed very much within the grasp of the author.
2. Thus, while the research questions are clear and precise, they could, and should have been narrowed down considerably. The argument for a “multi-site” analysis of governance practices is in principle convincing, but the result is a rather thin analytical output; for example, the “media & cultural consumption” section could alone be the subject of a whole dissertation, while the two paragraphs dedicated to “education” are hopelessly insufficient. A solution could have been the focus on one particular site, such as the politics of the body (physical appearance and dress code), or the social media presence of president Kadyrov. This would have allowed a more in-depth analysis of the material, and a more detailed tracing of the politico-discursive elements outlined at the start of the dissertation.
3. The study of social media use is potentially very productive analytically. At the same time however, this dimension of the study raises several issues. The first concerns whether social media can be studied in the same way as any discourse. The second is whether social media can be studied at all as a unidirectional communication – without, that is, taking into account the continuous reaction and feedback that the medium is designed to encourage (and provides). The third issue concerns the use (and study of the use) of images. In this sense, the thesis would have benefitted from an engagement with the by now significant literature on politics and social media, and/or that focused on visuality and visual culture.
4. Similarly, the argument could have benefitted from an engagement with the wide literature dedicated to the relationship between politics and religion, which would have provided additional conceptual reference points which develop and fine-tune Mouffe and Laclau's framework. (But this, of course, would only have been possible within a much narrower research framework.)

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

1. What are the differences between religion and ideology in the operation and establishment of hegemony and political legitimacy?
2. Is it not a truism that all discursive formations are constitutively related to interest by virtue of their intrinsically political nature?
3. Is social media a typical form of discourse? What theoretical, methodological and political challenges does the study of social media raise?
4. Can images and other visual texts be considered a part of the “linguistic realm” (p. 21)? Are there no specific dimensions of the visual (e.g. affective or aesthetic) that distinguish it from the linguistic domain?
5. In what sense is “analysis” a method? (identified as “method 3” in the text)