

# IMESS DISSERTATION



**Note:** Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator

(cc Chiara Amini [chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk) and Lisa Cagnacci [l.cagnacci@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:l.cagnacci@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>	Sophia Rigby
<b>Dissertation title:</b>	How a Realist-Constructivist Theory Can Contribute to Understanding the 2014 Ukraine Crisis

	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>UCL Mark:</b>	67	<b>Marker:</b>	Andrew Wilson
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				<b>Signed:</b>	Andrew Wilson
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				<b>Date:</b>	21 May 2018

## 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):**

**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.

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

**Strengths**

The dissertation mines an impressive range of literature. The bibliography is excellent and well-presented. There is an ambitious attempt to marry realist and constructivist theory and apply the result to the Ukraine crisis. The main body of the essay is nicely structured around a list of, and subsequent analysis of, Russia's motives (Though this list is not complete: one might add Putin's need to boost his own domestic popularity and overcome the legacy of the protests of 2011-12, and isolate the political and economic system from similar challenges in the future).

Mostly, the writing style is good; and the footnoting and referencing are all done well.

**Weaknesses**

The main problem is with the realism section. There is so much that is presented in this section as eternal, but is also constructed, like the representation of NATO expansion. Too many tendentious Russian claim are presented as fact – this is a matter of writing style, elsewhere the author says that national identity, for example, is always changing. So is foreign policy discourse.

Chronology is crucial here. It would really help to give chapter and verse on the deteriorating relationship between Russian and the West. The deterioration did not start in 1991 or 2000. The relationship was pretty good under Obama's first term (the era of the 'reset'). The relationship deteriorated with the Arab Spring in 2011, the Bolotnaya protests in 2011-12, and finally the culmination of the Ukraine crisis in 2014. That is how I would depict the interaction between realism and constructivism; because that is when what are presented as realist arguments are basically constructed. Michael McFaul's new book would be a help here (From Cold War to Hot Peace).

Ultimately, the dissertation might work better if it was more critical of realism. Ultimately all apparently realist arguments are constructed.

This keeps the dissertation from being a distinction, but it is an excellent 2:1.

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

I would ask about chronology:

When do you think were the key turning-points in the deterioration of the relationship between Russia and the West?

And

To what extent do you think that what are presented as timeless considerations of 'national interest', like Russia's fear of open borders and attack from the West, also socially constructed?