Final Research Proposal Guidelines

The research proposal assignment should consist of at least the following elements:

- An **abstract** which conveys the research question/problem, gap in the literature, theory/hypothesis, and methodology of your proposal. The abstract should not exceed 150 words. *Note that the abstract does not count to your total word count.*
- An introduction in which you present the **research question**, make clear why this should be studied and discuss the scientific and practical **relevance** of such a study. Your research question should aim to fill a gap in the literature, challenge existing findings or provide a replication of existing findings based on new data. Within the context of this assignment you have to pose an *explanatory research question*; you should clearly state the dependent variable and the main independent variable(s)
- A short discussion of the relevant **literature.** You should refer to *at least* 10 academic publications, but ONLY discuss works that are directly relevant for your study and research question. Focus on where there is consensus and where there is divergence in the literature on the topic of your study. This divergence should be the gap you seek to fill.
- Think of the literature review as a discussion of alternative explanations of the variation you seek to explain.
- Discussion of your **theoretical argument** which seeks to decrease the knowledge gap highlighted in the literature review**.** Here you will discuss the main **concepts** in your study. The theory section should include at least one **hypothesis (observable implication of key explanatory variable).** I would like the theory section to be longer than the literature review---keep both concise.
- A discussion of how you intend to **design** of your study, including the **type of data** you will need to study the relationship in your hypothesis.
- Discuss how you can **operationalize** your concepts using this data (in a **valid** and **reliable** way).
- Make clear how you will gather the data for your research project. Also discuss the variables you need to **control** for in your research design.
- When discussing the data, the order should be: dependent variable, explanatory variable, control variables.
- Indicate potential limitations of the study. Are there threats to causal inference? What are they and how might they be overcome?
- Conclude with a discussion of the academic and practical implications of your potential results.