

## Handout 1: The purpose and content of a synopsis

Everybody needs to bring a 1-2 page synopsis for the seminar

### **Synopsis:**

A synopsis is a tool for the writing process. It has three main objectives:

- 1) It helps verbalising the idea of the paper and at the same time makes it more concrete. It is a tool for thinking the subject and argument of the paper through.
- 2) It helps you to focus and structure the paper. A good synopsis can save you from reading source material that later turns out not to be of use to the paper.
- 3) It serves the purpose of informing your supervisor about the project and thereby making a more focused and in-depth supervision possible.

### **What should a synopsis include?**

- 1) A motivation for the choice of subject. Why do you think it is an interesting subject and how can the paper contribute new knowledge?
- 2) An outline of the paper's subject and a description of the literature that you want to relate to.
- 3) A preliminary thesis statement. What is it precisely that you want to investigate and what are your research questions?
- 4) A short discussion of the argument of the paper. What do you expect to find or what argument are you going to advocate?
- 5) A reflection over the strategy of analysis or method. Is the paper a case study, will it make use of the comparative method, is it a theoretical discussion etc? Remember that you need an argument for why for example the comparative method is central to answering your research questions.
- 6) An account for the type of materials and sources that you want use, that is, what is the base texts and why have you chosen these relating to your research questions.
- 7) An outline of the structure of the paper and its main sections. Which elements are necessary to answer the thesis statement of the paper? Necessary is a key word here, since 10 pages of review of a given theorist isn't necessary if you really only need one specific argument for your paper.
- 8) A list of the 5-10 most important books or articles on the subject of your paper.
- 9) In general, account for your deselection throughout the synopsis. This information can be just as important as your choices and shows that you have an overview of the given subject matter.