

PWB-ST-VS Digital Media in Autocracies: Term Paper Requirements

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Your final grade is the grade you get for your term paper. Term paper is a 10-page long writing that reviews scholarly literature (academic journals, books). To make a paper: you have to choose a country and a topic from our seminar. Then, you have to find literature and collect the relevant literature. Finally, you review the literature and write up it into a paper of your own. The following document will guide you in this process.

Choosing a topic

1. Start by choosing a country: suppose that you are interested in Hungary.
2. Then, pick a topic from the seminar's syllabus most interesting for you.

Each week of the seminar has one such topic. Their titles have between 1 and 3 concepts. For instance:

- *'Week 14: National security and agency of social media companies';*
- Country: *Hungary.*

The topic then: *'Social media companies in Hungary's national security policy.'*

Having chosen a topic, do a brief scoping of literature to answer the following questions:

- *'Do I have enough literature on the chosen topic?'*

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- *‘Do I have enough literature specific to my country?’*

These answer will help you to assess feasibility of your essay. You may discover that your particular case-topic pair is not well covered in the literature. Then, you have two options:

1. Compare countries if you do not have enough on a single chosen country.
2. Consider changing the topic.
3. Ask your instructor for help.

See Appendix A for a list of topics of our seminar. See Appendix B for a list of countries classified as autocracy in the recent V-Dem report.

What is enough literature?

This question cannot be answered with a specific number. To see whether you have ‘enough,’ consider this:

- *‘Do I have more than one paper?’*
- When more than one paper: *‘Do these papers refer to each other?’* and *‘Are there other relevant papers referenced together by my papers?’*
- *‘Are there any links between the papers based on what they discuss?’*

Positive answer to the questions are a good sign that you may have enough. Negative answers imply that you may have to search for more literature: try different keywords, look through references in the papers you have found, try another search engine (i.e. Google Scholar, Web of Science, Semantic Scholar, ‘elicit.org’, etc.).

You may use something called ‘gray literature’ (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey_literature). Consider interviewing an expert, or your chosen country citizen. Prioritize academic sources (books, peer-reviewed journals).

Where to find literature

1. JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/>. Take a look here as well <https://guides.jstor.org/researchbasics/welcome>.
2. WoS: <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/>
3. Bamberg Library: <https://katalog.ub.uni-bamberg.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Language=en&View=ubg&Branch=1>

Only after you have used options above and it did not yield enough material, go to Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.com/>.

How to search

- Always use "advanced search" instead of the basic one. With advance search you get more control over what is in your results. By specifying where to search in what way, you can eliminate a lot of redundant material.
- Pay attention to the way your search results are sorted. This is important. These are the sorting you want: sort by citations, sort by date. This is the sorting that will probably give you more trouble: "sort by relevance." You sort by relevance after you exhausted all your options for searching and sorting.
- Learn your keywords to navigate stacks of literature. Take a look at papers I uploaded to the VC for us. For example, let's look at (Lührmann, Lindberg, 2019). After the abstract, there is "keywords" line. These keywords are chosen by authors. Lührmann and Lindberg decided on the following: "Autocratization; democratic backsliding; waves of democratization; democratic erosion; comparative democratization; democracy; quantitative methods; autocracy; autogolpes". They decided: "our paper must be found in these stacks of papers: a stack of papers on 'autocratization', a stack of papers on 'democratic backsliding' and so on." Identify the name of the stack that is most relevant to your question. Then, go to WoS and request this stack: specify that you are searching in "Author Keywords" and put the name of the stack in the search bar. Now you have a list of papers. Sort this list by the number of citations. Now, on WoS, you can search inside this list for other stuff like "Hungary." Pay attention to the highly cited papers.

- Look through the Bibliography section of a paper or book for the other items. On WoS, you can look at bibliography without access to a paper. Find interesting titles in the bibliography, look up keywords the authors chose, go look inside this stacks for more relevant pieces. Repeat until you have found enough.

ChatGPT

From my experience, ChatGPT is useless for searching the relevant literature. Please, do not rely on it. Make sure your paper will not have references hallucinated by ChatGPT. Made up references will be considered cheating.

You can use ChatGPT to improve your English writing. Just double check every change it suggests to make sure that it does not add anything you are not trying to say yourself. I need to grade a paper that reflects *your* thinking and *your* work with literature.

What is "literature review"?

The idea of literature review is to summarize and connect together in one piece of writing knowledge contained in other pieces. In other words, you are explaining a topic of your choice using information somebody else produced and published in a form of a book or a journal paper.

When you do this "explaining," you must have a goal. When there is a goal behind your writing, it is easier to write - you do not waste time in uncomfortable hours of feeling that you do not know what to do. A goal makes your writing easier to read and understand (which improves your grade): when you have a goal, you do not write about distracting topics in your papers that can take attention away from the actual subject you have to discuss in the paper.

What should be your goal? Your goal for this assignment is to discuss what other people published on your topic. For example, you study digital media in Hungary's national security. Then, your goal is to discuss what others have written about Hungary's national security and the role of digital media in it.

What if other writers discuss the national security but do not discuss digital media? Then, you have to find out why nobody discuss it. Is it because Hungary has no policy that reference digital media or because nobody has bothered to publish a paper or a book about it? You need to find out. If it is the latter, then you have to connect together a stack of literature on the national security of Hungary and a stack of literature on digital media and

national security discussed in general. How to connect a general discussion to a particular case? You have to extrapolate and speculate. Make sure that when you do so it say it in your writing." To the best of my knowledge, nobody has discussed the role of digital media in Hungary's national securing. In the next section, I will review the general discussion of the digital media and national security. Then, I will discuss how it can be applied to the case of Hungary."

When you start doing connections as I described above, you will notice that you have to look up more literature. You do so but you keep yourself bounded by your overall topic. If your topic is bounded by "Hungary", "national security" and "digital media", then you do not have to do a review on "agenda-setting theory" because you had to mention it. Just put a reference to a source you used to learn about this. For example, "...the agenda-setting theory can explain how concentrated media ownership can help advancing autocratization in Hungary (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)."

Grading criteria

Your essay will be evaluated by the following form.

Criteria	Notes	Evaluation
Basics/Literature		
Structure & Presentation		
Correctness / relevance		
Argumentation		
Reflection of results, limitations		
Innovative / Creative work		

Conclusion :

Grade:

For each criterion there can be one of the following marks:

- ‘++’
- ‘+’
- ‘0’
- ‘_’

- ‘—’

as a rating. This is added up and results in the following grading scale:

Grade	1, 0	1, 3	1, 7	2	2, 3	2, 7	3, 0	3, 3	3, 7	4, 0
Points	12–11	10–9	8–7	6–5	4–3	2–1	0–1	–2 ––3	–4 ––5	–6 ––7

- *Literature.* How you solved the problem of finding your literature. How well your literature covers the issue. How connected and/or independent your sources. Your awareness of how the literature fits together. How did you select the literature. How explicit is your strategy for search and selection.
- *Structure & Presentation.* How well sections of your paper support each other. Coherence of presentation.
- *Correctness and relevance.* Your claims and structure should reflect what is in your literature.
- *Argumentation.* How your claims supported. Logical issues. How the text anticipates potential criticism and preemptively responds to it.
- *Reflection of results, limitations.* Your ability critically assessing yourself and your work.
- *Innovative / Creative work.* This reflects the degree of ‘extra.’ How far you went beyond ideas and materials we engaged during the seminar.

Paper composition

The following describes how to structure your paper. This does not mean that this is how you should do it. This is an example that you can adapt to your paper.

1. Introduction

This short section introduces a reader to your topic and provides guidance to your text. It defines briefly your concepts and connects them to your country.

2. Context

Provide social and historical context. This section informs the reader about the crucial facts on your chosen country. This section helps a reader to connect their prior knowledge about your topic with to your country.

3. Topical section 1

Introduce a reader to your first topic. Elaborate definitions of your concept. Review discussions about the topic in the context of your country. Avoid repeating the previous section, draw on the context section for explaining your review of the literature.

You may organize your review in different ways. Use what best fits your materials. For example, you can organize the section around concepts, history of the discussion, around connections between concepts or literature.

Reflect on the quality of the found literature. For example, you can compare the amount and quality of literature on the topic with the amount and quality of similar literature about a different country (i.e. China).

Contextualize discussion of the literature. While discussing an author's claims, put them in the context of what we have read and discussed on the topic during our seminar. How the claims are different? Do the claims agree with what we have studied in the seminar? Explain in what ways.

4. Topical section 2

The same as above, only for another topic. The number of topics is up to you: you may have one or more topical section.

5. Conclusion

Summarize your findings and provide their critical assessment. What could be improved? What could not be done, but wasn't possible to do? How this literature review impacts what you have learned during the seminar? Reflect the degree of certainty about your claims: what is strongly supported, what is supported weakly? For weakly supported claims, discuss what could be done to either prove or disprove them.

Referencing literature

Please follow the APA style: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

Format of the submission and deadline

- Please submit a PDF file by email <sergei.pashakhin@uni-bamberg.de>.
- The deadline is **September 30, 23:59 (CET)** for Bamberg students. For international students, the deadline depends on when your University needs a grade. Ask me for help to figure out when is your deadline. Please give me at least a week to process your paper, prepare feedback and give it a grade.
- Consult these resources for templating and styling your paper: <https://vc.uni-bamberg.de/moodle/course/view.php?id=26902>

Appendices

Appendix A. List of seminar topics

- Autocratization and democratization
- Effects of Internet on political outcomes
- Social media logic, platformization and governance
- Network citizenship
- Autocracy, uncertainty and information
- Censorship and social media
- Social media and civic engagement
- State propaganda and astroturfing
- Digital activism under autocratic regime
- National security and agency of social media companies

Appendix B. List of autocracies (2024)

Note: this list is collected from V-Dem Democracy Report 2024 (https://v-dem.net/documents/43/v-dem_dr2024_lowres.pdf, p.17).

Electoral autocracies:

- Benin

- Mauritius
- Ngeria
- Sierra Leone
- Tunisia
- Algeria
- Angola
- Azerbaijan
- Bangladesh
- Belarus
- Burundi
- CAR
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Comoros
- Congo
- DRC
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Equatorial Guinea
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Guinea-Bissau
- Hungary

- India
- Iraq
- Ivory Coast
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lebanon
- Madagascar
- Mauritania
- Mozambique
- Niger
- Pakistan
- Palestine/West Bank
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Russia
- Rwanda
- Serbia
- Singapore
- Somaliland
- Tajikistan
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Togo
- Türkiye

- Uganda
- Ukraine
- Venezuela
- Zanzibar
- Zimbabwe
- Nicaragua

Closed autocracies:

- Kuwait
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan
- Afghanistan
- Bahrain
- Burkina Faso
- Chad
- China
- Cuba
- Eritrea
- Eswatini
- Guinea
- Haiti
- Hong Kong
- Iran
- Jordan
- Laos

- Libya
- Mali
- Morocco
- Myanmar
- North Korea
- Oman
- Palestine/Gaza
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Syria
- UAE
- Vietnam
- Yemen