**Structure of a research-oriented thesis**

**1) Introduction**

Introduce the topic and explain why it is an important topic

State your research question

Briefly summarize what is known about the topic in existing scientific literature and then state what you do in the thesis (and what is new about your contribution)

State your findings and - if applicable - say what they mean for the existing theories. This means, stating your *argument* (that is, something like the overall message of your thesis saying what you have found in your analysis and what its implications are for theory (if applicable) and for practical life(if applicable)).

Describe the structure of the chapters that follow (briefly describe each chapter; best way to do this is to also add how the chapter fits in your endeavor of answering the research question).

**2) Literature review and hypotheses**

Discuss relevant literature on the topic.

Structure the literature review around topics (not as a list of authors or a list of descriptions of scientific papers)

At some point in the literature review (often it is at the end of the discussion of the existing literature) say what is missing in the literature and what the new thing is that your thesis is adding.

State your hypotheses (what you expect to see in your analysis?). If your specific hypotheses require you to provide a lengthy description of variables first, state the hypotheses on at the conceptual level (that is using concepts, not the actual variables that may be complex in their measurement). Each hypothesis should have a theoretical explanation explaining why you expect what you wrote in your hypothesis.

**3) Data and variables**

This section describes data used for the analysis (the information has to be complete so that if someone wanted to replicate your work, they will have all the information they need). Data doesn't necessarily mean "numbers". Interviews are data, analysis of a text produces data, etc.

It explains why these are suitable data for the analysis and why the chosen mode of analysis is a good mode of analysis (this is not a journal article so some sort of comment justifying why you chose this method and this data, as opposed to other methods and data, will be enough)

Describe variables that appear in the analysis. Clearly state what is the dependent variable and what is/are the independent variable(s).

If applicable, this section includes detailed versions of hypotheses.

**4) Analysis**

Describes how the analysis was conducted, presents the results, and comments on the results.

This section may be broken up into multiple chapters if there is a lot of analysis to be presented and if it seems more logical.

**5) Conclusion**

Repeats many of the items mentioned in the introduction (but not in a way of exact copy+paste): the topic, why the topic is important, what we didn't know from the existing scientific literature and what this thesis adds as a new thing, what the author's argument is (that is what the findings mean for our understanding of the topic),

Summary of the findings and discussion of their implications for the theories discussed in the literature review

Discuss the weaknesses of the thesis.

Practical meaning of the findings for the society

May include a speculation about what it would mean in practical terms if the logic of the argument were extended beyond what we know from our analysis (for example, a speculation about what it would mean for elections if all voters behaved the same way as the voters in our sample)

May include suggestions for future research

**5) List of references**

**6) Appendix**

**Additional notes and tips:**

* The entire thesis should be written keeping in mind what the author's argument is (your argument is your answer to the research question). Leave out things that are obviously irrelevant for the argument. Structure the literature review keeping in mind the argument. Structure the Analysis section with an eye on what the argument is.
* Back up your work! Ideally every day. Dropbox, Google Drive, or other cloud services are examples of useful options.
* Use a citation software to manage your citations (EndNote Basic, Zotero, Mendeley, or Citace Pro should be available to MU students for free).