

IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator (jiri.vykoukal@post.cz)

Please note that IMESS students are not required to use a particular set of methods (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or comparative) in their dissertation.

Student:	Giada Malugani
Dissertation title:	Technocratic populism in the context of contemporary Europe: Silvio Berlusconi and Andrej Babiš

	70+	69-65	64-60	59-55	54-50	<50
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Knowledge <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>		69				
Analysis & Interpretation <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>			62			
Structure & Argument <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 argument's limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>			63			
Presentation & Documentation <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>	72					
Methodology <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>		68				

ECTS Mark:	B (68)	Charles Mark:	86	Marker:	Jiří Vykoukal
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>			No	Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	12 September 2024

MARKING GUIDELINES

A (UCL mark 70+) = A (Charles mark 91-100 - excellent): 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 (UCL mark 69-65) = B (Charles mark 81-90 - very good)

C (UCL mark 64-60) = C (Charles mark 71-80 - good): 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 (UCL mark 59-55) = D (Charles mark 61-70 - satisfactory)

E (UCL mark 54-50) = E (Charles mark 51-60 - sufficient):

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) = F (Charles mark 0-50 - insufficient):

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.

Please provide substantive and detailed feedback!

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

Dissertation deals with the two prominent populist politicians, Andrej Babiš and Silvio Berlusconi, its aim is to show how much these two politicians represent a relatively new side of populism exhibiting elements of technocracy. The link between the technocratic face of populism and both mentioned political leaders addresses one of the existing research gaps, namely the one connecting Southern Europe and post-communist East- Central Europe. On the other hand, it would be good to explain what exactly is the contribution of this approach or why does it have a sense to work on just these two politicians. Does it contribute to our better understanding of regional context of technopopulism or is the cross-regional approach helping our better understanding of technopopulism or can we get some methodological profits from the comparison?

Logically, in the first parts of the paper the author comes with the introduction of technopopulism to the scene. This part not only proves extensive knowledge of the field, but also assists in identification of the research gap and it also could keep the research nearby the broader research context. I would welcome better structuring of conclusions of the debate and how they could stick to the research design, mainly in a sense what makes populism technocratic or where the technocratic populism steps down to standard populism. It is true that in the light of the analysed literature it's hard to come with a clear definition, but I am not sure if the provided definition is able to remove the essential discrepancy between populism as anti-elitist project and technocracy as an anti-popular project. From that point of view, it could be maybe better to understand technopopulism not a standard concept but as a borderland where both, technocracy and populism meet and overlap. In this case I also see certain disbalanced performance of both elements when populism is more visible than technocracy, and the second impression is that the paper speaks more about technopopulism in terms of how it works in reality than how it functions as an analytical category.

In terms of methodological design, I see the main issue in the fact that the author tries to "reconcile" two strategies, one based on case study approach, the other one based on comparative approach. Case study approach results in description or analysis of the two regional personalized cases of technopopulism while comparative approach works with clearly defined parameters. It seems to me that in this situation each strategy makes slightly the other one weaker. We have two cases from which the author derives comparative conclusions while these cases should appear as a product of the comparison based on clearly defined and explained criteria. This leads me to my last comment concerning the level of explanation which could be more elaborated.

The paper is written in a clear manner, referencing is correct, the author undoubtedly knows her topic, and the ambition to find and fill the research gap is obvious. I also appreciate the description of limits of the research (which, in my opinion, are more complicated) and of the "avenues of further research", but I would also expect more structured conclusion instead of reading rather a sort of summary.

My overall opinion is that this is really a very solid piece of academic work with some minor issues which could be resolved in the next research.

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

1. Is it possible to compare technopopulism with the Bolshevik idea of the party as a vanguard of the people who need the party to become aware of their power, rights, and missions?
2. Could you provide other examples of technopopulism or describe its share on current populist scene?
3. Does it have a sense to speak about "leftist" and "rightist" technopopulism?