

# Bachelor's Thesis Seminar in Economics

Literature search 19.1.2023

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# Agenda for today:

- How to find (more) literature on your topic
- How to know if a paper is high enough quality
- How to know if a paper is Economics
- What about unpublished Working Papers?

# Finding literature:

- Identify review articles/survey articles!
- Look through respected working paper series e.g. National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Search for keywords.
- Searching on Google scholar
  - searching for keywords, methods and concepts, keywords in **referring papers** etc.

-> Show example <https://scholar.google.com/>

+ Ask your assigned external advisor, after looking at their webpage to understand what are their fields of expertise.

# Quality & Field identification

- JUFO Portal:

<https://jfp.csc.fi/en/web/haku/julkaisukanavahaku>

- Finnish official classification and rating of journals in different academic fields. You can search by journal name here. If a paper that you consider is in a journal not included in this classification, then you should treat that with high reservations.

- IDEAS/RePec impact factor ranking:

<https://ideas.repec.org/top/top.journals.simple.html>

- This ranking of academic journals in Economics and related fields give an *indication* of which are the respected journals. It can also help you figure out if a given paper from a given journal is Economics.

# Quality

- The academic system and publishing process is designed to try to ensure quality of academic research
- Academic journals and book publishers typically employ “peer review” which means that a research paper or book manuscript is scrutinized, judged and criticized, typically in several rounds, by other experts in the field (the author’s “peers”) before it is accepted for publication. The author makes revisions after receiving comments from other researchers, and “bad” papers are weeded out.
- **BUT... There is a wide range of quality**
- Commercial journals exist that will publish “anything” without serious review. Since everyone wants to publish, those researchers that are not accepted anywhere else may turn to those journals. In the beginning, it is hard for students to know which journals are serious and which ones are not.
- The journal ranking above, especially JUF0, can help you determine the quality of a journal.
- For unpublished papers, you can also investigate the authors- can you find them online? Do they work in a university or official research center? Have they published in serious journals before? Are they still students?

# Is it Economics?

- Look up the authors: are they working in departments of economics? Did they publish other papers in Economics journals?
- Does the paper refer mainly to economic papers in their bibliography?
- Look for keywords from economic theory: utility maximization, optimization problem, incentives, budget constraints, agency/principal agent problems...
- Look for methods typical to economic empirical analysis (Difference in differences, RCTs, Instrumental variables)

Note: It is OK also to cite work from other disciplines in your thesis, if motivated by your topic. But you should make sure to also cite economics papers, and frame your thesis in a way that is relevant to **economics** rather than other adjacent fields such as finance. Discuss with your advisors and with seminar teacher how to find an economics angle.

# Citing unpublished work?

- In Economics, the publishing often takes very long. Therefore, it is also common to cite unpublished papers, so called Working papers.
- Especially for new topics (e.g. much research specific to COVID-19 is still not published).
- It is OK to cite some working papers in your thesis, but:
  - Keep in mind that such unpublished working papers have typically not gone through the system of checks and controls by other researchers that is required for publication in a *journal* (the “peer review”).
  - Find a balance between published work and unpublished Working papers
  - Try to assess the quality of the working paper by e.g. looking at identity of authors, their universities and other published work, checking if the paper is already cited (via google scholar), is the paper part of an established working paper series (e.g. NBER)?

# Cite when needed!

- It is important to add references to the claims you make and the information you present in your thesis.
- It should be clear when the ideas and claims are not coming from you but taken from existing literature.
- You need to give credit to the authors of the work you use, and you should not copy phrasing directly from the papers that you use.
- See the section on citing in the BSc Thesis Guide.



# Citing and avoiding plagiarism

- Writing in “your own words” signals that you have understood and processed the texts before you use them in your thesis.
- Taking whole sentences from other papers and rearranging them and/or changing a word here and there **is considered plagiarism**, which is unethical and can have grave consequences for your studies.
- See Aalto’s resources on citation and plagiarism, <https://wiki.aalto.fi/display/turnitin/Skilful+writing+and+plagiarism+avoidance>
- Later: Use the Turnitin practice service to check your text.

# Guide on mycourses

See more information in this in the PDF guide for the work with the thesis has been added to the mycourses section Materials (BSc Thesis in Economics Guide)

Read the sections about finding a topic and literature.

# Next steps in seminar/thesis work

- Contact your external advisor – list of advisor allocation is published on my courses this week.
- Before contacting:
  - think about what makes you (most) interested in your suggested topic (some topics that students submitted are very briefly described, and could be studied from many angles).
  - Check your advisor's homepage
- Research plan – read more about your topic to narrow it down and start preparing your Research plan
  - Classroom presentations on February 9th.