BSc Thesis and Seminar
Second meeting

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Agenda for today

- Finding literature

    - How to find 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    - What about unpublished Working Papers?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 and using data

- Preparing for public presentation (research plan)

- External advisors and next steps

Finding Literature

- ▶ Identify review articles/survey articles
- ▶ Look through respected working paper series e.g. National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Search for keywords

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- The Library's resources:
    - Aalto Primo (`https://primo.aalto.fi`), Aalto Business Guide (`https://libguides.aalto.fi/business/6789`)
- Search on Google scholar.
    - Search for keywords, methods and concepts, keywords in *referring* papers etc.
    - Show example `https://scholar.google.com/`
- Research Rabbit.

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 by other experts in the field (the author's "peers") before it is accepted for publication.** The authors makes revisions after receiving comments from these "peer" researchers, and the paper is then reconsidered for publication.
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  BUT... There is a wide range of quality for publication outlets:
  - Commercial journals exist that will publish "anything" without serious review (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predatory_publishing) Researchers (or aspiring 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.

Rankings and listings to help determine quality

We suggest two journal listings or rankings that can help you determine both if a paper has sufficiently high quality, and to understand if it can be considered an economics paper.

1. 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 appears in a journal not included in JUFO: treat it with high reservations. Also journals ranked 0 in JUFO should not be your main references.

2. 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 checks

The journal ranking above, especially JUFO, can help you determine the quality of a journal.

▶ For the four examples shown earlier, two journals (Sustainability and American Journal of Industrial and Business Management) are ranked 0 in JUFO, while the two others (American Journal of Biomedical Science & Research and International Journal of Clinical Studies and Medical Case Reports) are not listed in JUFO.

For unpublished papers, you can also investigate the authors

▶ can you find them online? (+)

▶ Do they work in a university or official research centre? (+)

▶ 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, Regression discontinuity design)

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.

▶ 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

Unfortunately there has been cases in recent years where BSc theses were suspected of plagiarism.

▶ 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

With the introduction of generative AI the risk of "accidentally" engaging in plagiarism is increased, as these tools often do not provide references or credit to the originators of facts or ideas.

▶ Remember to report if and how you have used AI (lecture 1).

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`

▶ Before submitting your draft and final thesis: Use the Turnitin practice service to check your text - linked on Mycourses page.

  ▶ Turnitin: a tool for detecting potential plagiarism and AI generated text.

Citation guide and managing references

- See Aalto Citation Guide (`https://libguides.aalto.fi/c.php?g=410674&p=2797288`) for information about citation techniques and managing references.
- Special computer programs and tools have been developed for managing references
  - These reference managers allow users to import, organize and format the references
  - Using these tools is recommended when there is a large number of references in your work (can easily become a mess)
- Examples of reference management software:
  - Aalto University IT Services provides the Endnote reference manager for the students.
  - Other: Mendeley, Zotero, CiteULike, JabRef (free software) Citavi, ProCite, RefWorks, RefManager (commercial software)

Guide on Mycourses

- ▶ See also more information on 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.

Finding and using data

- ▶ Can use economics to answer real-world questions with actual data
- ▶ In the Bsc thesis and its presentations, you can use data to motivate your research question
  - ▶ For example, make figures to present and discuss stylized facts
  - ▶ Note that this is a complement (not a substitute!) for good writing
- ▶ Data Pilot + examples of other data sources:
  - ▶ Aalto Business Guide, Statistics: `https://libguides.aalto.fi/c.php?g=410651&p=2797097`
  - ▶ FRED Economic Data: `https://fred.stlouisfed.org/`

Presenting your research plan

Practising and demonstrating your ability to present ideas orally in front of an audience is one of the learning goals of this course.
Aalto University has created and collected resources to support students with presenting in public.

▶ Tips on what to think about before and during a presentation:

 ▸ Link to video in English   ▸ Link to video in Finnish

▶ Tips and thoughts on anxiety and stage fright:

 ▸ Link to video in English   ▸ Link to video in Finnish

Some additional resources and links will be posted on Mycourses under the *Presentations* section.

External advisor

- We allocate external advisors to students based on topics and fields of expertise - a list of advisor allocation is published on my courses this week.
- Contact your external advisor.
- 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

External advisor

- **Two contacts:** one before research plan presentation and another one before the final presentation
  - **First contact:** schedule a meeting with your advisor to ask their opinion about the suggested topic and literature.
    - Before the meeting: look your advisor's webpage to understand what are their fields of expertise.
  - **Second contact:** discuss with the advisor if they wish to give oral or written feedback on the draft before the final presentation.
- We encourage to take advantage of their expertise but do not take any extra time or ask additional comments (only two contacts).

Next steps in seminar and thesis work

- ▶ Deadline for topic choice January 22nd
  - ▶ if you want to participate Data Pilot, announce this in your topic choice
  - ▶ we send a link to a spreadsheet on topics related to Data Pilot, mark your name on an available topic ("first come, first served")
- ▶ Contact your external advisor
- ▶ Research plan – read more about your topic to narrow it down and start preparing your Research plan
  - ▶ Classroom research plan presentations on February 1, 2024 - order determined by lottery.