

ECO 209 Writing Workshop

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Overview

- Unpacking the Assignment: Term Paper
- Writing is a Multi-Step Process
- Thesis Statements
- What is an Academic Source?
- Writing Tips

Purpose of the Term Paper

Why are we writing in Economics?

- Economists must be able to bring their ideas back to society
- Developing critical thinking skills
- You will have to write for your job

Purpose of the Assignment

What are you writing?

“Write a short academic paper on the impact of the fall in oil-prices on the Canadian economy. What policies could be implemented to avoid the negative externalities of commodity-cycles?”

- Academic paper:
 - ▶ Clearly state what the most important effects will be
 - ▶ **Critically** discuss the likeliness of each effect
 - ▶ **Critically** discuss the strength of each effect

Critical Thinking

What does it mean to “Critically Discuss”?

- Consider positive and negative effects
 - ▶ Few things are all good or all bad
- For each effect, consider arguments for and against the effect
 - ▶ What evidence is there for the effect?
 - ▶ What evidence is there against the effect?
- For each argument, think about the necessary conditions

Previous Year's Prompt

“Write a short academic paper on the rationale and wisdom of using expansionary monetary policy during the Great Recession”

- Consider positive and negative effects
 - ▶ Expanding money supply might help boost credit and demand
 - ▶ Expanding money supply could lead to inflation later
- Arguments for and against the effect
 - ▶ Even if interest rates are lower, companies won't invest more
 - ▶ If interest rates are lower, consumers will consume more
- Necessary conditions
 - ▶ Investors must be confident that investments will pay off
 - ▶ Consumer's decisions have to be sensitive to the interest rates

Writing Process:

Writing is hard but it's easier if you break it into multiple steps:

1. Research
2. Analyze
3. Outline
4. Rough Draft
5. Revise
6. Edit
7. Proofread

Before You Write

1. Research

- ▶ Search for literature
- ▶ Skim quickly
- ▶ Read critically
- ▶ Take notes for each source

2. Analyze

- ▶ Compare your sources
 - How do they relate?
 - Which agree? Which disagree? Why?
- ▶ Create notes for the whole topic
 - What are the main ways of thinking about this topic?
 - How do they differ? Where do they agree?

3. **Outline**

- ▶ What do you want to argue for?
- ▶ What evidence do you have for this position?
- ▶ What sensible criticism could someone have?
- ▶ Organize all these points: write them in bullet points

4. Rough Draft

- ▶ Goal: Put every bullet point into words
- ▶ Don't worry about spelling, grammar or typos: **just write**
- ▶ Don't think about whether this is any good: **just write**
- ▶ Don't stop to re-order your thoughts: **just write**
- ▶ Only stop when all your bullet points are written out

5. **Revise**

- ▶ Re-order ideas to improve clarity
- ▶ Do you have evidence for each of your points?
- ▶ What other sensible criticism could someone have?
- ▶ Have you dealt with the most important criticism?
- ▶ Does your introduction clearly state your opinion, and your main points?
- ▶ Does your conclusion clearly re-state your opinion, and your main points?
- ▶ Good essays have many rounds of revision

Polishing

6. **Edit**

- ▶ Fix grammar and spelling
- ▶ Make your sentences shorter
- ▶ Replace big complicated words with simpler words
- ▶ Look for unnecessary words or sentences
- ▶ Good essays have many rounds of editing

7. **Proofread**

- ▶ Read the paper aloud
- ▶ Fix any typos, grammar or spelling mistakes that are left
- ▶ Repeat until you have read it through twice without finding any errors
- ▶ Get a friend or relative to proofread and identify any errors you missed

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement identifies the position that you are taking

A good thesis statement:

- Is concise
- Expresses your opinion
- Is specific
- Contains the main points of the essay

Thesis Statement Examples:

The federal government of Canada has decided to legalize marijuana, ending a 95 year prohibition on its consumption. Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould announced the decision, saying “Our intent is to come up with legislation that will regulate non-medical access to marijuana, keeping it out of the hands of children and the hands of criminals” (Global News, June 30, 2016)

Thesis Statement Examples:

Bad Thesis Statement:

Legalizing weed is going to be totally awesome!

- Not academic language
- Not specific
- Doesn't contain any explanation
- It is an opinion

Better Thesis Statement:

Legalizing marijuana will be beneficial to the federal government because of increased tax revenue and lower criminal justice costs.

Thesis Statement Examples:

Bad Thesis Statement:

In this essay, I will discuss the many costs of marijuana legalization.

- It is not specific
- Opinion is not clear
- No explanation

Better Thesis Statement:

Legalizing marijuana will harm Canadian residents through more traffic accidents, lower worker productivity and increased exposure to second-hand smoke.

Thesis Statement Practice

Activity: write a thesis statement about the following paragraph

The Government of Ontario will test a basic income scheme in several parts of the province. The idea is to assess how a basic income will impact economic outcomes in both rural and urban settings. The government is motivated by a desire to end poverty and the idea of a basic income scheme has recently been widely discussed in the popular press.

Remember that the thesis statement must:

- Be Concise
- Express your opinion
- Be Specific
- Contains the main points of the essay

Academic Sources

- Assignment requires 5 academic sources: peer reviewed journals
- To find journals articles:
 - ▶ Google Scholar
 - ▶ <http://oneseach.library.utoronto.ca>
 - ▶ JSTOR
 - ▶ NBER - Working Papers

Other Sources

- Other good sources
 - ▶ Major Newspapers: Globe and Mail, National Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal
 - ▶ Blog posts of experts: Worthwhile Canadian Initiative, Marginal Revolution
- Note these don't count toward your 5 source requirement!
- Don't use:
 - ▶ Wikipedia
 - ▶ Anonymous blog posts
 - ▶ Blog posts of people without expertise

Citing Your Sources

- Cite all the sources you use!
- In-text citations and a bibliography
- You need an in-text citation if you:
 - ▶ Direct Quote
 - ▶ Paraphrase
 - ▶ Summarize
- Pick one of the major styles (APA, MLA, Chicago Manual, etc...)

Writing Tips

- Start early
 - ▶ Writing is a multi-step process
 - ▶ Trying to do all the steps in two days is hard
- Get help:
 - ▶ Writing centres
 - ▶ Office hours
 - ▶ Economics study centre
- Introduction should clearly state position and main points
- Body should explain those points in detail
- Conclusion should restate position and main points

Writing Tips

- No unnecessary repetition
- Write short sentences
- Use less jargon
- Use fewer complicated words
- Check for spelling and grammar

Questions?