

## Writing Your Dissertation

An EC3400 Session  
28 Nov. 2001

## You Will Learn

- What is a thesis statement
  - A thesis statement you might use
- What make a good organization
  - An organization you might use
- Ways to edit, reference, and make tables
  - Essential for a good impression
- Ways to convey your contributions
  - Don't short-change yourself

## Imitate a Journal Article

- Look at good articles: *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*
- Imitate them
- Similar length: ca. 20 single-spaced pages
- Similar style, tables, references
- Similar sections, e.g.: introduction, literature & theories, data, analysis, conclusions

## Have a Clear, Interesting Thesis

- Thesis statement: your conclusion
- Should be able to say in 1 or 2 sentences
- Not okay: "I studied gender and wages."
- Clear but obvious: "Women are paid less than men on average."
- Good: "Women are paid less because of pure discrimination by some employers."

## A Thesis for You

- Write a possible thesis statement now (if you haven't already)
- Maximum 10-20 words
- Give it a clear conclusion (one that might emerge from your research)
- Make it interesting, given past research, topical debates, policy concerns

## Organize to Prove the Thesis

- Sections (motivate and) prove the point
- If a section doesn't help, take it out
- For each section, how does it help?
  - Convey how each section helps prove the point
- Sections may have to address needs:
  - Literature review
  - Data
  - Analysis

## An Organization for You

- Outline a possible organization
- 3-6 sections (not chapters!)
- Briefly (1-4 words each) stated
- An organization that will serve your purpose in practice

## Clear, Succinct, Correct Writing

- Find and fix flaws in your argument
- Find and fix factual errors
- Don't be ambiguous
- Say what's important for understanding
- Remove unnecessary sections
- Remove unnecessary words
- Fix grammatical problems

## Handle References Correctly

- Cite your sources
- Cite literature correctly
- Include a correctly-formatted list of references

[In the session, examples were shown. See e.g. the *American Economic Review*.]

## Format Statistical Tables

[In the session, an example was shown from a journal article. See for example *American Economic Review*, June 2001 p. 627. Don't just use raw Stata output. Instead, format decent-looking tables.]

## Convey Your Contributions

- Get across your work and new findings
- Don't sound like you are bragging
- Just let the reader know by explaining
  - How the literature review was carried out
  - Precisely how the data were collected
  - How and why statistical analyses were done
  - How possible objections / criticisms were addressed
  - Etc. (contributions differ across dissertations)

## You Have Learned

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  - A thesis statement you might use
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- Ways to convey your contributions
  - Don't short-change yourself