How to write a term paper

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NTNU

Causality

Your paper should explain some ***causality***

Variable analysis: Explaining a change in one variable with the change in other variables

Both quant and qual does this

$$y = X_1 + X_2 + X_3$$

Example: Current level of GDP/capita (y) across Africa can be explained (in part) by the mortality of European missionaries (x_1). (Because theory). However, both x_1 and y could be explained by varying local climates (x_2, confounding-/control variable), or the which European power colonized that area (x_3, confounding-/control variable). (Because theory).

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Theory

You should be answering 'why' questions. So, read your text and look for places someone might stop and ask 'but, why?'

▶ Because: theory.

Answers should (generally) be of logical explanations

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General pointers

The text should be structured (have a discernible intro, main part and conclusion)

Avoid hyperbole

- ▶ **Example:** Now we are in a time of *huge* multinational conglomerates, and, technological firms that have more money then whole countries. There are *vast* disparities in terms of income, wealth, and opportunities between citizens in the most developed places.

Do not use 'we' unless you are writing in collaboration with someone.

Do not be afraid to use 'I'. If it is your conclusion or your argument etc. then be honest about it!

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Avoid normative statements

Avoid 'as-is-spoken' phrasing

- ▶ Example: As the U.S. has a strong belief in the American dream, the notion of as long as you do your best and believe in yourself, you can achieve anything, they don't have much of a welfare system to brag about. And as has been seen in cases of financial crises, that's something than should be changed in the American society.

Do not plagiarize

- ▶ If you cut and paste text from anywhere else, it needs to come with quotation marks and a paged reference in your text. Block quotes are still something you should try to avoid, as widespread use of quotes dampens your own voice in the text.

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You should be trying to *convince* the reader.

▶ The point is not to simply show all sides to an argument, but to do so, and then explain to the reader what the "correct" conclusion is and why

Avoid using non-academic sources

▶ Unless you absolutely have to, which is rarely the case. Empirical data is an exception, but you still need to be critical of your sources. Wikipedia, SNL (Norwegian), most addresses with a .com domain are NOT good sources!

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General pointers

You are not citing the author, you are citing specific work

- ▶ I don't need to know his/hers fist name, nor profession,
- ▶ **Example of what not to do:** Economist Mark Blaug's (1976) view of human capital theory (HCT) is useful when trying to understand the scope of it.
- ▶ **Example of what to do:** On a microeconomic level individuals invest in HC to get private economic returns, while on a macroeconomic level societies invest in HC for its members to help economic growth (Mincer 1984).