

Writing Theses and Reports

- **Q:** how many of us have written (or helped to write) any kind of research report?
- Do you find this kind of writing “intimidating”?
- What questions do you have about writing up your research?

Thesis vs. Dissertation

- **Thesis/Dissertation:** in general, these are focused works that maintain clear links to a more general field
 - Both involve extensive background discussion (pre- and post-findings)
 - Thorough documentation of the field of study (history of literature, research)
 - Study methods
 - Findings
 - Conclusions, including discussion of the meaning of the results

Thesis vs. Dissertation

- A master’s thesis is intended to represent your ability to contribute to your own knowledge
 - Can you put together a plan to inform yourself about progress in a given field
 - Can you execute research that demonstrates you understand that field

Thesis vs. Dissertation

- A PhD dissertation represents your ability to contribute new knowledge to your chosen field
 - Planning and executing are important here too
 - Key point here though is the contribution – have you completed truly original research – a significant addition to your field

Thesis vs. Dissertation

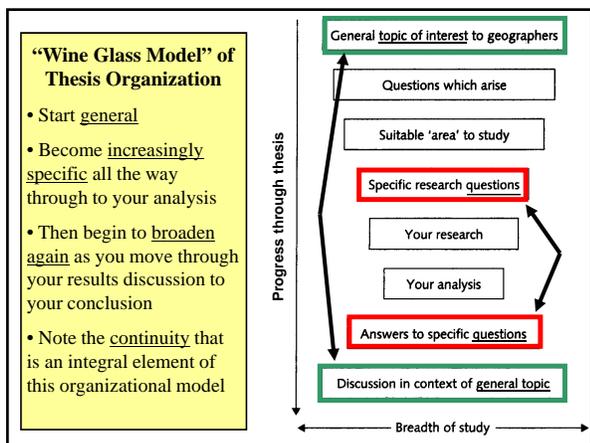
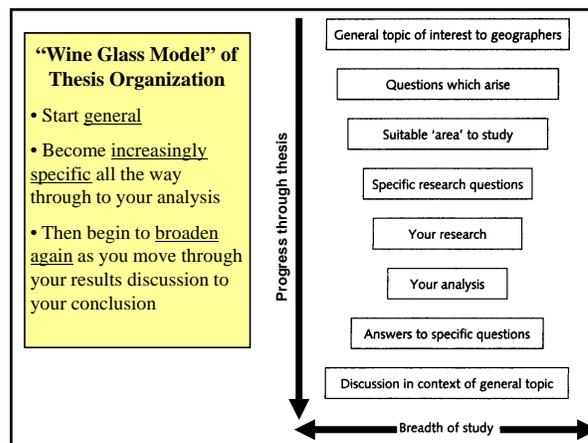
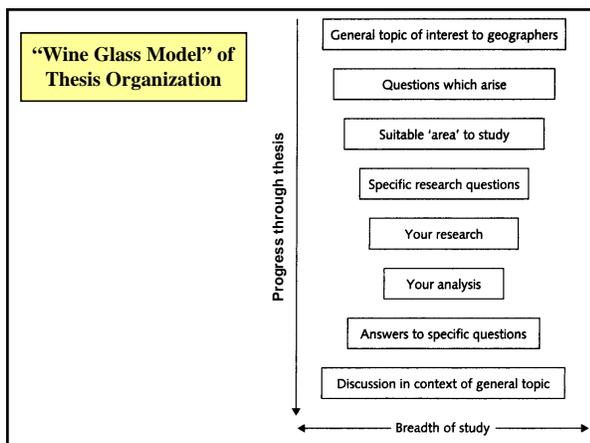
- A PhD dissertation represents your ability to contribute new knowledge to your chosen field
 - Completing a good research project in itself is not enough for a PhD

Writing Theses

- A few thoughts from your reading
 - 1. Your thesis title is actually important
 - Spend some time thinking about your title, as you will live with it the rest of your life
 - Does your title give an accurate, brief indication of what's in the thesis?
 - Does your title help to generate interest in your work?

Writing Theses

- A few thoughts from your reading
 - 2. How you organize your work also contributes to thesis success
 - Your reading contains two models of "writing up"
 - I definitely recommend the "wine glass" model



Writing Theses

- A few thoughts from your reading
 - 3. Make sure you justify any choices you make in your research
 - Decisions you made in data collection, analysis, or any area of methodology where multiple options exist and you chose one particular way to go
 - Addressing this area head on will make your thesis defense go more smoothly

Writing Theses

- A few thoughts from your reading
 - 4. Invest time in the discussion of your results
 - In many ways, this section is the entire point of your thesis: now that you have done what you wanted, what now?
 - This can be important in clarifying your future direction, in your own mind as well as for others: what's next?

Writing Theses

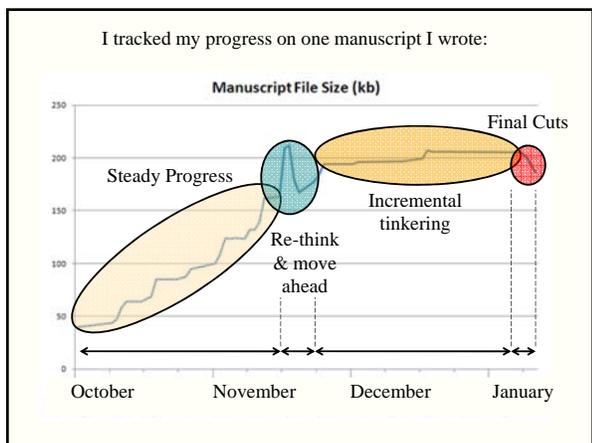
- A few thoughts from your reading
 - 4. Invest time in the discussion of your results
 - If you go on to PhD studies, your master's thesis discussion can "set the stage" for what you do
 - If you go from your Master's to employment, your discussion might set you up for a particular career path

Writing Theses

- See two sample tables of contents for a couple of models of thesis structure and organization

Writing Theses

- One other thought related to writing
 - Writing a thesis (or any other research document) is a complex process
 - Sometimes, you will have breakthroughs
 - Other times, you will need to delete or revise



Writing Theses

- Also, have a look at two handouts that give insights into planning for your research
 - 1. Basic Principles for Thesis Research
 - 2. What Makes a Good Thesis?

Writing Reports

- Q: how many of us have written or read an “applied research report”?
- What’s the difference between a report and a thesis?

Writing Reports

- Research Report: highly focused, addressing a particular issue/problem
 - Whole document is specifically linked to the study purpose
 - Focus on results of research
 - Report may review related theory, but purpose of this would be context for understanding (not a complete and thorough review)

Writing Reports

- Typical research report outline
 - Purpose: describe the reason for writing the report – brief, specific, to the point
 - Problem: short paragraph introduction to the topic
 - Scope: define any technical limitations of the report (related to geography, or the phenomenon studied)

Writing Reports

- Typical research report outline
 - Theory: concise summary of the theory directly relating to the report topic
 - History: any necessary historical perspective
 - Findings: clear outline of what you found

Writing Reports

- Typical research report outline
 - Conclusion: summarize the findings, and make recommendations based on what you found
 - References: list sources cited in report
 - Appendices: support material not directly needed to understand the report, but relevant to using the report

Writing Reports

- My report checklist handout gives some guidelines for you to self-evaluate the reports you write