

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A TERM PAPER:

A term paper should be considered practice for eventually writing a publishable article, even if you never actually publish an article. Every term paper requires a unifying **THESIS**. A paper which is purely expository lacks a thesis. It would not be publishable. This thesis may either be a **SCHOLARLY THESIS**, a **THEORETICAL THESIS**, or more commonly a combination of the two. A scholarly thesis is a thesis of historical interpretation; it attempts to resolve a **DISAGREEMENT OF INTERPRETATION** among laymen and/or recognized scholars. A theoretical thesis proposes a particular solution to a particular **PUZZLE**. This puzzle may concern the analysis of some concept. Or it may concern the correct explanation of some phenomenon.

It is useful in learning to write term papers (or articles) to avoid a purely "free-form" style, and to go through the "academic" exercise of covering the following series of steps in order:

1. Some theoretical puzzle and/or scholarly disagreement should be clearly stated in the first section of the paper. (Example of a theoretical puzzle: why did communist revolution succeed first in less developed rather than in more developed countries, contrary to what Marxism predicted? Example of a scholarly disagreement: Capitalist ideologists view the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe as the death knell of Marxism, while Marxists view the same events as giving Marxism a new lease on life free of Stalinist deformations.)
2. The second section of the paper should survey the alternative solutions to that problem or disagreement.
3. The third section should single out the solution with which you identify heuristically.
4. The fourth section should build the case for that solution. This case should be built using empirical evidence and logical argument, wherever relevant.
5. The fifth section should spell out and reply to objections to the solution for which you have opted. These objections are to be developed from the standpoint of the other, rejected solutions.
6. The sixth section contains your replies to these objections.
7. The seventh section summarizes what has been accomplished positively.
8. The eighth section should specify what still remains to be done, e.g.: what evidence is still not available, what hypotheses still need exploration, what new problems are raised by the solution for which you have argued.