Towards my thesis

Hints and tips for your final proof -
Master’s degree
PART 1

- Choosing the topic and deciding the title
- Structure and features of a thesis
PART 2

• Searching for sources

• Getting the documents you have identified

• What is plagiarism and how to avoid it

• Citing works correctly and creating references
IMPORTANT WARNING

• Everything suggested in this talk HAS TO BE confronted with your thesis supervisor’s opinion

• We can offer advice, but the guidelines for your thesis can ONLY be defined by your supervisor
• Students have to give proof of their abilities in synthesizing, reworking and presenting a topic.

• Text has to be laid down according to scientific standards.
• Work is usually kicked off by a hypothesis (e.g., accidents are more frequent on dark roads than on well-lighted roads)

• Existing literature can be used to give account of the topic in as much detail as possible

• Empirical experiments can also be performed (e.g., by lighting up roads)

• Different viewpoints are synthesized (or experiments are verified) to assess how reasonably the initial hypothesis can be supported
You shall read a great amount of bibliography to write your thesis.

All that reading should be aimed at building up a **consistent** and **well-structured** reasoning.
It has to be:

- consequential: from general to specific
- free from overlappings, logical gaps, repetitions and inconsistencies
• It can not be a «cut & paste» stuff, collected untidily from books, journal articles, other reports and theses, or from documents found on the web.
THESIS ROADMAP

• Choosing the topic and defining the research question

• Feasibility analysis: bibliographic research, context definition and data collection

• Setting up your research plan

• Data analysis: results interpretation

• Writing
Obviously to be done in collaboration with your supervisor.

The topic of your final proof has to be identified within the subjects you have taken classes about in your degree course.
CHOOSING THE TOPIC AND DECIDING THE TITLE

• In choosing the topic you have to take account of:
  – YOUR interest towards the issue;
  – how relevant the issue is;
  – research feasibility;
  – actual time availability;
  – your post-degree plans and perspectives;
  – how useful your work on the issue may result when searching for employment.
The topic of a thesis has to be precise, circumscribed and contextualized
DON’T WAIT TOO LONG!

• If you have planned extensive and detailed work, you’ll have to start well in advance.

• If the professor you’d like to be your supervisor is very busy, you’ll have to start well in advance.
STRUCTURE OF A THESIS

- Title page
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Chapter 1
- Chapter N
- Conclusion
- Appendices (to be named with letters rather than numbers if more than one)
- References
• The Table of contents has to be arranged with your supervisor, after the topic of the thesis has been carefully examined and contextualized
• A well-structured Table of contents can:

  • help you consider the topic rationally and select the ideas to focus on;

  • allow your supervisor to understand how you intend to develop your argument, thus enabling him/her to give you precise directions
INTRODUCTION

• A concise presentation of:
  • the topic of the thesis
  • the research question to be dealt with
  • the way the topic will be approached
  • how the argument is structured in chapters

• The results of the research need not be disclosed; they can nevertheless be mentioned briefly
- The starting ground for the research is described, with a review of the existing literature on the topic

- The specific object of the thesis is outlined, along with the research hypotheses that will be formulated
- The field of analysis is narrowed down thanks to its rigorous description

- Data, sources and methods employed are presented, especially if the research has an empirical character
Results are:

- described (in relevance order);
- interpreted;
- compared to what is reported by the existing literature;
- compared with the initial research hypotheses, detailing whether they have been confirmed or not.
CONCLUSION

- The work is summarized, with a synthesis of its main results

- The original aspects of the research are highlighted, as well as the advancements achieved in scientific knowledge on the topic

- Hints for further research are provided
FOREWARNING

The following general directions refer to customary habits, not to mandatory rules.

Therefore such aspects have to be arranged with your supervisor.
• The paper should be composed of 50/70 pages

• Each chapter should be about 15/20 pages long, except for Introduction and Conclusion (5 pages max)

• Chapters will be numbered
• Each chapter can be divided into two or more paragraphs

• Even further division into two or more subparagraphs is possible; it is however better to avoid overuse
PRACTICAL TIPS

• Margins of 2.5 - 3 cm should be left on all four sides of each page

• *Times New Roman* and *Arial* are the standard fonts most commonly employed

• Suggested font size: 12

• Spacing: 1 - 1.5

• Pages will be numbered

Use Word default styles
• **Figures and tables**
  – will be numbered (e.g., 2.4);
  – need brief explanatory captions;
  – have to be cited in the text.

  It is also necessary to indicate the source of each of them

• **Acronyms** will be spelled out in full at their first occurrence
The paper’s text should be written in a clear, precise and analytical style, avoiding features of colloquial, informal and narrative language.
Comunicazione e media

La Statale news

La Statale News
Il magazine di Ateneo con le novità su didattica, innovazione, ricerca, le news dai dipartimenti e gli eventi di maggior rilievo in Statale.

Visitare la Statale News

Portale Video
Il Portale dedicato alla produzione audiovisiva dell'Università degli Studi di Milano: documentari didattici, divulgativi e di ricerca, registrazioni di convegni, eventi, cerimonie e molto altro ancora.

Visitare il Portale Video

Social media
Seguì l'Università Statale di Milano sui:
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube

Press room
Leggi i comunicati stampa dell'Università Statale o accedi alla rassegna stampa con le credenziali di Ateneo.

Archivio fotografico
Una selezione di immagini di qualità che ritraggono persone, attività e spazi dell'Università Statale di Milano.

Identità visiva di Ateneo
Dal corretto uso del marchio e dei colori istituzionali, agli esempi di applicazione del sistema coordinato che garantisce la riconoscibilità di tutte le strutture dell'Ateneo.
• Poor acquaintance with the scientific literature concerned

• Omitting to cite sources

• Collecting data superficially and archiving it in a disorderly way

• Contriving explanations not supported by science
Before writing a thesis it is necessary to gather documents related to its topic (bibliographic research).

Bibliographic research is an activity that allows you to find out and access documents.

A document does not only consist of its textual content, but also of its paratext (i.e., accessorial information provided by foreword, footnotes, illustrations etc).

The paratext helps you evaluate the document as well as retrieve others.
RESEARCH MEANS

Virtual LIBRARIES, Unimi Digital Library
- access by: EXPLORA search engine
  - SBA PORTAL, databases

physical LIBRARIES
- main access by CATALOGUES
  - UNIMI OPAC
  - SBN OPAC
  - ACNP
  - MAI, KVK
  - WorldCat
  - local OPACS, BL, LC etc

bibliographic search MEANS

WEB (encyclopédias, open access resources, sites, institutional sites, wikipedia, blog, social media, etc.)
- access through SEARCH ENGINES
  - GOOGLE
  - GOOGLE SCHOLAR
  - GOOGLE BOOKS
WHERE CAN I FIND DOCUMENTS?

• In physical libraries that keep books and journals: access using catalogues (es. Opac Unimi)

• In virtual libraries: access by Unimi Digital Library, or by Unimi search engine Explora

• On the web (sites, online encyclopedias, collaborative web – wiki, blog, social media …); you can access such resources using generic search engines, like Google, or more specific and reliable ones, like Google scholar or Google books

N.B.: Every retrieved document has to be endowed with a PARATEXT, so that it can be evaluated and cited in your thesis
BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH CYCLE

1. DEFINING
   a. Defining topic and gathering information
   b. Identifying key concepts and words
   c. Selecting resources and searching them properly
   d. Evaluating retrieved documents

2. ANALYZING
RESEARCH IS A CIRCULAR PROCESS

- It is not strictly necessary to follow the described research process; on the other hand, it can optimise the results of your work, allowing you to save time and efforts.

- The process develops through two main steps:
  1. **Defining the topic**: gathering information / identifying key concepts and words
  2. **Analyzing**: selecting resources / evaluating retrieved documents
Let’s do a practical example together:

«Fighting poverty: Europe in the 21th century»
• **DEFINE** your topic with the help of general works

- Encyclopaedias (printed and online)
- Handbooks
- Atlases
FIND INFORMATION
BY READING BOOKS
FIND INFORMATION BY BROWSING THE WEB

Poverty

Poverty is not having enough material possessions or income to meet one's needs. Absolute poverty is the condition of being poor enough to be unable to afford the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Relative poverty is relative to others in the same society.

Governments and nongovernmental organizations often use a standard of poverty to identify those who are living in poverty. This standard is usually based on the cost of living in a particular area or country. Poverty is often measured using indicators such as income, expenditure, and household assets.

In the context of developing countries, the concept of poverty is often used to describe the lack of access to basic services such as education, health care, and drinking water. Poverty is a complex issue that is influenced by a variety of factors, including economic, social, and political factors.

Poverty can have serious consequences for individuals and societies. People living in poverty may experience a variety of challenges, including poor health, limited access to education and training, and limited opportunities for economic growth.

Poverty is a significant challenge in many countries around the world. Many governments and nongovernmental organizations are working to address the issue of poverty by implementing policies and programs designed to improve the lives of those living in poverty.
KEY CONCEPTS AND WORDS

From general works you can pull out key concepts and words, that will be useful to:

• analyze the topic
• retrieve further documents searching specific resources, in Unimi Digital library and/or on the web
Key concepts

- **Where:** Europe
- **When:** 21st century
- **Language:** English

Keywords

- **Words/names/name variants:** Europe, 2020 strategy, poverty, welfare state
- **Synonyms:** anti-poverty policy, fighting poverty, reducing poverty...
- **Translations:** English, French...
THE RESEARCH PATH :
STEP 2

ANALYZE AND RETRIEVE

• It is now necessary to **analyze** the topic, for which you have to **retrieve** documents

• In order to identify relevant documents, it’s important to employ different tools:
  – *library catalogues*,
  – *databases*,
  – *search engines*, etc.
• What do they contain: library or library system holdings

• What’s their purpose:
  – Pinpoint a book whose bibliographic details you know

• Main catalogues: Unimi Opac, ACNP, SBN, MAI, KVK

• Where can you find them: free online or by SBA portal
Be careful!

In catalogues you will find data concerning «container» publications (journal, books), and not data regarding specific documents (articles, essays, chapters)!
WHAT IF YOU CAN’T FIND THE BOOK IN THE UNIVERSITY CATALOGUE?

Ask your library to get it elsewhere:

http://www.sba.unimi.it/Biblioteche/scpol/1869.html


All Unimi Libraries offer Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Services
TOOLS:
University digital Library

Initial search:

Our University’s search engine for digital and printed resources search

It searches at the same time:

- Unimi e-journal and e-book collection
- Unimi catalogue
- Online resources outside Unimi
- AI R
- Unimi databases
Let’s search an article starting from the title:


«fighting poverty» + full text
In order to make proper use of the various research tools, you have to adopt suitable research strategies

- Wildcard character: asterisk (*)
- «» = exact phrase
- **Boolean operators** AND-OR-NOT (capital letters)
• It is a portal that allows you to access:
  - databases, e-journals and e-books purchased by Unimi;
  - selected free resources (catalogues, institutional websites, encyclopaedias etc)

• It can be accessed through the SBA portal, even from outside the University (off campus access)
A database is an electronic archive containing information that has been structured so as to be retrieved with a query software.

Databases can be bibliographic, full-text, or both.

Databases are generally used for advanced research or research by subject.

Research by subject: when?

- When you don’t know what has been published about your topic
- When you need to update or increase your bibliography
An important resource concerning the disciplinary area of Economics (DEMM) is represented by Bloomberg database, that cannot nevertheless be accessed through the customary channels of Digital Library.

In fact it can only be consulted locally on a workstation in the Info Lab on the 3° floor of the Department.
The web is very rich of potentially useful information, apart from expanding your research beyond the academic field, but accurate analysis is needed, and sources have to be carefully evaluated.

Search engine: Google

Websites
The websites you find have to be **carefully analyzed** before they can be considered reliable.

**URL (website address)**
Verify server, domain (.edu, .net, .gov, .org, .com), and path (for example, a tilde ~ indicates a personal webpage)

**Author**
Authors must be **recognizable** (About us, Information, Contact). Check if the author is an **expert in the field**

**Date**
Publication date, last update, contained documents’ date

**Content**
Verify that the information provided is **complete, accurate and suitable** for your needs. Compare it with other sources to ascertain its **reliability**.

Be careful with commercial sites.

**Formal aspects**
Check spelling and grammar. In case you are dealing with a scientific work, verify that **sources** are cited, and that **data and methods employed are indicated**.
SPECIFIC SEARCH ENGINES

• Google scholar
• Google books
To sum up
RESOURCES

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<th>WEB:</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Databases</td>
<td>Search engines:</td>
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<td>Explora</td>
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Link:
http://www.sba.unimi.it/Strumenti/10546.html
• What you can / cannot do

• Why and how to cite properly

• How to create a bibliography
Citing is necessary to:

- make your work verifiable, by providing the means to identify accurately the sources employed;
- reproducible;
- unforgeable;

- avoid passing off others’ work as your own;

- allow readers to delve into the topic
• It is always necessary to identify the original source when you are using other people’s ideas or works.

• Any document, page, text, sound, image, table or video, available on the Internet (free of charge or for fee) is the intellectual and artistic property of others who have thought, created and published it on the Web.
WHAT IS MEANT BY «REFERENCE» OR «CITATION»?

• Both terms indicate a codified way of describing the sources used in your work (for example: books, articles, essays within books).

• References (or «citations») present a series of elements in an established order, employing conventional punctuation systems that vary according to different citation styles.
  – For example: a basic citation of a book includes its author(s), title, information about its publication (place, publisher, year).

• Once a definite citation style has been chosen, it has to be applied to the whole document (from footnotes to final bibliography).
Quotation can be **direct, indirect or secondary**

In all cases it is necessary to cite the source. All the sources used have to be included in the final bibliography.
It is a report of the exact words used by an author, placed between quotation marks in the text:

According to Locke, «the end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom»

It’s a paraphrase of someone else’s words, without using quotation marks.

According to Beccaria, capital punishment is unjust because it is based on the strength of the State and not on the law, useless and unnecessary.

(C. Beccaria, *On crimes and Punishments*, 1764, c. XXVII)
SECONDARY QUOTATION

It occurs when you are referring to a book or article cited in another book (secondary source):

…I follow Fredric Jameson’s usage of postmodernism as «a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order» (Manovich 2002, p. 131).

In the final bibliography, **only** the secondary source (the one you have actually read) is to be cited:

Examples of quotations

Direct quotation

Indirect quotations

Footnotes

Although Coates concludes that splitting the CEO and Chairman positions by legislation "may well be a good idea for larger companies," he further concludes that mandating such a split "is not clearly a good idea for all public companies."78

Proponents of a mandatory non-executive Chairman of the Board have overstated the benefits of splitting the positions, while understating or even ignoring the costs of doing so. Michael Jensen identified the potential benefits in his 1993 Presidential Address to the American Finance Association, arguing that: "The function of the chairman is to run the board meetings and oversee the process of hiring, firing, evaluation, and compensating the CEO. . . . Therefore, for the board to be effective, it is important to separate the CEO and Chairman positions."78 In fact, however, overseeing the "hiring, firing, evaluation, and compensating the CEO," is the job of the board of directors as a whole, not just the Chairman of the Board.

To be sure, in many corporations, the Chairman of the Board is given unique powers to call special meetings, set the board agenda, and the like.77 In such companies, a dual CEO-Chairman does wield powers that may impede board oversight of his or her performance. Yet, in such companies, the problem is not that one person holds both posts; the problem is that the independent

85. Id.
87. James Verdonik and Kirby Happner, Role of the Chairman of the Board 2 (explaining that "one of the duties of the Chairman is to call meetings of the Board of Directors and the shareholders. . . . chairmen often set the agenda for board meet- ings"), http://www.directorsforum.com/role-of-the-chairman-verdonik-happer.pdf.
At the end of the thesis it is necessary to insert a **Bibliography**.

- It’s a list of references describing **all the works** you have made use of. The works cited in the footnotes have to be included, too.

- A bibliography has to make the reader aware of the works you have consulted and the literature on the topic in general.

- It is usually in alphabetical order (according to the last name of the author).

- Remember! Write down the references of every source at the time when you are consulting them (as regards books, always consider the title page, not the cover!).


DIFFERENT STYLES

MLA (MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION) STYLE


APA (AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION) STYLE


CHICAGO STYLE:

REMEMBER

• Insert in your final bibliography only what you have really used.

• Avoid an excess of secondary citations.

• Ask your supervisor about the citation style to use.
EXERCISES
Are these bibliographical references correct?

*Corporate governance and finance law.* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

P. A. Gourevitch and J. Shinn, *Political power and corporate control.*

S.M. Bainbridge, *Corporate governance after the financial crisis*, Oxford.
• Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own (deliberately or not)

• It is the violation of another person’s intellectual property rights, which is also ethically wrong

• Besides, it is a serious infringement of Unimi Code of ethics, for which disciplinary sanctions can be imposed
Examples of plagiarism are:

- copying and pasting from other people’s work
- translating or paraphrasing a text
- writing about an existing theory without citing the source
• **L. 22-4-1941 n. 633**
  Protection of copyright and other rights related to its exercise, with successive amendments. Below only the most recent:

  – **D.Lgs. 15-3-2017 n. 35**
    Implementation of EU Directive 2014/26 on collective management of copyright and related rights, and on the bestowing of multi-territory licenses for rights concerning musical works and their online exploitation in the home market

  – **D.L. 16 October 2017, n. 148 (art. 19), as modified by L. 4 dicembre 2017, n. 172**

• **In the Italian Civil Code, copyright is covered by articles 2575 to 2583**
Let’s find an image in Google images

http://images.google.it/

• It is possible to find many useful images on the web. Under any image we can however read that it may be subject to copyright

• Most images you find in Google are covered by copyright
To use copyright-free images in Google:
Google images > Tools > Usage rights > Labeled for reuse with modifications
Creative Commons (CC) licenses are public copyright licenses that enable the free distribution of an otherwise copyrighted work. They give precise indications about the possibility to reproduce, distribute and edit works.

https://search.creativecommons.org/
BE CAREFUL!

Notice the difference between Copyright © (all rights reserved; images in books are covered by copyright until 20 years since their publication) and public domain.
For information about:

- thesis discussion date;
- online graduation application deadline;
- graduation application submission and documents to be attached;
- time-limit to pass exams;
- overall instructions,

visit the Students’ secretarial office webpage:
http://www.unimi.it/studenti/immconcl/laurearsi/1141.htm
• Eco, Umberto, *Come si fa una tesi di laurea: le materie umanistiche*, Milano, Bompiani, 2012
• Revelli, Carlo, *Citazione bibliografica*, Roma, Associazione italiana biblioteche, 2010
• Dell’Orso, Francesco, *Citazioni bibliografiche: secondo il Chicago Manual of Style* (e con appunti da *Come si fa una tesi di laurea* di Umberto Eco)
• Gnoli, Claudio, *Le citazioni bibliografiche: una guida introduttiva per interpretare e redigere correttamente le citazioni delle fonti bibliografiche*
• The University of Chicago, *Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide* (in inglese)
• Gualdo, Riccardo, Raffaelli, Lucia, Telve, Stefano, *Scrivere all’università. Pianificare e realizzare testi efficacy*, Roma, Carocci editore, 2014
• Gambirasio, Angela, *Tesi di laurea: dal foglio bianco alla discussione*; slide presentate al Verso la tesi per magistrali (25 ottobre 2107)
• Pozzi, Sonia, *Incontri preparazione elaborato finale – Corso di Laurea GLO* (settembre 2017)
You can find them at
http://www.sba.unimi.it/aree-protette/12929.html
SATISFACTION SURVEY

Tratto da http://www.leconciergemarketing.com/tag/grill-devaluation/
Thank you for your attention!
corsibd@unimi.it