

Writing Your Thesis

Cuz Potter
Assistant Professor
Division of International Studies
Korea University

Download thesis guidelines

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

Korea University Grad... x +

gsis.korea.ac.kr

Google

ABOUT ADMISSIONS **STUDY** FACULTY + RESEARCH CAMPUS LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS



EVENTS ACADEMIC CALENDAR NEWS + NOTICES ABOUT KUGSIS

SEP 30	GPAS SPECIAL LECTURE (A-) Tuesday, 17:30 - 18:40, Professor Cho, Woonbin, International Studies Hall, Room #32.
SEP 29	THE 12TH MEETING OF THE... Monday, Sep. 29th - Oct. 17th, Alprena Bwart, Pyeongchang
SEP --	KIEP VISITING SCHOLAR S... Wednesday, 6:00 - 5:15 p.m, Professor



[KU-KIEP-SBS EU CENTRE].
The academic study of the EU by providing research grants to KU faculty work.



[KU-KIEP-SBS EU CENTRE].
Submission Deadline: October 31, 2014
Announcement of Prize-winning ...



SELECTION FOR 2015-1 EX.
Application Period: Sep 22nd - 26th



gsis.korea.ac.kr/study/forms

Link: <http://gsis.korea.ac.kr/study/forms> > [1/1] Top

Finding a topic

thesis \neq
masterpiece

1. Many students have lofty ambitions for their thesis. I was originally one. In some respects, this is laudable and can push you toward a high quality thesis that you can feel proud of for years to come. However, clinging to this goal is counterproductive.
2. First, as painful as it may seem, your master's thesis is highly unlikely to be a masterpiece. It is really the first step in learning to write as an academic. So, if this is your goal, you will fail.
3. Second, the quest for perfection typically erects inevitable stumbling blocks and impedes progress, and you may not finish in a timely manner...or at all. You should bear the Italian proverb in mind: "Perfect is the enemy of the good".

thesis \neq report

1. A thesis is not a report about a topic or a case. It attempts to add to our understanding of an unresolved theoretical or empirical issue.
2. Individuals writing case studies often fall into this trap. To avoid this, you are encouraged to do comparative case studies. If the case studies vary in meaningful ways, you can more effectively reach rational conclusions rather than simply telling a story.
3. For more on case study research, look at Yin 2003.

Three ways to advance knowledge

1. Ask a new question
2. Employ a new methodology
3. Employ a new data set

- As 기정호교수님 has said (roughly), “There are three ways you can advance knowledge: 1. Asking a new question; 2. Employing a new method; and 3. Employing a new data set.”
- A master’s thesis tends to contribute by using a new method or data set.
- A new method is not necessary—indeed, it probably is not—a “new” method; it is one that has not been applied to the particular question or data set that you have identified. It may even be as simple as adding a variable to a regression or using a different type of regression.
- A new data set could be one that you have downloaded or—quite often at GSIS—a new case study. Researchers *may* have studied the impact of latrines in reducing water borne diseases all over Africa, but perhaps they have not done so in Malawi or in the Gesu District of Tanzania.

question \neq
search for policy
recommenda-
tions

Bad sample proposal

1. **Topic:** Responsibility to Protect and Non-Interference in Humanitarian Crises: A Case Study
2. Tentative table of contents
 - 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.1.1 Concept of Humanitarian Assistance
 - 2.1.2 Operational system at the international level
 - 2.1.3 Operational system at the regional level
 - 2.2 Literature Review
 - 2.2.1 Concept of Responsibility to Protect
 - 2.2.2 Non-Interference as Regional Norm
 - 2.2.3 Comparative Analysis
 - 2.3 Case Study
 - 2.3.1 Examples of need for humanitarian assistance
 - 2.3.2 Analysis of the cases using both concepts
 - 2.3.3 Case of cross-border humanitarian assistance
 - 2.4 Conclusion

1. The topic is really just that, a topic. There is not indication that a real question has been identified. And this typically indicates that the author has not yet done sufficient background reading or work on their literature review. Consider Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2003).
2. In fact, the outline may ultimately work, but without a clear question it is simply a list of items that the author believes will be applicable. Quite often a number of items in the list may have no relevance to the final topic. However, if the student has put time into these items, she will typically be reluctant to delete them, leading to a bloated and poorly defined thesis.
3. So start with a question and figure out what you need to include to examine it.
4. For more advanced readings on social science research, see (Abbott 2004) and (Flyvberg 2001).

Model your thesis on a journal article

Regional Studies, 2013

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2013.827334>

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Regional
Studies
Association

River of Traffic: The Spatial Fragmentation of US Ports

CUZ POTTER

*Division of International Studies, Korea University, 522 International Studies Hall, Anam-dong, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul 136-701,
Korea. Email: cuzpotter@korea.ac.kr*

(Received April 2012; in revised form July 2013)

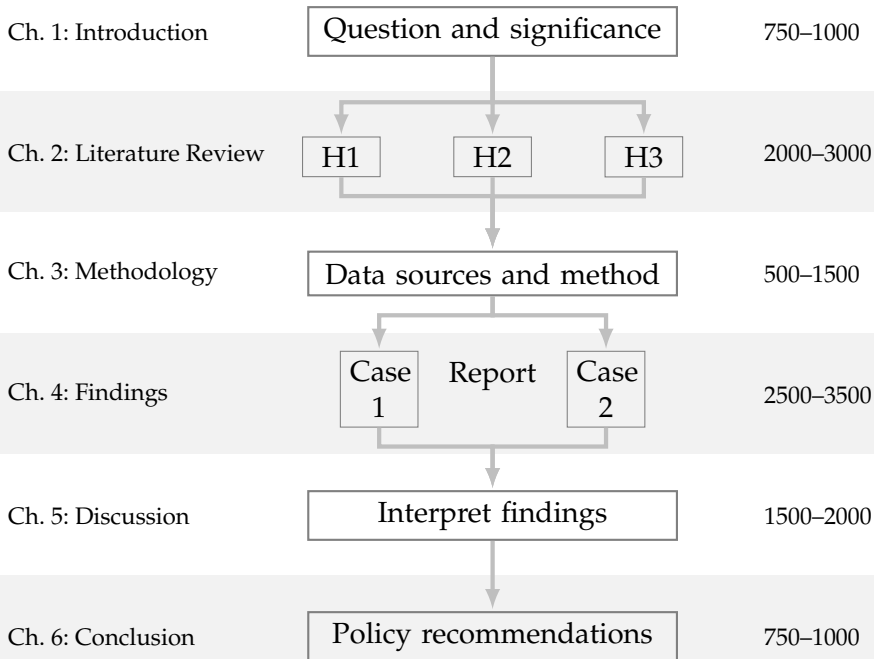
POTTER C. River of traffic: the spatial fragmentation of US ports, *Regional Studies*. Containerization has spatially fragmented the physical functions of US ports by reducing the friction of moving freight through ports to inland destinations. Previous studies of this shift have focused on case studies or selected municipalities. Employing descriptive statistics, regression analysis and geographical information system (GIS) mapping to explore shifts in longshoring, warehousing and trucking employment across the United States, this paper provides two major findings. First, employment in labour-intensive transportation activities, notably warehousing and trucking, is primarily driven by proximity to population concentrations rather than to port infrastructure. Second, a significant proportion of warehousing employment has migrated, forming a band approximately 200–300 kilometres inland.

Port regionalization Spatial fragmentation Containerization Logistics Trucking Warehousing

POTTER C. 河流交通：美国港口的空间碎裂，区域研究。货柜化已透过减少从港口将货物运输至内陆目的地的摩擦，在空间上碎片化了美国港口的实质功能。过去对此一转变的研究，多半聚焦案例研究或选定的市。本文运用叙述统计、回归分析，以及地理信息系统（GIS）製图，探讨美国海港沿岸、仓储以及货车运输工作的转变，并提出两个主要研究发现。首先，劳力密集运输活动之工作，特别是仓储与货车运输工作，主要是由至人口集中处的邻近性所驱动，而非至港口设施的邻近性。再者，仓储聘僱工作中，有显著的部分已迁移，形成了大约两百至三百公里长的内地。

港口区域化 空间碎裂化 货柜化 物流 货车运输 仓储

1. A master's thesis is basically the equivalent of a journal article. The scope and type of question is more or less at the same scale and scope. Master's theses tend to be longer—though the need not be!—but that is because you have not practiced writing in an academic manner.
2. In the course of studying at GSIS, you should have read many journal articles. Some of them you liked. Some you didn't.
3. Choose an article you like that does research you like. Examine it closely to see how it is structured, how it positions itself in the literature, how it frames its question(s), how it presents its finding, and how it concludes (policy recommendations, future research directions, etc.).
4. Do *not* indiscriminately use previous students' theses as a model for yours. Ask me or another professor for suggestions about *good* theses. Unfortunately, there are a good number of poor quality theses in the GSIS library. If you use them as a resource, you risk producing another poor quality or unacceptable thesis.



1. The introduction should introduce your question and its significance (why it is important).
2. The literature review should identify and *organize* the schools of thought or differences of opinion about your question. It is not a catalog describing related literature; it organizes that literature into broad patterns. By doing so, the literature review typically identifies a number of hypotheses to test and variables to include in your analysis. A good literature review, in my opinion, makes the rest of the thesis relatively straightforward: it provides a clear question and framework for addressing it. Note that literature reviews generally do not include background on your case study (if you are doing one). For writing literature reviews, look at Creswell (2003) or Hart (1998).
3. The methodology section describes the techniques and data sources employed in your analysis. It should supply sufficient detail for the reader to understand how you collected your data and how to replicate your study. The methodology should also report the limitations of your method as to validity and generalization. That is, you should tell the reader under which conditions your study is relevant and how far he or she can extend the study. For instance, a study microfinance in the Middle East may not be relevant in areas that do not employ Islamic financing rules. For guidelines in developing case study research (and potential language for describing it!), consider looking at (Yin 2003), especially chapter 2.

1. The findings section may be multiple chapters, depending on how you would like to organize it. This section reports the results of your quantitative study or lays out the relevant details of your case study. In some ways, this is the driest part of the thesis as it simply reports your findings and provides foundational interpretations of the results. It does *not* interpret your findings.
2. The discussion section is where you provide an interpretation of your findings and answer your question.
3. The conclusion should reintroduce your question, offer a quick summary of your findings, make policy recommendations, and (often) make recommendations for further research. You may also want to review the limits to your study's validity and generalization.

1. Note that while the structure of the classic thesis suggests a linear process to developing a thesis, this is not the way it works in my experience. The evolution of a thesis is nonlinear. Typically you start with a question in mind and begin to do a literature review around that question. However, in the process of reading and organizing the lit review, you might find a more interesting question, or a narrower, more operational question. Then you have to reframe your question, adjust your lit review, and develop your methodology. However, in the process of developing your methodology, you may find that the data available to you (or your own capacity to analyze data) is insufficient to answer the question at hand. Hopefully, you realize there is a different issue you can address. Thus, you have to go back and reframe your question and rewrite your lit review... again.
2. So expect the process to be a bit confusing and time consuming. That is why you have almost a year to write it.

Other parts of the thesis

1. Cover
2. Abstract
3. Acknowledgments
4. Table of contents
5. List of tables
6. List of figures
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices
 - 8.1 Questionnaires
 - 8.2 List of interviews
 - 8.3 Additional tables or diagrams of potential interest

abstract \neq
introduction

Abstract

1. Roughly 250 words in single paragraph
2. Contains:
 - 2.1 Research purpose/question
 - 2.2 Methodology
 - 2.3 Major findings
 - 2.4 Conclusions

Plagiarism

Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings,.. . Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery—celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: “It's not where you take things from—it's where you take them to.”

–Jim Jarmusch

Stealing is bad,
m'kay?



1. Celebrate = show → “Celebrate it if you feel like it” → “Document your theft”
2. Our ideas are not original. The way we combine them can be. And it is the combination that is the contribution.

GSIS definition of plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the creative work of another person as if it were your own, without appropriate acknowledgment of the author or source.

How do you
avoid
plagiarism?

CITE!!!

오빠

Chicago style.

Chi-
Chi-
Chi-
Chi-
Chicago style!

Chicago style in text

1. “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty” (Fainstein 2001).
 - 1.1 Citation comes *after* all cited material so that reader does not confuse others’ ideas with yours.
2. As Fainstein (2001) argues, “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty.”
 - 2.1 Implies that following material is drawn from another source, until you add a clear transition, like, “Contrary to her argument...”.
3. As Fainstein argues, “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty” (Fainstein 2001).
4. “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty” (Fainstein 2001, 44).
5. Blah, blah, blah (Abbott 2004; Fainstein 2001).

1. GSIS uses Chicago style, so start using it in **ALL** your papers.
2. There are many online resources that detail the style. Use them.
3. It may seem awkward at first, but for the informed reader, the author-year style indicates quickly where you have obtained your ideas and understanding.

Four types of plagiarism¹

1. Verbatim (Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V)
2. Inadequate paraphrase (Remixes and mashups)
3. Uncited paraphrase (IP theft)
4. Uncited quotations (Duh!)

¹This section draws heavily on the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* and plagiarism.org

Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s because the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s because the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V: Solution 1

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000* (Studies in Government and Public Policy).

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Solution 1=direct quotation with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As Fainstein (2001) suggests, “the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.”

Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V: Solution 2

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Solution 2=paraphrase with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. [As Fainstein \(2001\) suggests, increasing returns on real estate investment were used to justify new proposals.](#)

Remixes and mashups

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As real estate investment returns increased steeply, a stream of new development proposals justified their costs with predictions of ever-increasing returns.

Remixes and mashups

Source

The **steeply climbing** curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with **prognoses** of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As real estate investment returns **increased steeply**, a stream of new development proposals justified their costs with **predictions** of ever-increasing returns.

1. Changes order of sentence but retains phrasing.
2. Replaces a few words (highlighted) with synonyms.
3. Would be the same if multiple sources were combined.

Remixes and mashups: Solution 1

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Solution 1=adequate paraphrase with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. **In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals (Fainstein 2001).**

1. Despite a few identical or nearly identical words, phrases are not copied.
2. Author is cited.

Remixes and mashups: Solution 2

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Solution 2=direct quotation with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. Building on increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, new proposals “justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns” (Fainstein 2001).

1. Directly quoted phrases are quoted.
2. Author is cited.

IP theft

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals.

IP theft

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals.

Remixes and mashups: Solution 1

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Solution 1=adequate paraphrase with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals (Fainstein 2001).

or

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. According to Fainstein (2001), in the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals.

1. Author is cited.

Duh!

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As a result, “the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns”. And politicians failed to see the false logic this entailed.

Duh!

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000* (Studies in Government and Public Policy).

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As a result, “the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns”. And politicians failed to see the false logic this entailed.

Duh!: Solution

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*.

University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.

Solution=quotation with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As a result, “the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns” (Fainstein 2001). And politicians failed to see the false logic this entailed.

1. Author is cited.

In practice

Build your ideas
into an outline.
Then write.

1. I think formulating an outline of your paper—even a loose one—before writing it is one of the best ways to avoid plagiarism. When you are flipping through papers while writing, it is natural and all too easy to keep following the line of argument of the paper rather than your own (i.e., to plagiarize). With an outline between you and the original sources, you are more likely to use your own words and make your own unique argument.
2. It is also a good way to make sure that your paper's argument is clear, coherent, and cohesive. Without an outline, students tend to start writing with a vague idea of what they want to say, hoping to discover their argument along the way. Unfortunately, because no one ever takes the time to revise the earlier sections to reflect the discovered argument, the reader is usually left very confused.
3. I also do not believe that developing an outline first takes more time. It takes longer to *start* typing, but because you now know what you want to say, it takes less time to actually write the paper.

Useful resources

1. Google Scholar (scholar.google.com, more citations generally means that the article is more important)
2. ISI Web of Science
3. Lexis-Nexis
4. JSTOR
5. Access through KU network or by logging in to library website

Reference managers

1. If you write papers, learn to use one.
 - ▶ Saves time... ultimately
 - ▶ Formats your citations and builds your bibliography *for you.*
 - ▶ Endnote (most popular, works well with MS Word, available through university)
 - ▶ Zotero (online)
 - ▶ Reference manager (science people seem to like it)
 - ▶ JabRef (open source, works well with Libreoffice, my choice)

1. **Reference managers**

2. Reference managers are a godsend to paper writers. Basically, you enter information about your source, select the reference to cite, and the program does all the formatting for your citations and bibliography. One professor wants MLA? No problem. Tell the program to format it in MLA. The professor changes their mind and suddenly wants Chicago style? No problem! Tell the program to reformat your document. No more cutting and pasting, italicizing, boldening, etc.
3. It may take a little more work to get started, but not much(!), and once you do it you will never regret it.

1. **Using reference managers**
2. I strongly advise that you use the abstract (or review or notes) field of your reference manager entry to summarize the article and add your own observations after you read an article. This takes an extra 15–20 minutes typically, but it serves two purposes. First, summarizing and reflecting on the article immediately after reading it will embed it more deeply in your mind. Second, when you are writing your thesis, you will forget what an article says months or weeks after you've read it—if not days or hours! Having a short summary in your reference manager will save the trouble of having to read *the whole article* all over again. Though not really necessary for a short term paper written over the course of a week, this will ultimately save you time in writing your thesis over a year.
3. In addition to summarizing the article (in your own words!), you should also add your own thoughts about the piece. For example, you might note that while the article is interesting theoretically, the methodology is weak. You might simply express how much you love or hate an article (but try to add *why* you do). You might reference related articles.

1. I also recommend adding a list of quotes that you think might come in handy later. I typically do this as I read the article. Don't forget to include the page numbers! Note that this complements and facilitates the earlier recommendation to create an outline before you write. By placing quotes in the reference, you can better avoid going back to the original text and starting to follow it.

Thank you.

Bibliography I

- Andrew Abbott. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. W. W. Norton & Co., London, 2004.
- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2003.
- John W. Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, second edition, 2003.
- Susan S. Fainstein. *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London, 1980-2000 (Studies in Government and Public Policy)*. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 2nd edition, 2001.
- Bent Flyvberg. *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

Bibliography II

Chris Hart. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998.

Robert K. Yin. *Case study research : design and methods*. Applied social research methods series ; v. 5. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Calif., 3rd edition, 2003.