

Economics 161 — Fall 2005

International Integration of Latin American Economies

Latin American Economic Development

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Guidelines for Final Group Paper

1. CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

- Clarity
- Strength of arguments (validity and number)
- Quality of empirical and theoretical evidence
- Structure and style
- Adequacy of references

2. STRUCTURE

- (1) Your paper follows a theme. It is more than a collection of paragraphs or sections.
- (2) Your paper begins with a concise introduction that presents your theme and whets the appetite for the main argument.
- (3) The main body of your paper places your points into distinct paragraphs or sections. The paper nevertheless integrates the ideas and avoids repetitions. The main body of your paper substantiates the points with theory and evidence.
- (4) Your paper ends with a conclusion.

3. CONCEPTS

- (1) When possible, relate your topic to concepts and models discussed in class.
- (2) When using concepts not discussed in class, define them and explain the relevance to your topic.
- (3) Make the arguments in your own words. Evidence of copying and pasting from other work will be severely marked down.
- (4) In empirical arguments, do not confuse correlation with causation.
- (5) When referring to theoretical models, beware of their simplifying assumptions.

4. REFERENCES

- (1) Base your paper on academic (scholarly) references. If you use scholarly contributions from the internet, cite the web article and be prepared to argue that the source is reliable.
- (2) Follow the following rules for references in the text: A reference to a book or article as a whole takes the form (Fernandez, 2005), that is (Author, Date of Publication). Notice this format in the lecture notes. Alternatively, you can directly quote Fernandez (2005). To reference literal quotes, use the form (Fernandez, 2005: 22), that is (Author, Date of Publication: Page Number).
- (3) Include a list of references after the conclusion. Use the references at the end of the syllabus as a guide for formatting. For references from the internet, cite the URL and specify the date and time of your last access.
- (4) Do not reference lecture notes.

ECONOMICAL WRITING

You may find the following notes on approach and style useful.

I. WHO TO ADDRESS

Think of the reader of your paper. You may imagine a graduate student or professor who, as of yet, knows hardly anything about your specific topic; you may imagine a classmate of yours whose attention you want to capture and keep. Convince this reader that your topic is relevant, and that the reader will learn something from your findings. Write to that specific reader. (The reader will change in later life and may become a decision maker or the world expert in your field.)

II. WHAT TO FOCUS ON

Your focus should be only on questions that you can answer. You are not out to evaluate the overarching problems of the world. You merely want to ask, and answer, questions that pertain to your specific topic. It is usually tough enough to find conclusive arguments and evidence for a specific topic.

III. HOW TO STRUCTURE THE ARGUMENT

The introduction is not filled with technical details. The introduction explains to the ignorant but educatable reader what your topic is about and why it is important. Do not make claims that the remainder of the paper will not sustain. If you use some recent development or related issue to motivate why your topic is relevant, be very short.

Early in your paper, have a section or paragraph that introduces the main notions and concepts.

If you use original data, it is often useful to insert a paragraph on the data source, or a whole section. In that part, do not discuss any results, only the data source and quality.

Number all your sections. Within sections, number the subsections.

In the conclusion, you may want to state what your analysis cannot provide (your paper may not have offered a full cost-benefit or welfare analysis, for instance, but may be suggestive; your paper may not conclusively answer counterfactual questions, but may point to the answer). If you wish, speculate briefly how the analysis could be extended or made more rigorous.

Cite the relevant literature in the text to substantiate your arguments. Relate your points to prior findings in the literature. Did others reach the same conclusions as you do?

IV. STYLE

Sentences tend to get long and convoluted because thoughts may be. As a rule of thumb, initial drafts of papers can lose up to a quarter of the words within a sentence, and the meaning becomes clearer. As another rule of thumb, do not allow your sentences to become longer than one line and a half. English is not Latin or German. Make only one point with one sentence. Cut redundant phrases such as "Simply put," "We consider it remarkable that," "It is notable that," "actually."

V. RESTRAINT

Make careful points. Do not oversell. Conclude only from what your analysis undoubtedly supports. Make all other statements conditional.