



How to Write a Thesis (MIT Press)

By Umberto Eco, Caterina Mongiat Farina, Geoff Farina, Francesco Ersparmer

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How to Write a Thesis (MIT Press) By Umberto Eco, Caterina Mongiat Farina, Geoff Farina, Francesco Ersparmer

By the time Umberto Eco published his best-selling novel *The Name of the Rose*, he was one of Italy's most celebrated intellectuals, a distinguished academic and the author of influential works on semiotics. Some years before that, in 1977, Eco published a little book for his students, *How to Write a Thesis*, in which he offered useful advice on all the steps involved in researching and writing a thesis -- from choosing a topic to organizing a work schedule to writing the final draft. Now in its twenty-third edition in Italy and translated into seventeen languages, *How to Write a Thesis* has become a classic. Remarkably, this is its first, long overdue publication in English. Eco's approach is anything but dry and academic. He not only offers practical advice but also considers larger questions about the value of the thesis-writing exercise. *How to Write a Thesis* is unlike any other writing manual. It reads like a novel. It is opinionated. It is frequently irreverent, sometimes polemical, and often hilarious. Eco advises students how to avoid "thesis neurosis" and he answers the important question "Must You Read Books?" He reminds students "You are not Proust" and "Write everything that comes into your head, but only in the first draft." Of course, there was no Internet in 1977, but Eco's index card research system offers important lessons about critical thinking and information curating for students of today who may be burdened by Big Data. *How to Write a Thesis* belongs on the bookshelves of students, teachers, writers, and Eco fans everywhere. Already a classic, it would fit nicely between two other classics: *Strunk and White* and *The Name of the Rose*.

Contents

- The Definition and Purpose of a Thesis
- Choosing the Topic
- Conducting Research
- The Work Plan and the Index Cards
- Writing the Thesis
- The Final Draft

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Editorial Review

Review

Although first published in Italian in 1977, before Eco (*The Name of the Rose*) became an internationally renowned novelist, this guide to writing a thesis -- originally aimed at Italian humanities undergraduates -- brims with practical advice useful for writing research papers.... His advocacy of index card files to organize data seems quaintly nostalgic in the age of laptops and online databases, but it only underscores the importance of applying these more sophisticated tools to achieve the thoroughness of the results that he advocates.

(*Publishers Weekly*)

How to Write a Thesis is full of friendly, no-bullshit, entry-level advice on what to do and how to do it, illustrated with lucid examples and -- significantly -- explanations of why, by one of the great researchers and writers in the post-war humanities ... Best of all, the absolutely superb chapter on how to write is worth triple the price of admission on its own.

(Robert Eaglestone *Times Higher Education*)

How to Write a Thesis remains valuable after all this time largely thanks to the spirit of Eco's advice. It is witty but sober, genial but demanding -- and remarkably uncynical about the rewards of the thesis, both for the person writing it and for the enterprise of scholarship itself.... Some of Eco's advice is, if anything, even more valuable now, given the ubiquity and seeming omniscience of our digital tools.... Eco's humor never detracts from his serious intent. And anyway, even the sardonic pointers on cheating are instructive in their way.

(Scott McLemee *Inside Higher Education*)

Eco is a first-rate storyteller and unpretentious instructor who thrives on describing the twists and turns of research projects as well as how to avoid accusations of plagiarism.

(Jan Gardner *Boston Globe*)

The book's enduring appeal -- the reason it might interest someone whose life no longer demands the writing of anything longer than an e-mail -- has little to do with the rigors of undergraduate honors requirements. Instead, it's about what, in Eco's rhapsodic and often funny book, the thesis represents: a magical process of self-realization, a kind of careful, curious engagement with the world that need not end in one's early twenties. "Your thesis," Eco foretells, "is like your first love: it will be difficult to forget." By mastering the demands and protocols of the fusty old thesis, Eco passionately demonstrates, we become equipped for a world outside ourselves -- a world of ideas, philosophies, and debates.

(Hua Hsu *The New Yorker*)

Well beyond the completion of the thesis, Eco's manual makes for pleasant reading and is deserving of a place on the desks of scholars and professional writers. Even sections such as that recommending the combinatory system of handwritten index cards, while outdated in the digital age, can propose a helpful exercise in critical thinking, and add a certain vintage appeal to the book.

(Times Literary Supplement)

About the Author

Umberto Eco is an Italian semiotician philosopher, literary critic, and novelist. He is the author of *The Name of the Rose*, *Foucault's Pendulum*, and *The Prague Cemetery*, all bestsellers in many languages, as well as a number of influential scholarly works.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Champlin:

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Rose Duprey:

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Janelle Coe:

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Sherry Fitzgerald:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that will question when you got college students? We believe that that question was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, Everybody has different hobby. So you know that little person like reading or as studying become their hobby. You need to know that reading is very important and also book as to be the matter. Book is important thing to incorporate you knowledge, except your personal teacher or lecturer. You will find good news or update about something by book. Different categories of books that can you take to be your object. One of them is actually How to Write a Thesis (MIT Press).

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