**Writing a Most Excellent Paper**

Select topic that is compatible with expected paper length

You can ask a big question like Do Churches create social capital. But that is your starting point. Putnam’s was: why are people not bowling as much in leagues?

Ways to narrow topic. Ask smaller question. Frame large question then tell reader what aspect you will cover. Use a case study.

Do not over-promise and do not over-conclude

Think through order: Like Putnam’s Introduction (overview--what to expect), what, why, why is it important, what to do about it.

Write introduction paragraph and draft of CONCLUSION then outline steps to go from introduction to conclusion

Each paragraph should be a separate “thought” or theme and first sentence tells you what the paragraph is about

Does the paper flow. From beginning to end. From one point to the next. Does the order make sense? Leading to a conclusion.

Make sure over-all there is balance. Even when interesting do not take side trips.

Do not completely rely on spelling checker

Read your paper out loud to yourself or friend

Finish draft. Set it aside. Play a game. Sleep. Get a beer and then go back to it later.

Most A papers students have left enough time at end to give it that last 10% of effort in editing and proofreading.

Do not use long quotes, paraphrase.

Use standard in text citations (Johnson 1999), include Internet: url and date of access

Many papers fail because the conclusion is done at the 11th hour. “So anyway all this stuff is important, you know. Ok.”

Address paper as though your mother or a stranger were reading it.

Eliminate all words that do not contribute to meaning.