Guidelines for Seminar Papers

(Rev. January 2008)

1. Write clearly.
   a. Assume the reader is not necessarily a specialist in your discipline or area.
      i. Define specialized terms.
      ii. Describe major scientific issues in full.
      iii. Explain why the causal assumptions in your model(s) are either right or useful for other reasons.
   b. Describe major empirical findings and their implications in full. Don’t stop with, “Here’s my model and its coefficients. Make of it what you will.”

2. Document your work.
   a. Make a table (in fixed font or in a worksheet) for any model worth taking seriously, that is, which has not been rejected on the way to a better model.
      i. Report parameter estimates and their standard errors.
      ii. Report fully standardized coefficients, especially for measurement models.
      iii. Avoid “*” as indicators of statistical significance.
      iv. Avoid t-statistics. Anyone can see the ratio of a parameter estimate to its s.e.
      v. For each model, report the LR test statistic, df, n, BIC, and RMSEA. Avoid other indices of fit unless you also offer a specific justification for their use in this instance.
      vi. Report reduced form coefficients, direct, and indirect effects whenever they are appropriate to the model (use the command EF on the OU line of LISREL).
   b. Use path diagrams as well as equations to describe your model. Do not use LISREL-created path diagrams unless they are clear and complete. It may be much better to draw your own, even freehand.
   c. Appendices (fixed font, readable size)
      i. Means and standard deviations, possibly measures of skew.
iii. Correlations (not covariances).
iv. Input run-streams and output for major runs.

3. Aim for professional style.

a. Always use a spell-checker.

b. If your native language is not English:
   i. Find an editor, or
   ii. Ask a native English speaker to read and help you edit the text, or
   iii. Take your manuscript to the Writing Lab for editorial advice.

c. Fonts
   i. Never use a base font smaller than 12 points.
   ii. Use Times Roman, Dutch, Palatino, Georgia, Schoolbook, or other similar fonts for text. (Courier or prestige elite are acceptable, but less attractive.)
   iii. You may use Helvetica, Swiss, Arial, Calibri, or similar fonts, but only for titles or headers.
   iv. Never use Swiss, Helvetica, Arial, or similar fonts for text or for table entries.
   v. Unless you are skilled in laying out tables, use a fixed font like Courier, Courier New, or Prestige Elite for tables.
   vi. Place footnotes on the same page as the citation to them, and use a font no more than 1 point smaller than the base font. Avoid long textual footnotes.

d. Other formatting issues.
   i. Use ample margins, e.g., 1" all around.
   ii. Double-space all text.
   iii. Number text and reference pages, after the first page.
   iv. Order the components of the paper as follows: Cover page, abstract, text, references, tables, figures, appendixes.
   v. Print the above-named components only on one side of the page. It is difficult to read a text closely when it is printed on both sides.
   vi. Staple the cover page through the figures in one packet; staple the Appendix; use a strong metal clip to attach the two packets.
   vii. Read the paper and attachments before you turn it in. Look for typographical errors and poor language, and make sure the print quality is good.

I will not read papers that are not in acceptable form. They will be returned unread.