What is a dissertation?

Is it different from a thesis?

Does it “count” as a scholarly article?

How can I use it for my paper?

Dissertations are in-depth research papers, usually over 100 pages long. Doctoral students write dissertations in order to earn a Ph.D. They include original research and insight and take significant time, often years, to produce.

Some fields and universities use the terms “thesis” and “dissertation” interchangeably. Generally, however, a dissertation is submitted in order to earn a Ph.D, while a thesis is submitted to earn a master’s degree.

It depends on who you ask! Dissertations are not usually published in journals, and do not go through peer review. However, they do include original research and insight, and students must present and defend their research to a panel of field experts before their dissertation is accepted.

If you are wondering whether you can use a dissertation as a source, you should ask your instructor. Even if you can’t use the dissertation itself, most dissertations include a long list of references. These can include scholarly articles, books, primary sources, and more.

If you find a dissertation that seems relevant to your topic, look at the references—you’ll probably find several useful sources.