

## ***RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES<sup>1</sup>***

A final research paper, is required of all students. This paper should reflect a proportionately greater expenditure of effort than the earlier papers. It should be a "crescendo" and incorporate perspectives attained in the course.

### **Topic:**

Research involves inquiry into the unknown. A research paper summarizes and documents that inquiry. Many topics, many issues have arisen in class readings and discussions. You have, doubtless, found some of these topics interesting, profound, important, offensive, or in some other way, intriguing. Pick a topic that engages your interest and curiosity. Use the assignment to learn something of genuine interest and intrigue. You may be curious about the life of one of the authors. You may want to know more about the social or historical background of a particular work. You may want to find detailed information about a topic that was lightly touched on in class discussion. There are many options. Do follow your own interests. Don't write a paper on a topic you think I will find fascinating. Write on a topic you find fascinating.

### **Purpose:**

There is some overlap between essays and research papers. Essays are designed to persuade, and often use research to bolster credibility. Research papers, while not value free, are more slanted towards the presentation of discovered information than persuasion to a given viewpoint. Choice of a topic is always based in one's values, but the primary purpose of research papers is to inform, analyze, and classify rather than persuade.

### **Primary Research and Scholarly Research:**

As I indicated above, research involves inquiry. Direct inquiry is primary research. In "hard" scientific fields primary research involves experimentation. In fields where experimentation is impossible or unethical (such as the social sciences) primary research involves methods such as observation, interview, questionnaire, etc. Primary research involves implementation of a well thought through research design. Research procedure produce data that will by design answer the question the investigator wants answered. Indirect inquiry is the path most of you will take. Indirect inquiry is scholarly research, exploration of an issue by reading what's been written about it. To undertake scholarly research, you use the resources of a library or appropriate data base.

### **Essential Elements:**

The paper you write will simply (1) Summarize what you have learned in your research. (2) Document either your direct methods (research design) or your scholarly sources. The paper should be about 8 pages (including bibliography) using a 12 point font and 1" margins.

### **Structure:**

In structure, the paper should first identify the topic and discuss its importance or interest. Second, the paper should present several major points or issues you've discovered in your

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<sup>1</sup> This assignment will be due December 1.

inquiries. Third, the paper should conclude with an extended statement of the perspective(s) that are attained through the research you've completed. Finally, you need to document your methods or sources. This can be accomplished within the text in the form of footnotes, in a bibliography which lists the sources you've used, or in an appendix describing research methods.

**Style and Style Manuals:**

The research paper is the primary form of professional communication for scientists and scholars. For that reason, style and form are important and often rigidly specified. Professional journals reject papers that are not written according to very strict guidelines and these guidelines differ greatly. This provides job security for the writers of style manuals. For this paper, consistency is the chief requirement. If you know what your major field of study is going to be, use the standard style manual for professional writing in that field. Otherwise use one of the following: Note the style manual you use on the title page of your paper.

Turbian, Kate - A MANUAL FOR WRITERS

Achtert & Gibaldi - THE MLA STYLE MANUAL

Univ. of Chicago Press - THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Lester & Lester - THE RESEARCH PAPER HANDBOOK

WEBSTERS STANDARD STYLE MANUAL

Howell, John - STYLE MANUALS OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD

**Every Page Perfect:**

In terms of mechanics and grammar, every page should be perfect.

**Alternative Format:**

You can present your research as a fictitious autobiography. To complete this option, you'd do research on the circumstances faced by people contemporary to one of the authors assigned for this seminar. You would then imagine a character (either a historical character or a completely fictitious character) and write a memoir segment. You must thoroughly research your work.. You must document every detail of the memoir to demonstrate historical accuracy. The memoir segment, like the paper should be no more than eight pages including bibliography. Document details via footnotes.