

TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Instructions and general comments: The goal of this assignment is to write one, 8 to 10 page, research paper. Below, I have broken up each stage of paper construction into manageable and progressive stages. Each of these stages will count for a grade (points), and each stage is scaled on the previous one. You are expected to submit, over the course of the semester, each of these separate components. Use this sheet wisely, because you will need it throughout the course of the semester. Also, consult my website (www.philosophy.ilstu.edu/ljwaggl) for further information concerning the class and this assignment.

Overall guidelines. **Please read through this entire document before you begin to focus on a topic.** Keep these guidelines handy and refer to them often as you move through the various parts of the project. Margins should be set at one inch top, bottom, left and right. All stages of the writing project are to be typed, and as I shall assume that you will be using a computer for ease of revision. There are several computer labs throughout the campus if you should not have one of your own. Please consult the university homepage (www.ilstu.edu) for locations of the various labs and their respective times of operation. Remember, the Milner Library has several computers that you may access in order to find additional computer resources on campus. Ten or Twelve point font is acceptable. Typical font faces are the following: times new roman, arial, courier, garamond, etc. I prefer that you stick to one of these more or less standard font faces for two reasons. First, they are widely available. Second, they are very easy to read. Other font faces, especially those that imitate handwriting, are often very stressful on the eye. Although these fonts have a use, stick to the standard fonts. If you have any doubt about the font face, this document was written in times new roman. Page numbers should appear on the bottom of the page, right justified.

Stages of the term paper. (Consult your course syllabus for the deadlines for each stage of this assignment. No paper will be accepted without all of these earlier stages attached with my original comments. The finished paper should be bound with a single staple in the upper left hand side of the page. No plastic or other forms of paper cover sheets are acceptable. No three hole binders are acceptable. In order for the finished paper to be accepted, these earlier components are to be paper clipped to the back of the finished paper with my comments on them.)

Stage 1: Topic choice, rationale statement, and initial bibliography, (a.k.a., your prospectus.) The purpose of the prospectus is to gain approval of your topic and to initiate your investigation into the project. Your prospectus must contain a **working thesis**, and some idea of what you are thinking about trying to establish or prove. A brief paragraph, also known as the rationale statement, should follow the working thesis. What I am looking for in this rationale statement is a brief explanation of why you have chosen to write on this topic, what you think you are going to discover in this research, and reflect your interests.

Your initial bibliography should include at least 5 scholarly sources. Use the Milner Library online catalog to find resources. These five scholarly sources should include at

least one book length treatment of your topic, two article length treatments, and no more than one internet resource. You may freely include more than this, but the minimum requirement is the five. You should not feel compelled to find all of your sources immediately or even at this stage. What I am looking for with this initial bibliography is that you are investigating and reading the information you will need to develop your paper.

Stage 2: Thesis statement.

Once your prospectus has been approved, you should start reading the materials on your initial bibliography. This will help you develop and sharpen your ideas for your thesis. This stage is critical because in the development of your thesis, your paper should begin to take shape. The thesis is the focus of your investigation, and the remainder of what should be in your thesis statement (also known as a topical outline) will inform your reader how you intend to prove this thesis. Yes, a thesis should be a bit controversial. That is, in part, the point of doing research. Take some time with this, because the more specific you can be here, the easier your job will be later when you are writing your paper. The topical outline should be something like a road map for your reader. This should enable the reader to know what to expect in the body of the paper, and highlight the important points you are about to make in the larger project. This is critical here, because I will be able to make suggestions as to the scope of the project here.

Stage 3: Annotated Bibliography.

This is a revised version of your initial bibliography. This version must contain a minimum of **ten scholarly sources**, and it must include at least two book length treatments, two article length treatments specifically on this topic, two article length treatments of a general sort, two current mass media sources, and no more than two internet sources. If you should choose to ignore the internet, then I would also like to see two general book length treatments as well as two specific book length treatments of your topic. There is a reason for both the shorter and the longer treatments. The shorter treatments will address specific problems those working in this area will recognize. The longer treatments will handle the context of the problem, some historical information, and will not be rushed because of the openness that only a book length treatment can achieve. A word about books. You should not feel compelled to read several extremely long books on your topic. Use the critical apparatus, indices, tables of content, etc., to locate in these longer things where your topic is discussed and focus your labor on those sections. This may take some discipline, but this will drastically reduce your workload.

As stated above, you are to develop a bibliography that includes a variety of kinds of sources. This is a way to provide depth, as well as breadth, to your research, and to introduce you to varying types of scholarly resources. This bibliography is to be **annotated**, meaning that after each entry, in proper format, a brief statement accompanies the entry explaining its probable value to your paper.

Stage 4: Refined thesis, revised topical outline (initial paragraph) and paper outline.

The refining of your thesis comes with further reading and thinking about your topic and

how you think you might prove this thesis. You may find that your initial thesis needs revising, even total redirection, depending on what you have learned as you continue your research. Building on this thesis and topical outline, your initial paper outline will lay out the primary and secondary ideas that you intend to include in the course of the paper. This outline should also demonstrate your effort to establish a logical organization to guide you in the actual writing of the paper.

Asking you to submit an initial paper outline is a means of pushing you to think about the major and minor points you anticipate discussing as you proceed with your writing. The outline you settle on now should not be considered to be written in stone - it may certainly be modified as you proceed from this point. Make sure that this initial outline should a reasonable development and logical flow of ideas from the beginning to the end of your text, and that you plan for a good introduction and conclusion. See my website for additional information concerning introductions and conclusions.

Stage 5: Finished paper.

The paper should include all of the following to be considered complete: a cover sheet containing the title of the paper in the first third of the page, your name in the middle of the page, and the course (name and numerical designation), the date of submission, and to whom the paper is being submitted **in that order**. The body of the text should be numbers consecutively, starting with page 1 on the first page of written text (not the cover sheet). There should be **no running title, no running name (yours), no running anything else** across the top or bottom of each page of the text. The only requirement here is the page numbers. The bibliography should be on a separate page and titled "Bibliography".

Specific requirements of the paper are: clear introduction with thesis, topical outline, and some detailed discussion of the topic at hand. The body paragraphs should also take up the details of how you intend to prove the thesis, and include some discussion of opposing view points. You should also address these opposing view points and offer some response to them. Tie together the details to your thesis, and remind the reader how these details relate to the thesis. Your paper should, for top grade consideration, be focused, and your voice should ring through the entire paper. When you bring up data, evaluate this data, and relate it to your thesis. With handling opposing points of view, you are required to offer your own assessment of these things. Your conclusion should not introduce any new ideas, and should include a topical outline and a restatement of your thesis. This should not be the first time that your reader has heard your thesis, i.e., no delayed theses in these papers.

Paper's submission should contain: The coversheet, the paper itself, the bibliography. These should be stapled together. Attached by paper clip to the above should be the initial prospectus (stage one), your outline, and the annotated bibliography. I do want copies of these original documents with my written comments on them. I want to see, even at this stage in the game, that further development and further reflection has been taking place. This enables me to tell those papers that are original and those papers which have been purchased.