

Overview

Your research project consists of the following components. **You must complete and hand in ALL of these to receive any grade on the project.**

- **Research proposal: 5%, due 03/FEB/2006**
- **Annotated bibliography: 10%, due 24/FEB/2006**
- **Final paper: 15%, due 31/MAR/2006**

This is a research project in the discipline of Humanities. This means that you should begin your research from an **exploratory question**, or set of questions, that you want to investigate and attempt to come to some conclusions about (although a fixed conclusion is by no means guaranteed). **You are required to apply the concepts and theories that we have studied in the course in your exploration in ways that help investigate and illuminate your questions.** You are required to **think and write critically** about all of the material you use: theories, concepts, studies (data), examples (evidence).

In this paper you will be asking and exploring ‘Big Questions’ or ‘Big Ideas’ about information and communication technologies; in other words you must address the larger social/cultural dimensions of whatever it is you are looking at. From this broad perspective you will narrow your focus to a specific area of application (topic), all the while being prepared to broaden your perspective again at the conclusion of your research. (Note: In terms of the dimensions of technology we outlined in term 1, the technical and economic dimensions are the least relevant to this project.) You must be able to **differentiate between technology, technological context** (e.g. infrastructure, social and cultural systems that surround technology) **and content** (e.g. television shows) in order to complete this assignment.

The key to a good Humanities paper is critical analysis. Doing critical analysis means that you must **begin with some primary source material and draw ideas from it**, not the other way around. You must move beyond description and opinion into the realm of **informed, researched work that can incorporate and stand up against material that refutes it**. Some thoughts on analysis: http://wire.rutgers.edu/research_process_obser_vs_anal.html. While this webpage is a good start, we would actually prefer that you **go farther with your analysis**, and remind you that these are *examples only*; you will need to do your analysis within the parameters of the course material for HUMA 2920. That being said, spend some time looking around the various topics on this site as they offer some good, clear ideas about how to formulate a topic and proceed with a humanities paper.

Good examples of papers that meet the goals for writing in the Humanities from the readings we have already done in the course include Eisenstein, Kellner, Packer and Poster. Obviously we don't expect you to do as much research or write as well as these authors, but the papers are good examples of the **application of theory to research findings**, and the **construction of a critical argument**; both things that we are looking for.

This paper is NOT:

- a piece of investigative journalism;
- to be approached with a hard-and-fast conclusion that you desire to prove (a research paper starts from questions and/or a hypothesis);

- a literature review without analysis and critical content;
- a chance to uncritically present your own personal views to ‘prove’ that you are right;
- a place to use the direct effects model or treat audiences/the general public as sheep.

You have already begun to do some work towards shaping a topic in your last mini-assignment, and have received comments on that work. Take these comments seriously; there is no point trying to push through with something that your tutorial leader has deemed inappropriate. Read the feedback, understand the feedback, and ask for help if things aren't clear. If you have been told that your writing needs work go to the Writing Centre ASAP to get assistance and be prepared to do the work throughout the term not at the last minute.

Some other resources:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html>

<http://vos.ucsb.edu/>

Research Proposal Guideline – 5% – Due 03/FEB/06

In this assignment: 1) you **identify the topic** for your term paper; 2) **discuss the theoretical framework** you are using; 3) **explain how your topic can be related to this theory**; 4) **outline your approach to researching the topic**; 5) **explain why your topic and approach are relevant and important**. Considering that in mini assignments 2 and 3 you have already had the chance to brainstorm and do some preliminary thinking and research, at this stage **your topic has to be very specific** (i.e. no broad themes such as “television and spectacle”).

The proposal must be written in essay form in 500-750 words, properly referenced and cited (MLA or APA style). Use the questions below as a guide to help you think through and write your proposal. But be sure that your proposal reads as an essay not just answers to these questions. You do not have to follow the same order in constructing your essay, but you must address them all or indicate why you are not yet able to address them.

1. What, specifically, is your topic? Describe in as much detail as possible the topic you plan to examine. What are your research questions? If you have a specific hypothesis at this point in the project, you can discuss it as well; if not, present some possible argumentative positions that you may consider in refining a more specific thesis.
2. What theoretical framework and/or concepts are you planning to use? What is your current understanding of these theories/concepts? Describe them in as much detail as you can.
3. How can your topic be understood and discussed in relationship to the theory/concept? How does the theory/concept apply to your topic?
4. What do you think will be the greatest challenges in writing on this topic? How do you plan to deal with these challenges in your research and writing? What are your plans for researching the topic? Where are you going to look for information on the topic? What are some possible sources you think you must consider and draw from?
5. In the context of the work we have been doing in this course, why is this topic relevant and

important? Describe the reasons why you have chosen this topic—personal or career interest, special knowledge, intellectual curiosity, current relevance, etc. If you have a particular background or scholarly work that attracted you to the topic, you can describe it as well.

As always, you should consider the above as thought triggers and not an outline per se. Feel free to provide additional areas of discussion as long as they are relevant and necessary. Although this may be a relatively low point value assignment, it is an essential step in the project and sets the course for it. So take it seriously and do your best to get a solid start on your project. **You cannot change your topic after you submit your proposal.**

Your proposal should be **double-spaced, 12 point Times or Times New Roman, 1” margins**. It **must have a meaningful title** (not a generic one), **but no title page**—just make sure your name and tutorial leader’s name are on the top page. Include the **word count at the end**. Hand in a **hard copy** of your proposal at the **beginning of the lecture on due date**.

AND

On the web forum, post your title and a summary (50-80 words) of your topic and theoretical framework you will be using.

Annotated Bibliography Guideline – 10% – Due 24/FEB/06

In this assignment you will be constructing an annotated bibliography for your research project. An annotated bibliography is a list of sources with a brief analytical discussion of each source. The purpose of this assignment is to help you guarantee that you have done a thorough job of researching the topic and have obtained a diverse array of source material that you will reference in your final paper. Do not rely on existing abstracts/indices for summary information; look at the source yourself before creating your annotation.

Basic Requirements for Sources:

- 1. You must have at minimum 12 sources.**
- 2. Two of the sources must be from our course material. In cases where only an excerpt was included in the course kit, you are required to obtain and consider the full version.**
- 3. No more than 5 can be electronic-only sources (i.e. sources that have no print version).**
- 4. Thus, 7 must be available in paper form (even if you obtain them electronically).**
- 5. At Least 4 must be books (defined as more than 100 pages in length).**
- 6. All sources must be credible, scholarly material.**

Once you have collected the required sources, you need to construct an annotated bibliography. This will include a proper citation (**MLA or APA format**) of the source, followed by a short paragraph that describes the source in the following ways:

- 1. What specifically is the subject of this source?**
- 2. What makes this is a credible source of information?**
- 3. What is the author’s principle argument(s)?**
- 4. How will this source be useful to you in constructing your own argument(s)?**

Each of these should only require one or two sentences but make sure that you cover all four points in your annotation of each source. **Length of each annotation: 75-100 words.**

Arrange the sources in alphabetical order by author's last name, and number the items. The annotated bibliography must be double-spaced between entries and single-spaced within, Times or Times New Roman 12 pt, 1" margins. There is no need for a title page, but be sure to include your name and tutorial leader on the first page of the assignment.

Final Essay Guideline – 15% – Due 31/MAR/06

The final stage in your research project for HUMA 2920 is the completion of a 10-12 page research essay. The essay should reflect the culmination of about 3 months of solid work, including the topic proposal and annotated bibliography assignments.

Checklist

1. Your paper should be 2500-3000 words, double-spaced, 12-point font (Times or Times New Roman only), with 1" margins and only the left margin justified. The minimum word requirement is just that, a minimum; stopping at exactly 2500 words does not constitute completion of the assignment if more is necessary to fully make your argument. But do your best not to go beyond 3000 words. Do not pad your writing (by using filler words) as we are looking for substance. And make sure you edit your essay to stay within the limit.
2. Your paper should have a clear thesis and should follow up this central argument with well-supported and well-argued prose.
3. Your paper should be free of grammatical and spelling errors, typos, and other problems that would have been eliminated with a careful and thorough proofreading of the essay.
4. Your paper **must have a title page and an original title** (not "HUMA 2920 Final Paper" or other cringe-inducing, generic titles that suggest boredom before the reader has even started).
5. Your paper should be properly cited using the MLA or APA citation system (available online). **Failure to cite sources properly constitutes plagiarism**, a violation of York's academic regulations. **You must include a bibliography** (a.k.a. works cited list) at the end.
6. Your paper should be carefully organized, with a clear introduction and conclusion and a paragraph structure that flows and reflects a logical ordering of ideas. Check carefully to eliminate any faulty paragraphs and to insure that your ideas are presented in a clear and coherent fashion.
7. Your paper should be analytical and argumentative in nature and not consist merely of excessive summaries of source material or general background information. One way to check if you have produced an essay that meets these requirements is to have someone to read the essay and then ask them the following question: "What was my major point?" If they cannot answer this question, consider revisions to increase the focus of your essay.