

## Assignment 2: Abstract

HUMA2920 – 2006-07

The purpose of this assignment is to get you started on exploring a theoretical framework for your final research paper. More specifically, this assignment is an opportunity for you to develop the skills that will help you in the research proposal and annotated bibliography that will be part of your final research project. You do *not* need to have finalized your research topic in order to do this assignment. However, we hope that by the end of this assignment you will have some idea of what your research topic may be and how you may go about conceptualizing it.

This assignment has two parts. **You MUST hand in both parts of the assignment and you MUST provide and keep to the word limits.** The two parts of the assignment should be stapled together and handed in as hard copy. Double space your lines; use Times or Times New Roman, 12 point; number your pages; **NO TITLE PAGE**, but make sure your name and tutorial number are on the top sheet. **DUE DATE: 27/OCT/06, beginning of lecture.**

### **Part 1: Abstract** (on page 1 of the assignment)

The abstract is an opportunity for you to condense a scholarly article into a short, descriptive form in only **100-150 words** (min-max word count). An abstract is a summary that covers **ALL** major arguments made by the author and indicates how the author supports her/his arguments (what kind of data, what reasoning, what theory and methodology). The abstract does not necessarily cover historical details, minor sub-arguments, statistics, etc. Also, the abstract does not directly quote from the author (although you can use the specialized terminology that the author uses). Finally, the abstract does not include your opinion or critique of the source. The challenges will be a) to recognize and understand the author's arguments, b) to identify the research and/or reasoning that support the arguments, and c) to capture all of this in your own words in a limited space.

Select one of the following articles as your source (one is online, the rest are in the course kit):

Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding."

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

Kellner, Douglas. "Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle."

Habermas, Jurgen. "The Public Sphere."

Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." (from p. 126 of the course kit to the end)

DeCerteau, Michel. "Making Do."

We suggest that you spend some time reading as many abstracts as you can before you complete this assignment, as this will help you get a sense of how they are written and what your task is. For information on abstracting, consult:

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/bizwrite/abstracts.html>

<http://www.rpi.edu/web/writingcenter/abstracts.html>

You must provide the bibliographic reference for this source according to MLA style. You may find a good online guide for MLA at:

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/cite5.html>

Bibliographic reference does not count towards the word limit. Provide a word count for the abstract alone.

## Part 2: Usefulness and Critique of the Source

This part should be on separate sheets from the abstract. Give it an **original title**. In **300-400 words** (provide a word count at the end), explain how 1) the theoretical framework in your source article may help you think up a topic and develop ideas for your research project and 2) what may be the strengths or weaknesses in this theoretical framework. There are two critical tasks here: 1) to recognize the strengths and limitations of the this theory with regards to understanding and investigating the impacts of ICTs and critique it on that basis; and 2) to project/envision how this theory might be relevant to and useful in your research topic (the more specific you can get here is the better). Hand this in on a separate sheet stapled to your abstract. For this part, pay close attention to and try to address all of the following (not necessarily in the same order):

1. What ways of thinking does this source propose with regards to information and communication technologies (ICTs)?
2. What questions does this source raise with regards to ICTs?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this theory with regards to ICTs? What critique can you bring to this source? What else might be important to pay attention to?
4. How might this source help you conceptualize a research project? What ICTs could best be analyzed using the theoretical framework in this source?
5. What initial hypothesis could this source offer with regards to your (potential) research topic?

### Answers to some common questions, or five big BUTs:

1. Yes, your opinion is needed for this assignment BUT it should be backed up with examples, solid argumentation, and clear prose.
2. We do not assume any expertise (beyond being a student in 2920) on the topics covered in these articles BUT you should choose the one you feel most comfortable with in terms of subject area.
3. The above questions should provide lots of issues for you to explore BUT they do not constitute an outline for the final version of the essay.
4. We are happy to help you if you have questions BUT you need to allow 3-5 days for a response and not expect a “recipe” for writing your essay.
5. You may use external material to support your analysis (this must be properly cited) BUT you do not have to do this if you can provide an adequate treatment with your own insights.

Remember: Your essay should be typed, double-spaced, 1” margins (check your defaults), 12-point Times or Times New Roman font with all pages stapled together.

### DUE DATE: 27/OCT/06, beginning of lecture

#### Late Policy:

**Up to 3 Days: 20% Reduction**

**4-7 Days: 40% Reduction**

**More than 7 Days: Zero Points**

(You may e-mail your essay to me in order to “fix” the completion date, but you must also turn in a hard copy in the very first class meeting after the e-mail submission. This policy only applies to late papers—on time submission requires a hard copy on the due date.)