

Final Paper Guidelines

(portions from Jean Stockard, CRN 15109)

Please feel free to bring a draft of your paper to me at any time for comments and suggestions. I can promise that this will result in an improved grade if you take the time to turn criticism to your advantage.

Basic Things to Consider

First, you must remember that you need to be as objective as possible in writing your paper. This is not the place to spout your own beliefs or prejudices. Instead, the paper is designed to help you seriously and carefully study and analyze a pseudo-scientific topic as objectively as possible. You must do everything in your power to make sure that you are as fair and open-minded as possible in gathering, analyzing, and presenting information. In the final discussion section of your paper you will be allowed to present your own opinions, but they will still need to be supported by the data. If you are not fair and careful, and if you do not have solid data to bolster your arguments, you will only hurt yourself.

Second, remove the word “prove” from your vocabulary. We cannot “prove” things in scientific research as we can with logical proofs in mathematics. Instead we find evidence that supports or does not support hypotheses. Try to avoid the use of the first person in your writing. Some words are continually misused grammatically, so be careful. For example, say “data are” since data is plural (datum is the singular form, as in “datum is”). Spelling and grammar are very important, so check and re-check your writing. Try to avoid emotive or superlative terms in your writing. Generally, the fewer adjectives you use, the better the paper will be. Minimize the number of impersonal pronouns, such as “they, he, she.” Use of specific nouns almost always makes the writing more powerful and interesting.

Do not write like you talk! Forget email! Critical writing is a formal and serious endeavor and is made ineffective by the use of slang and conversational or talkative writing styles.

I will deduct points for spelling and grammatical mistakes and if there are extensive stylistic or writing problems that inhibit my understanding of the topic and/or the topical points you are trying to communicate.

The following site has several references for styles in writing your paper. I do not insist on a particular style but it should be formal and consistent throughout your paper.

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/citing/>

Science and Pseudo-Science Concepts

It is critical that you utilize the critical concepts that you have learned in class while writing your final paper. Be sure to present evidence for your assertions, check references, look for logical consistency, be aware of misuse of scientific terminology and concepts. This should be your connecting theme in any topic.

The point of this class is to provide each student with the tools that they can use in evaluating any future claim or belief. The idea is not to obtain proof or certainty; the idea is to obtain an understanding of the facts, beyond a reasonable doubt, while still maintaining the concept that all justified knowledge is tentative and fallible.

Plagiarism

Students should be very wary of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a very serious offense, and occurs when you use the words of someone else and attribute them to yourself. Sanctions can be severe, including revocation of a degree (see <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>). It is absolutely essential that all material taken from other authors be acknowledged and cited correctly and that any material that is directly quoted is indicated by quotation marks. This applies to both printed material and material taken from the web.

Headings and Format

All material should be double spaced, in 12 point font, and include page numbers. To help you keep track of each draft and changes in your work over time you should use a header that includes the date. You will not include this header in the final copy of your paper. You must turn in hard copies of your work as well as send a copy via e-mail. When printing your paper, please use only one side of the page. This makes it easier to provide comments.

A consistent heading structure should be used throughout. One good strategy is the following. Chapter headings should be centered and in 14 point font. A level headings should be centered, underlined, and 12 point font (matching the text). B level heads should be flush with the margin, 12 point font, and underlined. C level heads should be underlined and indented at the beginning of the paragraph.

Again, please consult with me during this process as you write your early drafts of your paper.

References

References should be cited in the text using the author's last name, year of publication, and page numbers where appropriate. For example: (Chapin and Kaiser 1979), (Reade 1985, 81), (Florida Department of Environmental Regulation 1987, 129-143). Page numbers are necessary whenever a specific argument or finding, rather than the general focus of a work, is cited. All works cited should be listed alphabetically by author's last name in a double-spaced list at the end of the manuscript. Examples of the bibliographic form to be used are given below.

Florida Department of Environmental Regulation. 1987. *Agency Functional Plan*. Tallahassee, Fla.
an article in an edited book:

Harris, Britton. 1986. Quantitative models of urban development: Their role in metropolitan policy-making. In *Issues in Urban Economics*, eds. Harvey S. Perloff Jr. and Lowdon Wingo, 121-133. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press.
a journal article:

Harris, Britton, and Michael Batty. 1993. Locational models, geographical information, and planning support systems. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 12(3):184-198.
a book:

Innes, Judith E. 1990. *Knowledge and Public Policy: The Search for Meaningful Indicators. 2nd edition*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.