PAPER GUIDELINES

Several class sessions this quarter are allocated for research project development. We will provide overviews of existing data sets that may be used to test research hypotheses related to course concepts. The class will divide into at least two groups to complete different projects. You will need to help refine your project by reviewing the research, examining available datasets, and suggesting hypotheses to be tested. As a group we will decide on specific hypotheses to be tested, test them using SPSS, and outline the methodology and results. You will be responsible for individually proposing a research project in the project overview, for reviewing research literature related to the project you are involved with, and writing a final paper that includes an individually constructed introduction and discussion section, together with some version of the methods and results sections we create in our small groups.

As described below, the project overview is worth 7 points and the final paper is worth 30. You have an opportunity to earn up to 10 additional writing points for assignments that will take place throughout the quarter. One point will be assigned for active participation in (and preparation for) each of the three writing workshops planned for this quarter. To earn the point for a particular day you must come prepared with articles/documents, and fully participate in the activities. Other points come from the annotated bibliography (described below), and paper drafts.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Project Overview. Due on 2/10. 7 Points
You should make use of available project codebooks and the research literature to propose a research project that relates to the topic of this class and is that may be conducted using the datasets available to us. Think about what topics, variables, and questions, are of most interest to you, conduct a preliminary literature search related to those topics, and propose 1 or 2 hypotheses that you believe could be addressed with our data. At a minimum, your hypotheses should involve a total of 3 variables of interest. As will be discussed in class, these variables could be two independent variables and one dependent variable, one independent variable and two dependent variables, or maybe one independent and dependent variable, together with a covariate or a mediating variable. Your project overview should have three parts.

A. Identification of the constructs/variables of interest, together with a statement that the data are available in one of our datasets (identify which dataset). You don’t need a lot of elaboration here—just be specific about what measures are of interest. (1 point)
B. A preliminary hypothesis or two about how those variables are related. (2 points)
C. Citations for between 3 and 5 references that suggest that your hypotheses have merit, and that this is an interesting/important area for future study. Provide the APA style reference for each article and write a sentence or two explaining its relevance to your hypothesis. (3 points)

We will share these ideas as a class and use them to generate the projects we will be undertaking this quarter.

Annotated Bibliography. Due 2/24. up to 5 points
As soon as your research topic is clear (i.e., after we have formed class groups, determined topics, etc.) you should begin more in-depth exploration into the topic of interest. Some core articles will likely be consistent across classmates, but you should be sure you are looking carefully at the literature. Be sure that you have included as many important articles as possible...
in your annotated bibliography, as it will form the basis for the introduction you need to write. You will earn ½ point for each relevant reference that is appropriately listed and explained, up to a maximum of 5 points (10 references, though you may of course include more. An annotated bibliography provides an APA style reference for and briefly describes references that are important for your topic. These articles will help to form the basis for the literature review for your final paper. The bibliography itself should consist of:

A. An APA-style reference for an article that you have in your possession and that you plan to include in the final paper.

B. Under each reference, include 2-3 sentences that describe how this reference will be useful for the project and your paper.

Revised Introduction. Due 3/7. 
Please see the guidelines below on writing an introduction. You will bring a draft your literature review to our third writing workshop. You should use that session to revise that draft, and continue to improve it before turning in your revised introduction on March 7. I will read the introductions that weekend, and return it to you with comments, on March 10, so that those comments can be incorporated into your final paper.

Draft Discussion. 
Please turn in a rough draft of your discussion as soon as possible after your group has finished data analysis. This is your opportunity to get my feedback on this portion of your final paper.

Final Paper. Due 3/18 
This paper will include your carefully revised introduction (that will have addressed the feedback I gave you on March 10th), the methods and results section that we worked on in class (you may need to refine, as discussed in class), a discussion section, references, and any necessary tables/figures. Please also turn in the marked up version of your introduction that I returned on March 10, as well as any discussion or other drafts.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Writing, revising, and feedback. The paper should be written according to APA style, and writing style does count. Be sure to include topic sentences for each paragraph, and check for spelling and grammatical errors. You are expected to use the guidelines and tips from our writing sessions to improve your paper. In addition to these scheduled writing workshops, you must get my feedback on drafts of work. This will happen automatically when you turn in your draft introduction. However, you will clearly benefit from feedback on your discussion section as well. Please work in advance and give me a few days to get feedback to you. If I get several in one day it will take longer. Please give me a hard copy to review for feedback. It would be a good idea to see the Writing Center (at www.wwu.edu/~writepro) if you know that writing is challenging for you.

References. You need to list your references, according to APA style, on a separate page of the paper. Your citations to those references in the body of the paper should also be in APA style. Please make sure you provide complete references on drafts.

Plagiarism
- Be very clear about the sources for your ideas.
- This means you should document the sources you cite, regardless of whether they are direct quotations or restated ideas.
• Take notes on articles before writing your paper. Don’t write using the original article; use your notes instead.
• You should generally avoid quotes.

General writing tips

• Verbs
  o Past tense for things in the past -- what someone did, wrote, found.
  o Anything already published is in the past.
  o Present perfect for ongoing things -- when research has continued to use the same methods since an original study
  o Present for theory -- The theory claims that the following should happen.

• Transitions
  o Please use them between each paragraph. You need to give the reader a sense of how your ideas are connected
  o You may make topical sub-headings in your introduction, but that heading alone is not an effective transition. You still need to look at the overall flow of your ideas across paragraphs and pages.
  o You should make transitions to help the reader follow your line of reasoning. These are most helpful if provided at the beginning of each new paragraph, providing a connection to the previous paragraph.

• Reading out loud is on great way to catch missed words and type-o’s. I use an online program for this, or sometimes read it out loud to myself.
• The Bem article online has great information about writing a research paper. Also refer to this if you feel stumped.

Turning in your assignments. Turn in your papers at the start of class on the day they are due. One half of a letter grade will automatically be deducted from any paper that is not turned in at the start of class. A half letter grade is deducted for each portion of a 24 hour period a paper is late. I require printed copies of the papers for grading.

PARTS OF THE PAPER

Introduction: The point of the introduction is to describe what motivates this particular study. You should start by explaining why the topic that you are studying is important and interesting in general. Then the intro will get a bit more specific, and you should discuss why this issue matters theoretically. This is where you review the relevant literature. You have already collected relevant papers, so you just need to describe them. You need to clearly identify and describe each of the constructs you are examining in your research project and lead the reader to a clear understanding of the hypotheses being tested through the analysis. This means you must justify and explain each of the variables used in the study and how you expect them to be related.

The minimum number of papers to cite is 10, but more than that would likely be better. The exact number of citations needed will depend on the available literature and on your topic. It is fine if your introduction includes articles that we have read for class, but it should definitely include many others that were not presented or discussed as part of our class. There is no page minimum, but I would expect this section would be 8-10 pages. Please don’t exceed 13 pages.

The key is to make sure that you have justified the variables you are using for the study, and that the hypotheses to be tested are completely clear and logical by the end of the introduction. The introduction generally has three major parts.
1. The opening. You should start by explaining why the topic that you are studying is important and interesting in general. However, you should try to get orient the reader both the general area of study and to your specific study in the first paragraph or so. You should do this at the level of constructs (by talking about what factors are thought to influence the DV you will be studying) not operational definitions.

Tip. The first 1-2 paragraphs should interest the reader in your topic, and should clearly signal the direction your introduction is taking. By the end of the first 1-2 paragraphs it should be clear exactly what constructs you are exploring through your research, and which are your independent and dependent variables. It is usually a good idea to express this clearly by saying something like “Therefore, the purpose of this study is to…”.

2. Theory and history background. Then the intro will get a bit more specific, and you should discuss why this issue matters theoretically. This is where you review the relevant literature. You will have already collected relevant papers, so you just need to describe them. You need to explain why each IV would be expected to influence the DV, why your DV is interesting and important. Justify your hypotheses using previous literature. Give only as much detail on a study as is needed to clarify your point. Often it works well to group similar or opposing studies together.

Tip. Avoid the temptation to spend a great deal of time elaborating on specific confounds or control variables that may be correlated with our main interests. At most, you should mention them in a single paragraph in the introduction and raise them again in the discussion section. Don’t spend too much time on anything that is not of primary theoretical interest.

3. Current research. The most specific part of the introduction is the last paragraph, which will answer the questions: What variables were examined? What results are expected? You need to clearly state hypotheses and/or research questions. You must give reasons for each hypothesis you state, and these reasons should come from the literature you cited above. This should be a summary/reframing of the logic you built in the previous section.

Method and Results Sections. We will work on these sections as a class, and more detail will be provided as we go along.

Discussion. In the discussion section you should interpret and discuss the implications of the results. The discussion goes from the specific to the general. Open the discussion with clear statements of support or non-support for each of your original hypotheses. What were the major results? How do they fit with the psychological research on this topic? You should examine, interpret, and qualify the results. The discussion should be guided by the following questions: What have I contributed to the field? How has my study helped to resolve the original problems/questions? What conclusions and implications can be drawn from the study? If the hypotheses weren’t supported, you should discuss why you think you failed to support them. Identifying practical implications of the study, suggesting improvements on the methods, or proposing new research is appropriate. Show that you understand the limitations of the study. Is the internal validity strong? How about the external validity? End on a positive note—and don’t assume your null findings are due to methodological failures! You should conclude your paper with a discussion of the implications of this research for the literature as a whole. Why is your study important, and what does it add to the literature.

I would expect that you would cite at least 2-3 new articles in the discussion section.
RETURN THIS SHEET WITH YOUR FINAL PAPER

_____ /15  Introduction
   • First paragraph should pique interest and clearly introduce the topic, and clarify direction.
   • Should clearly articulate theory(ies) on which study was based. (Was the theory understood and correctly applied?)
   • All terms and concepts should be clear to a naive reader
   • The flow of the introduction should set the groundwork for the hypotheses and methods and results, as they are reported in the paper (not necessarily as originally conceived)
   • Hypotheses should be clearly articulated at the end of the introduction.

_____ /2  Methods, Results, Tables, etc.
   • Should exist and should be correctly formatted
   • Any necessary customization should be completed

_____ /8  Discussion
   • Major results should be summarized, qualified, and explained.
   • The first paragraph should clearly summarize the major results.
   • How does this research fit with previous research on this topic? How is your work consistent/inconsistent with previous research/theory?
   • What experiments would you suggest for future research? Relate these to weaknesses/problems with your design.
   • What are the implications of the study, future directions, how would you generalize it, apply it, etc? How does this study fit with previous research?

_____ /2  Attentiveness to suggestions for revision made on that draft

_____ /1  APA style used for references, statistics, title page, graphs, etc.

_____ /2  Writing and proofreading
   • Paper free of misspellings and typing errors?
   • Good transitions between paragraphs?
   • Is writing clear (no run-on sentences, colloquial expressions, jargon)

_____ /30  TOTAL GRADE