

Final Paper Assignment Description

Paper Goals:

This final paper is the capstone assignment of COM 431 since it requires you to use all that you have learned in order to produce a refined piece of rhetorical criticism. In the process of writing the paper, you should be able to:

- justify the artifact and your methodological choice
- advance and defend an insightful interpretation
- explain the relevance and applicability of the interpretation.

Due Date: Papers are due by noon in my office mailbox (CMU 102) on 12/10.

Paper Format:

1. Introduction (5-10% of your paper length)

In this section, you should introduce your analysis. You should provide a bit of background, identify your research questions(s), and state your thesis for your interpretation.

This section should answer the reader's question: what is this paper about and how is it organized?

2. Study description (15-20% of your paper length)

In this section, you should describe the artifact you are examining. In doing so, you should provide a description of the rhetorical situation/background of the artifact. You can discuss why the artifact is worth analyzing and/or talk about the consequences of the artifact (was it positively or negatively received?). After discussing the artifact, you need to talk about your method. In explaining how you approached your study, you should describe what theory of criticism you used as well as what steps you took to generate your data. For example, if you looked at multiple texts, explain how you determined which texts to examine.

This section should answer the reader's question: what are you studying, why is this artifact worth studying, and how did you study the artifact?

3. Analysis (40-60% of your paper length)

In this section, you should explain and discuss your research findings. Remember that you are making an argument for your interpretation, so you should use evidence from the artifact to back up your analytical claims. There is no standard way of organizing this section since it will depend heavily on the nature of your artifact and study. However, you might try to organize this section according to your findings. For example, if there are three main metaphors you found in your artifact, this section could be broken up into a discussion of each metaphor. As you discuss your findings, you are generally doing two things: proving that the finding exists and explaining what the finding means for your critique.

This section should answer the reader's question: what are your findings and what do they mean for the artifact?

4. Implications and conclusion (15-25% of your paper length)

In this final section, you should take a step back from the close reading of your texts and talk a bit about the larger implications of your analysis. For example, if you looked at specific presidential apology, talk about how your findings help explain other presidential apologies. If you looked at a particular ad campaign, explain how your critique applies to other similar campaigns.

This section should answer the reader's question: how do your findings apply to other artifacts?

Evaluation

Your paper will be assessed based on how well you accomplish the paper goals, the style of your writing, and the level of your insight.

Paper Parts

Introduction (5 points)

- opening
- research question
- thesis

Study description (25 points)

- artifact description
- justification of study
- description of method and study design
- justification of method and study design

Analysis (60 points)

- clarity and quality of findings
- clarity and quality of interpretation

Implications and conclusion (10 points)

- identification of implications
- discussion of implications

Overall concerns that affect the grade

- Overall quality of insight
- Overall Quality of writing
- Paper style and citation: point

Although I have itemized the points here, a failing in one can seriously impact the others. If your study is designed poorly (or describe the design poorly), this will impact your analysis and your implications. The paper will be read holistically and, as such, a failing in one area can't really be compartmentalized.

You might benefit by visiting the Communication Writing Center in CMU 222. Their hours are T & W 10:30-1:00 (walk in) and 3:30-5:00 (by appointment). You can learn more about the center and set-up an appointment by going to <http://www.com.washington.edu/Program/Undergrad/cwchours.html>.