

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER/PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The final research paper or project for this course may take the form of a traditional research essay (article length, or about 15-20 typed pages) or it may combine academic, researched essay writing with other formats, such as:

- a secondary education unit with detailed, researched lesson plans
- a digital or print multimedia project
- a digital or physical exhibit or installation or archive
- a local oral or written history on a contemporary event
- or some other format approved by the professor before Oct. 31

Whether you decide to write a traditional paper or craft a project, the topic must relate to contemporary American culture and how this period is defined or characterized.

Thus, your paper or project will likely address one or a combination of the following general topics:

- **DEFINITIONAL ARGUMENT:** use an American text or texts to define/characterize contemporary America or one of its subtopics, such as postmodernism, neoliberalism, environmental crisis, etc.
- **THEORY ANALYSIS:** apply a specific theory (e.g., feminism, Marxism, new historicism, queer theory, ecocriticism, etc.) to an American text or texts to analyze contemporary America or one of its subtopics
- **SPECIFIC AUTHOR/ARTIST/TEXT STUDY:** analyze theme/form; discuss literary-artistic, cultural, and/or historical significance
- **TEACHING APPLICATIONS:** issues in and/or approaches to teaching the contemporary American period for a specific discipline or across disciplines
- **GENRE/DISCIPLINE STUDY:** analyze one or a combination of the following: contemporary American literature (fiction, nonfiction, poetry), film, television, magazines, visual arts, music, dance, history, philosophy, architecture, geography, science, technology, politics, etc.
- **PERIOD/EVENT STUDY:** analyze a specific period or event within the larger contemporary American period, e.g., the 1980s, 1990s, 9/11, etc.
- **COMPARATIVE STUDY:** compare and contrast representative American views/texts/events with British/Irish/African/Spanish, etc.
- **SOME COMBINATION OF THESE TOPICS**

YOU SHOULD SELECT YOUR TOPIC, THE FORMAT THE FINAL PAPER OR PROJECT WILL TAKE (AND SEEK INSTRUCTOR APPROVAL AND/OR ADVICE), AND BEGIN YOUR RESEARCH AND WRITING NO LATER THAN **OCTOBER 31**.

MEETING WITH YOUR INSTRUCTOR THROUGHOUT THE TOPIC/FORMAT SELECTION, RESEARCH, DRAFTING, REVISION, AND FINAL WRITING STAGES IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED.

THE FINAL PAPER OR PROJECT SHOULD INCORPORATE THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- **Attention to the scholarly conversation about the topic:** incorporate at least five peer-reviewed journal articles or books related to your topic; the paper or project must demonstrate how others have or have not addressed the topic
- **A clear theoretical-methodological lens:** incorporate a clear theoretical-methodological approach to your topic
- **Close analysis of the primary and/or secondary text or texts to support and flesh out your argument:** you may use texts assigned in this class or others. Do not let examples “speak for themselves”: explain in detail for your reader how and why the examples support your analysis
- **Perfect citation (MLA preferred):** see academic honesty reminder below

THE PAPER’S OR PROJECT’S INTRODUCTION SHOULD ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What is the scholarly conversation that has already taken place about this topic and text(s)?
- How does your paper or project contribute to this conversation? For instance, will you disagree with an accepted analysis? Will you provide a different/new lens with which to address this topic?

FORMAT AND GRADING CRITERION FOR PAPERS AND PROJECTS

All written work should be double-spaced, 12 or 10 point font (Times or New Roman) with one-inch margins. **Page numbers should appear in the upper right-hand corner.** All papers and projects should include a title. A title page, however, is not necessary.

Before passing in your final paper or project I encourage you to drop by my office hours to chat about your analysis, look over your thesis statement, discuss your format and organization, etc. No revisions will be allowed. Put your very best effort into the final draft.

ACADEMIC HONESTY REMINDER

The American Studies program expects all the work you turn in to be your own. If you are found to have represented the work or ideas of others as your own—intentionally or unintentionally—you will face serious consequences, as follows:

1. Any student who is found to have plagiarized a paper or assignment, in full or in part, must meet with the professor of the class for which the paper is written.
2. The professor will review the suspect work with the student.
3. If this is the first time the student has been found to have plagiarized, he/she will receive an "F" for that paper or assignment and/or the course.
4. For second offenses of plagiarism, the student will receive an F for the course.

Additionally, and in accordance with Stockton College policy (<http://www2.stockton.edu/bulletin/undergrad/chap7.pdf>) the literature program faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students may be subject to discipline by the college, such as being placed on academic probation or expelled.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER EVALUATION SHEET

FINAL COURSE GRADE: _____/1000

Name: _____

Paper/Project Evaluation: _____/400

Criterion	Superior	Good	Average	Poor	Unacceptable
Assignment Guidelines Followed					
The paper/project effectively uses academic terminology, theory, & criticism to craft an original argument about contemporary America supported with appropriate evidence.					
The author carefully formats the paper/project for easy of access and reading. Suggested: 10-12 point font; double-spaced; numbered pages in the upper right corner.					
Thesis/Topic/Argument (Intellectual Development):					
The topic is clearly and appropriately defined, focused, and supported.					
The paper/project has a clear thesis appropriately placed in the introduction.					
The thesis is supported with specific, appropriate, and persuasive evidence, examples, and details.					
Outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately (MLA format preferred).					
The valid reasoning within the essay demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic's complexities.					
Organization (Expressiveness & Intellectual Development):					
The organization is appropriate for the purpose and subject of the essay/project.					
The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience and contains a focused thesis statement.					
Paragraphs are controlled by explicit topic sentences.					
Paragraphs are well developed; they progress logically from what precedes them. If appropriate, headings and subheadings are used.					
The conclusion moves beyond a mere restatement of the introduction and underscores the topic's significance.					
Style (Expressiveness):					
The prose is clear, readable, and sometimes memorable.					
The writing contains few surface errors, none of which seriously undermines the overall effectiveness of the writing for educated readers.					
The writing demonstrates fluency in stylistic flourishes (e.g., subordination, variation of sentence and paragraph lengths, interesting vocabulary).					

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER-PROJECT RUBRIC—DETAILED EXPLANATION

ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES FOLLOWED:

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Demonstrates a familiarity with academic terms and theories in general and of the criticism of the text(s) being analyzed and incorporates them smoothly into an argument
- _____ The writer's rhetorical stance is clearly articulated
- _____ Page guidelines met or exceeded without fluff or margin and font play; every word needed.

B (GOOD)

- _____ Shows a familiarity with academic terms and theories as well as related critical texts, and incorporates them into an argument
- _____ The writer's rhetorical stance is clearly stated or implied
- _____ Page guidelines met or exceeded without fluff or margin and font play.

C (AVERAGE)

- _____ Demonstrates some familiarity with academic terms and theories as well as related critical texts, but does not incorporate them clearly
- _____ The writer's rhetorical stance is implied but not clearly stated
- _____ Page guidelines met or exceeded without margin and font play, but some material may not be incorporated well.

D (POOR)

- _____ The paper displays little familiarity with academic terms, theories, or criticism
- _____ No rhetorical stance is articulated
- _____ Page guidelines nearly met, but material may not be incorporated well.

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- _____ The paper displays no familiarity with academic terms, theories, or criticism
- _____ No rhetorical stance is apparent
- _____ Page guidelines not met.

THESIS/TOPIC/ARGUMENT (INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT):

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Insightful, cogent response to a text and the questions that the text raises
- _____ Reasoning is persuasive and supported by detailed, relevant examples
- _____ The central point or thesis is focused for a specific audience, clearly defined, and gracefully stated
- _____ Research is thorough, well documented, and effectively integrated into the text. Perfect documentation (MLA preferred)

B (GOOD)

- _____ Provides a thoughtful, well-developed response to a text and the questions the text raises
- _____ Reasoning is sensible and supported by appropriate examples
- _____ The central idea or thesis is focused and clearly defined
- _____ There is clear evidence of research, but it not always appropriately used or effectively integrated into the text. Near perfect citation (MLA preferred)

C (AVERAGE)

- _____ Presents a clear response to a text and the questions the text raises
- _____ Paper is developed with acceptable reasoning and adequate examples, but these examples are sometime sketchy, vague, or repetitious
- _____ The central point or thesis is apparent but not clearly stated
- _____ There is evidence of research, but it is not always appropriately used or effectively integrated into the text. Good citation (MLA preferred)

D (POOR)

- _____ Responds to a text in an illogical and/or incomplete way
- _____ While some good examples are provided, for the most part the essay is underdeveloped
- _____ The central point or thesis is confusing, sometimes contradictory, and/or not explicitly stated
- _____ There is little evidence of research, and that is poorly documented and ineffectively used to develop the paper. Poor citation (MLA preferred)

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- _____ Presents a simplistic, inappropriate and/or incoherent response to a text
- _____ Examples are lacking or misused
- _____ The central point is not apparent
- _____ No research is evident. Unacceptable citation (MLA preferred)

ORGANIZATION (EXPRESSIVENESS & INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT):

A (SUPERIOR)

- _____ Organization strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are appropriate to the topic and consistently controlled
- _____ Paragraph breaks correspond to shifts in topic; paragraph topics are focused and clearly articulated; transitions are smooth and logical

B (GOOD)

- _____ Organizational strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are appropriate to the topic and usually controlled
- _____ Paragraph breaks correspond to shifts in topic; the paragraph topics are usually focused; and transitions are attempted although they are sometimes weak or ineffective

C (AVERAGE)

- Organizational strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are usually controlled
- Paragraph breaks usually correspond to shifts in topic; the paragraph topics are usually focused; some transitions are attempted but are weak or ineffective

D (POOR)

- Organizational strategies (e.g., chronological, spatial, or emphatic; topic headings) are only partially in control and applied inconsistently
- Paragraph breaks are arbitrary and paragraph topics are not always apparent; transitions are choppy

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- Organizational strategies are not apparent
- Paragraph breaks are arbitrary and paragraph topics are not always apparent; transitions are lacking.

STYLE (EXPRESSIVENESS):

A (SUPERIOR)

- Original imagery may be used to convey thoughts and emotions
- Ideas are expressed clearly and directly; sentences are varied and consistently well-constructed
- Final draft is close to error-free

B (GOOD)

- No original imagery is used, or imagery may be ineffective
- Ideas are usually expressed clearly, but prose is characterized by a lack of directness and/or conciseness; occasionally imprecise word choice; little sentence variety; and occasional major and minor errors in grammar occur
- Final draft has one section that may contain several errors but the majority of the paper is close to error-free

C (AVERAGE)

- Imagery lacks effectiveness
- Ideas are usually expressed clearly but the prose is characterized by a lack of directness and/or lack of conciseness; frequently imprecise work choice; little sentence variety; occasional major errors in grammar and frequent minor errors
- Several sections of the final draft require final editing for errors

D (POOR)

- Imagery is generally lacking and/or inappropriately used
- The paper relies on summary rather than analysis
- Most the final draft require final editing for errors

F (UNACCEPTABLE)

- Imagery is generally lacking and/or inappropriately used
- The paper relies on summary rather than analysis
- The paper is riddled with errors