

## Research Paper Assignment

### Introduction:

The purpose of the writing workshop is to teach you, the student, how to read and think critically, and to communicate clearly and concisely in a professional style. This assignment is designed to provide a medium through which you can improve your research and writing skills while increasing your knowledge about the criminal justice system.

The final product of the assignment will be a paper on the general topic of policing. The more specific thesis of the paper will be left to the student and may concern, but is not limited to: training programs, education, practices, stress, or policies. For example, the paper may be an evaluation of a program or policy. All papers must incorporate one theory related to the chosen topic and thesis.

The principal skills to be developed are analytical/critical thinking and writing via the research process, and the use of documentation to support the thesis. Therefore, there will be substantial practice reading and paraphrasing articles from scholarly journals.

The task of writing the paper will be spread throughout the semester into several steps, inclusive of choosing a specific topic and a thesis, finding evidence to support the thesis, learning to critique scholarly research, developing an outline, writing a draft, peer review, and finally composing the best paper you have ever written! This paper is intended to be a fairly complete exploration of the topic, culminating with a recommendation for specific action intended to address the issue(s) being examined.

The process of writing the paper has been broken down into 6 steps, which will be graded and/or assessed, and weighted separately from your final research paper. Each step is described in detail in separate handouts; however, here are brief descriptions of each:

### Step One: Choosing a Topic and Thesis + Oral Presentation

Your instructors have chosen the general topic of “policing”, but you must develop a more specific topic. In the course of narrowing the topic, you will need to conduct document research on the web and/or at the library. Choose a topic that can be handled in a relatively short (8-10 page) paper.

Once you have selected your topic you will need to develop a thesis. The thesis differs from the topic in that the topic tells what you are writing about, while the thesis states what you are going to say about the topic. For example, if the topic is "Does having an education decrease the likelihood of an officer using excessive force?" then one might develop the following thesis: “Police officers with a college education are less likely to excessive force than officers with only a high school diploma.” Keep in mind that you are not being graded on your opinion, but on your ability to communicate and support a point of view (your thesis). Supporting the thesis means utilizing evidence to clarify and support the point of view, and that evidence comes from your research.

Topic and Thesis Oral Presentation: This will be a graded oral presentation, using only a 4X6 note card. The day of your presentation you will turn in a type written, double-spaced description of your topic and thesis (minimum of one half-page in length). A handout will be provided online that will further address the details of this assignment.

### **Step Two: Literature Search**

A list of 10 references (scholarly journal articles) in APA format will need to be compiled. The references must be empirical or theoretical journal articles, which are from scholarly journals. Newspaper articles, magazine articles, “bulletins” or newsletters are not acceptable. See the following URL for a description of how to differentiate scholarly journal articles from popular magazine articles:

[http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/articles\\_scholarly.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/articles_scholarly.htm)

For additional help and examples of APA in-text citations and references, the following web page provides links to several sources: [http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/citing.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm)

### **Step Three: Article Critiques I - III**

The Article Critiques are more in depth analyses of four scholarly research articles. The articles which you will be required to critique have been predetermined by the 100W instructors. You will be informed of what the articles will be at the appropriate times throughout the semester, at least one week in advance of the due date for each critique. You will be preparing a 2-3 page critique for each of the four articles (not including the cover page). The articles will cover various topics related to policing. Students will be expected to utilize knowledge gained throughout the semester regarding how to understand and critique scholarly research, and apply that knowledge to sources used for the research paper.

Article Critiques will be turned in throughout the semester. Article Critiques must be submitted to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) before class, the day they are due. If required by your instructor, you will be submitting printed “Originality Reports” from [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) with each Article Critique. If your instructor requires e-mail submission of assignments, printed copies of “Originality Reports” will not be necessary. Originality Reports are usually generated fairly quickly (i.e., within minutes); however, if the site is experiencing a lot of “traffic,” the report generation process can take up to a full day. A handout(s) will be provided online that will further address the details of the article critiques. **It is expected that you will utilize the Originality Reports to fix potential plagiarism in your work, as such; you should be submitting your Article Critiques to turnitin.com at least one day before they are due.**

### **Step Four: Preparation of Outline**

A detailed outline is necessary before writing a paper. Preparing a detailed outline is not difficult once the research has been substantially completed. Creating an outline is a matter of organizing the discussion of your research in support of the thesis. A handout will be provided online that will further address the details of this assignment.

### **Step Five: Writing a draft**

Getting started on the first draft of a paper is often very difficult. However, having all the preliminary work done will simplify the task. The draft is just an elaboration of the outline. At this point, provided you have kept up, the paper should practically write itself. Keep in mind that this is just a draft and the sooner you begin this step the better. You should be able to write more freely and actually enjoy this process if you are not too pressed for time.

It is expected that your paper will incorporate relevant information from your chosen scholarly sources, appropriate to your chosen topic. Your paper will exemplify the development of your analytical thinking and writing skills. You will use headings for each section of your paper, so as to ensure that you include everything that is required. Check the criteria for scoring your research paper as you write your paper to be sure you cover everything. **Research Paper Scoring** guide is attached.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You will be submitting your draft to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). Make sure you allow for ample time to get your Originality Report back from [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). In addition, having the draft completed on time is particularly important, because a significant part of your research project is having your paper Peer Reviewed by a fellow student. Late papers may miss the opportunity for a peer review. Consequently, there will be major deductions for late draft submissions. (Important bonus: A draft that is **exceptional** may be accepted by the instructor as the final paper!)

The draft must include a reference list with a minimum of six total sources: four sources which must be scholarly journal articles (empirical or theoretical), the other two may be from textbooks, or other scholarly literary works. A handout will be provided online that will further address the details of this assignment.

### **Step Six: Peer Review**

You will be having your research paper draft peer reviewed by a fellow student. There will be specific guidelines for the reviews, which will be provided by your instructor. The Peer Review will be a graded assignment. The Peer Review assignment will provide you with constructive feedback on your paper.

### **Culminating Product: Final Draft of the Research Paper**

The text (body) of the final paper must be at least eight (8) neatly typed pages, *exclusive of the title page, abstract, outline and reference page*, typed in standard font (i.e., Times New Roman or Garamond, 12 pt., double-spaced, with 1-inch margins).

It will include:

- I. Title page
- II. Outline of your paper (single-spaced)
- III. Abstract of your paper (1/2 page, maximum, double-spaced)
- IV. Text of paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced)
- V. Reference page in correct APA format (double-spaced)
- VI. Turnitin.com Originality Report attached (if required by your instructor)

**Your paper will be graded based upon the scoring guide, which is attached.**

Student Name:

**FORMAT:** *Did you follow instructions for this assignment?*

(LO3)

2 points each

- Appropriate title page
- Abstract
- Outline included
- Pages numbered appropriately in the header
- Appropriate spacing (double-spaced only, exception of abstract and outline)
- Appropriate headings for each section included
- Correct APA (in-text citations and references)
- Submission to turnitin.com

Point Total =  16 points possible

**CONTENT:** *Did you understand the reading and information you collected for this assignment?*

(LO1; LO2; LO3) *Were you able to incorporate what you learned into a compelling argument?*

6 points each

- Strong, effective opening
- Appropriate and clear coverage of the issue examined
- Integration of theory
- Appropriate use of data from your research, proper sources
- Recommendations
- Effective, compelling closing
- Originality of ideas, demonstrates insight into issues/problem/solution
- Overall organization of paper, met minimum page requirement

Point Total =  48 points possible

**MECHANICS:** *Is writing at college level?*

(LO1; LO3) *Did you proofread your paper before submitting?*

6 points each

- Appropriate grammar
- Appropriate punctuation
- Appropriate use of vocabulary (word choice)
- Syntax (word arrangement in sentences)
- Minimal to no fragments/run-on sentences
- Minimal to no spelling/typing errors

Point Total =  36 points possible

Overall Score:  Percent of total possible:

Comments: