

Final Project Assignment

In your final project, you demonstrate that you can use what you have learned in this course to ask and answer important questions about the relationship of language, thought and action. Your final project will have to answer the following basic course questions:

What? You need to use the course concepts ask an important question about what language does and how it does it.

How? You need to figure out a way to gather evidence to answer the question, by observing people's actual speech behavior, by analyzing communications, by interviewing people about their communication, etc. This project requires you to go out and look at language as it's used in the world—*in detail, close up*.

So What? You need to explain the significance of your answer. Why should we care?

I have high expectations of your final project, which will be worth 20% of your grade. It will be assessed using the same standards as the essay exam. A good final project:

1. It asks an important question and develops a clear and specific answer, explaining What? How? and So What?
2. It supports the answer with direct, thorough and relevant use of ideas from the course. In other words: it answers the question by applying lots of course concepts, in a useful and accurate way.
3. It supports the position with what you've learned through independent investigation and observation of actual language use.
4. It recognizes the possibility of other answers, and argues against them.
5. It is well organized and well enough written to be understandable.

You can work on the final project on your own or with one other person; I expect group projects to be weightier than individual projects.

Here is one final project idea, as an example:

What? Do Engineering majors use different politeness strategies than Communication majors when making requests or complaints to professors? Course concepts: positive and negative politeness strategies; speech acts; repairs; requesting; complaining.

How? I'd want to collect emails to profs. from the different major—probably several dozen, so I'd have a lot of evidence to analyze.

So What? Different colleges on this campus seem to have different cultures, and looking at their speech practices would be one way to investigate these differences. It would also be interesting to find out whether Communication students are more skilled than Engineering students at this important task.

Timeline

Day	Date	Due
10R	23 Mar	Hand in three possible final project topics, with a paragraph explaining your interest in each and any advantages/problems you see with them.
12T	11 Apl	Last day to hand in Final Project Proposal. The proposal must include: Title of project. Names of students actively participating. What?—the question you want to answer. A list of the course concepts/ideas you plan on applying. How?—a description of how you plan on gathering evidence to answer your question. So What?—A paragraph explaining why we should be interested in your answer.
14T/R	18 Apl/ 20 Apl	Meetings with instructor. When you meet with me, you must hand in a report including: Title of project. Names of students actively participating. What?—the question you want to answer. A one paragraph statement of your answer, including course concepts. A copy of all the evidence you have collected. A statement of what you have left to do on the project.
15T	25 Apl	Poster presentations. Each group will have an opportunity to present a poster including: Title of project. Names of students actively participating. What?—the question you want to answer. Your answer, supported by some of your evidence (most of the poster) So what? Why should others be interested in your results?
162	3 May (noon)	Final project due (in mailbox). The final project must include at a minimum: Title of project. Names of students actively participating. What?—a statement of the question you want to answer, with an explanation of the course concepts you are applying. How?—a detailed description of how you went about gathering evidence for your answer; your "methodology." Your answer—a detailed analysis of your evidence, answering the question using strong arguments based on the course concepts and on the evidence. NOTE: <i>This is the core of your final project—the main basis for your grade.</i> So What?—a detailed statement explaining why your answer is important. What have we all learned from your work? Appendix—Copies of all the evidence you collected.