

PSC 490 Final Paper

Due November 30 by 12:30 PM

Research Paper

You have already selected a research question of interest to scholars of new media and have begun to explore answers to it based on course readings and your own investigation of scholarly research. You are now to move to the next stage, to move to answer that question through an original data analysis and exploration.

The data you collect and analyze will very much be a function of the question that you raise. You might, for example, ask how President Trump has been framed in YouTube videos that have been widely circulated. Hence you would download YouTube videos and analyze frames presented. Or you might ask how Instagram has been used for political purposes, in which case you would look at particular hashtags on Instagram and focus on how these photos were used for agenda setting—and whether for organization, or conversation, or general informational purposes (see Theocharis et al). Or you might ask whether we see evidence of the Ideal Speech Situation online, and then explore comments made on a public online forum.

It is important to note that for your research, you should focus on information that is available publicly. In other words, you should not evaluate, for example, your friends posts on Facebook. You can, however, evaluate a politician's use of new media if the politician (and most do) make their account publicly accessible. More discussion to follow here in our session on Oct 24.

We will spend Oct 24's session discussing our papers with one another and our plans for the empirical component of the paper.

Paper Length Guidelines

The length of your paper will be largely determined by the question your pursue, but here are some guidelines:

Your paper should be in the range of 10-12 pages, double-spaced with standard fonts and margins. This page guideline does not include a cover page, a bibliography, nor any tables or figures. Typically papers with more tables and figures have less discussion. It is likely that the tables or figures will be a critical component of your paper.

Submit a hard copy of your paper to USAOnline by the date and time above—and I recommend sending an email copy as well as a backup. For assignments to be graded, they must be uploaded to USAOnline. Use a standard citation format such as APA or MLA or Chicago.

Suggested Outline

Research papers typically follow a standard protocol, which I have included here for your reference. Note that the page lengths are guidelines.

Introduction (2-3 pages)

State the question and describe why it is interesting and important to those studying new media. Discuss the relevant literature that pertains to your question; you should focus first on our class readings and discussions, and then incorporate additional studies from there.

Methods and Data (3-4 pages)

Describe the data. Help the reader to understand why your data allows you to address your question of interest. Discuss any decisions made related to collecting or coding your data (e.g. “I downloaded YouTube videos pertaining to President Trump, which were located from a search by the word ‘Trump’ and by videos that received more than 100,000 views.”)

Describe the methods used to address this question. That is, what did you do with your data once you collected? Did you code its content, looking for certain themes or ideas? Did you use any statistics? What tables did you construct, and why?

Findings (3-4 pages)

Most likely, your data collection will make its way into tables, graphs, figures. Remember that good figures should be easy to interpret—summarizing information for the reader. That is, a reader should be able to look at your figures and have a general sense of what you accomplished.

Your responsibility in your findings section is to discuss what you have found. Walk through your analysis and explain how it helps to answer your question of interest.

Conclusion (2 pages)

Summarize your question and your findings, and discuss the broader implications of your analysis. How does your research paper help address an important question in the study of interest groups? What questions still remain?