

The Term Paper Option

Distributed in discussion section on Friday, November 17.

Availability of the option

There are two situations in which this option is available to you:

- (1) If the average of your grades on the two midterm exams is 90 or higher AND you have not exceeded the allowable absences in lecture and discussion, you have the option to write a term paper *instead of* taking the final exam. There is no other way to get out of taking the final exam, and no early examinations will be administered under any circumstances whatsoever. If you don't meet the grade and attendance criteria for this option, you *must* take the final exam to pass this course.
- (2) If you want to improve your grade, you can write a term paper *in addition to* taking the final exam. When we compute your final average, we will throw out the lowest grade of the four (three exams plus a paper).

Declaration of intent to write a term paper

If you want to write a term paper, you must declare your intent to do so by completing the form on the last page of this handout and giving it to your TA. (Keep the rest of the handout, because you'll want to consult it when you write your paper.) Be sure to sign the form at the bottom of the page. Your TA will check the information you supply about grades and attendance, and if it's correct, she will pass the form along to John.

Declarations will not be accepted after December 11. If you later decide not to write a paper, that's OK, and you don't need to tell us that you've changed your mind.

When is the paper due?

At the final exam, which is scheduled for Thursday, December 21 at 4:00PM. Early papers are OK.

How long?

2000 words. Put the word count at the beginning or end of the paper. Also include your email address.

How will the paper be graded?

John will personally grade all of the papers, and he will use a protocol with criteria similar to those that your TAs have been using for homework essays. In assigning grades, he will be placing particular emphasis on the following questions:

Does the paper have a point? Does it present evidence and reasoning in support of that point? Is the point clearly stated and convincingly argued for?

Is the paper original? Is it more than just a summary of the sources that were consulted? Is the author's original contribution clear? (Warning: Papers that rely excessively on direct quotation or close paraphrase are unoriginal and may even be plagiarized. See below for more about plagiarism.)

Is the paper well organized? Does it have good paragraph structure, and does it have a suitable introduction and conclusion? Is it focused? Has it been carefully proofread?

What are the allowable topics?

1. Almost exactly four years ago, the voters of Massachusetts overwhelmingly supported "Question 2", a referendum question that profoundly changed bilingual education in this state. Using the *Boston*

Globe, which you can search with Lexis-Nexis Academic from the library's website, investigate how various cities and towns have dealt with the effects of Question 2 over the last three years. You must do more than just summarize; you must look for patterns, think critically, and draw conclusions that are supported by evidence and argumentation. Papers with a consistent focus or theme will receive higher grades. Papers that merely repeat material from the lecture, homework, and discussion will receive low grades.

2. Deborah Tannen has written many popular books about communication. Read one of them, focus on one or two main points, and explain and evaluate what Tannen has to say. Your evaluation must involve a process of critical thinking, in which you use evidence and argumentation to decide whether what she says is correct, incorrect, or correct with modification. You must do more than merely summarize the book. Papers with a consistent focus or theme will receive higher grades. Papers that merely repeat material from the lecture, homework, and discussion will receive low grades.

3. In the past several years, George Lakoff has written a number of books and articles about political discourse in the United States. Democrats and progressives have begun to adopt his ideas. Read a book or several articles by Lakoff about political discourse, explain what his ideas are, and discuss, with examples, whether they are applicable to the campaign that just ended with last Tuesday's election.

Are other topics permitted?

Yes, but only under certain conditions. Your topic must be relevant to topics covered in this course since the second midterm. (See the syllabus.) You must explain the topic on the declaration form, and you must meet with John to discuss the topic. Your topic must not be overly broad and general. For instance, a paper entitled "Language and Gender" or "Language and the Law" is much too broad; an appropriately-sized topic is "Women's Language in Japanese" or "Do Juries Understand the Instructions They Receive?"

Can I get help?

Meet with your TA or John for help. If you've never used LexisNexis Academic and need it for your paper, you can get help in the Learning Commons. The University also has resources to help students with their writing. See <http://www.umass.edu/learningcommons/> for further information.

Sending an email to John in mid-December that says "What do you want in the term paper?" is not a reasonable way to ask for help. If you opt to write a term paper, then it's primarily your responsibility to figure out what to say. We are happy to offer guidance, but you have to do most of the work.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is very easy to detect, and the penalties are severe. To avoid a charge of plagiarism, your paper must properly cite sources:

- Any concept or fact you get from a written source or the Internet needs to be acknowledged with a prompt citation in the text or a footnote.
- Direct quotations longer than three words must be enclosed by quotation marks and include a citation of the source and page number where the quoted text occurs. This includes direct quotations from the Internet.
- Direct quotations should be used sparingly — no more than once or twice in your paper. When you get information from a source, explain it in your own words (paraphrase!) and cite the source.

The penalty for plagiarism is an F for the course and a report to the Academic Honesty Board. There will be no exceptions. No explanations, pleas of ignorance, or excuses about personal problems will make any difference. You are not required to write a paper in this course, so if you cannot write an honest paper, please don't write one at all.

Ling 101

Term Paper Declaration

Give to your TA no later than December 11.

Your name (printed): _____

Your TA's name: Amy Rose Annahita Kathryn

Check *one* of the following options:

- I want to write a term paper *in addition to* taking the final exam.
- I want to write a term paper *instead of* taking the final exam.

If you chose the second option, we need to determine whether you are eligible for it. SKIP THESE QUESTIONS IF YOU CHOSE THE FIRST OPTION.

What is your grade on the first midterm exam? _____

What is your grade on the second midterm exam? _____

Is the average of these two grades greater than or equal to 90? Yes No

(If the answer is no, you are *not* eligible for this option.)

Have you missed more than 4 lectures? Yes No

Have you missed more than 2 discussions? Yes No

(If either answer is yes, you are *not* eligible for this option.)

Topic (check one)

- Question 2 in Massachusetts.
- A book by Tannen.
- A book or several articles by Lakoff.
- Another topic. You must describe it in the space below and meet with John to discuss it by December 11.

Please read and sign the following statement:

I have read and I understand the course policy on plagiarism in the handout "The Term Paper Option", which was distributed on November 17, 2006.

(Sign here.)