

Research Paper Assignment

Introduction:

The purpose of the writing workshop is to teach you, the student, how to read 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 *Domestic Violence*. The more specific thesis of the paper will be left to the student and may concern a government or private agency, organization or treatment modality involved in domestic violence, or enforcement of laws related to domestic violence, such as Penal Code section 273.5. Agencies may include, but are not limited to probation's domestic violence unit, police training agencies, various domestic violence treatment programs, various safe houses for victims of domestic violence, Santa Clara County District Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit, Santa Clara County Superior Court's Domestic Violence Departments or the court's unified family court, and so on. The paper may be an evaluation of the agency, or a comparison of different enforcement techniques, or comparison of modalities used for treatment. One could, for example, compare California domestic violence procedures and laws with another state's, or compare a program using standard group therapy to one treating with cognitive behavioral modalities.

The principal skill to be developed is research 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 out through the semester in several steps, beginning with choosing a specific topic and a thesis, finding evidence to support the thesis, developing an outline, 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 issues being examined.

The process of writing the paper has been broken down into 7-8 steps, each one a separate assignment, which will be graded and weighted separately from your final research paper. Each step is described in detail in separate handouts, however here is a brief description of each:

Step One: Choosing a Topic & Thesis Presentation

Your instructors have chosen the general topic of "Domestic Violence", 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 at the library, and you will conduct interviews with service providers, including professionals and administrators or people who are the recipients of the service provided by the agency. 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 determine 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 "Are the needs of abused spouses being met by the Santa Clara County District Attorney's mandatory prosecution policy?" then one might develop the following thesis: "In spite of the appearance that this policy would deter and reduce incidents of domestic violence, the Santa Clara County District Attorney's mandatory prosecution policy has increased the severity and incidence of domestic violence in couples following completion of sentence."

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.

Thesis Presentation Will be an oral presentation, using a 4X6 notecard. The day of your presentation you will turn in a 4-5 page package of information you will be utilizing to research your topic. (Brief description of your topic and thesis, name, title and agency of your interviewees and list of proposed questions, web page from the agency which is the focus of your research, and a reference list of at least 10 sources you plan to examine for your research.) See handout for further details.

Step Two: Initial Interview

The Interview is a summary of an interview with at least one person involved in prevention or treatment of domestic violence, or enforcement of domestic violence laws. You are responsible to find a subject to interview, schedule and plan the interview, and prepare a summary. See handout for further details.

Step Three: Article Critiques

The Article Critique is a more in depth analysis of four scholarly research articles. Ideally, you will be able to find 4 articles from the reference list you prepared in Step One. You will be preparing a 2-3 page critique for each of four articles. They should be articles which you feel provide the most information for your paper. (If there are not four appropriate articles on your original reference list, you may use others, but you must clear the article with your instructor before you do the critique to ensure that it meets the criteria for this assignment.)

Article Critiques will be turned in on a weekly basis, one each week for four consecutive weeks. Article Critiques must be submitted to Turnitin.com before turning in for grading, so be sure to allow 2-3 days to submit it and get it back in time. See handout for further details.

Step Four: Final Interview

The final interview will be conducted after you have completed your article critiques. At this point you should have come up with some information which might be of value to the agency which you are writing about. The final interview will be more of a discussion of your findings and how they might apply to this agency than a "Question & Answer" type interview. The "questions" you pose in your final interview should facilitate discussion and provide information, which hopefully your interviewee will find of value. Therefore, what will ensue is a discussion of how your findings might be incorporated into that agency and how it might improve their operations. See handout for further details.

Step Five: 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, including interview findings and the various articles in support of or in opposition to the thesis. See handout for further details.

Step Six: 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. 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 Turnitin.com for review. You must allow 2-3 days to get your originality report back from 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. Late papers may miss the opportunity for a peer review. Consequently, there will be major deductions for late draft submission. The draft must be at minimum five pages. (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: at least one interview, and five additional references two of which must be scholarly articles, the other may be from various sources including additional interviews. See handout for further details.

Step Seven: Peer Review

You will be having your paper peer reviewed by a classmate. There will be specific guidelines for the review, which will be provided by your instructor. The Peer Review will be a graded assignment.

Step Eight: The Final Paper

The final paper must be at least eight (8) neatly typed pages, *exclusive of the title page and reference page*, typed in standard font, size 12, double-spaced, 1.25 inch margins. It will include:

- I. Title page
- II. Abstract of your paper (1/2 page, maximum, single-spaced)
- III. Outline of your paper
- IV. Text of paper (8-10 pages)
- V. Reference page in correct APA format
- VI. Draft with Turnitin.com Originality Report and peer review attached.

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

RESEARCH PAPER SCORING GUIDE

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

- _____ Title page
- _____ Abstract
- _____ Outline
- _____ Pages numbered
- _____ Correct APA in-text citation format
- _____ Correct APA reference page format
- _____ Appropriate sources used
- _____ Rough draft with Turnitin.com Originality Report attached
- _____ Editor's critique attached

CONTENT: *Did you understand the reading and information you collected for this assignment? Were you able to incorporate what you learned into a compelling argument?*

- _____ Strong, effective opening
- _____ Appropriate explanation of agency's history, goals and mission
- _____ Clarity of purpose: identified "problem" within agency and proposed solution
- _____ Appropriate use of data from your research, especially your literature review
- _____ Appropriate use of information from your interview (establish credibility of your interviewee, well-integrated quotes)
- _____ Explained value of project
- _____ Effective, compelling closing
- _____ Originality of ideas, demonstrates insight into issues/problem/solution
- _____ Overall organization of paper

MECHANICS: *Is writing at college level? Did you proofread your paper before submitting?*

- _____ Appropriate grammar
- _____ Appropriate punctuation
- _____ Appropriate use of vocabulary
- _____ Syntax
- _____ Fragments/Run-on sentences
- _____ Spelling/Typing errors