

LIT 350—Fall 2020
Final Project

You have some flexibility in choosing the shape of your final project. Please note that whichever option you choose, you do not have to answer all of the questions posed! They are there to help you start thinking. Your final project can take the form of one of the below options:

(1) Personal reflection paper (5-7 pages): Choose a concept and 2-3 texts from class that you want to explore further. Concepts include, but are certainly not limited to: objective self; language; personhood; subjectivity; emotion; plasticity; depression; presence; brain wound; memory; image; or neurodiversity. When working with multiple texts, you must also discover how the texts relate to one another. It is not simply a matter of reading the text, understanding it, and expressing an opinion about it. You must allow yourself enough time to be clear about what each text says and how the texts all relate to one another. In other words, this paper requires that you synthesize the intellectual work of others in order to them together into an integrated whole with your response to them. This is an opportunity to voice opinions, questions, interests, personal narratives, and reactions to the material assigned around this concept.

Consider the significance of your concept: Why is your concept important? What are the consequences of reconsidering your concept? Why is your particular perspective, expertise, or experience worth thinking about? In light of the assignment's and course's objectives, focus on how experiences in your life have impacted your beliefs, opinions, and ambitions. Consider events in which you have participated, people you have met, places you have visited, and challenges you have faced. What lessons have you gleaned from these various experiences?

Consider what information you're including: Think about how your narrative ties into the particular subjects and questions examined in the course; this should help you decide which specific events and episodes in your life that you wish to highlight or discuss in the assignment. Emphasize "reflection." Description of the events in your life might provide the background for this type of assignment, but your reflections on those events and their ramifications for who you are and how you approach your concept/texts furnishes the substance of the essay. Keep in mind that you are writing this reflection in the context of a particular academic discipline. If you cannot relate a certain detail to the subject at hand, it is probably best to leave it out.

Consider texts individually: What is the main problem or issue that the author is addressing? What is the author's central claim, argument, or point? What assumptions does the author make? What evidence does the author present? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the text? What are possible counterarguments to the text's claims? Why are the problem(s) and the argument(s) interesting or important to you?

Consider texts collectively: How do they relate to one another? Do the authors agree? Disagree? Address different aspects of an issue? Formulate a problem in different ways? In what way (if any) does the information or argument of one text strengthen or weaken the argument of others? Does integrating the claims in two or more of the texts advance your understanding of a larger issue?

(2) Group reflection paper (5-7 pages): The authors we've read come from a multiplicity of disciplinary backgrounds—cultural anthropology, public health studies, neuropsychology, psychoanalysis, etc. This option asks you to pair up with one of your classmates and reflect together on our interdisciplinary approach to studying the brain. Choose 2-3 texts to act as your case studies. If one of you studies cultural anthropology and the other neuroscience, you may choose to look at pieces by Joseph Dumit and Antonio Damasio. The more your disciplinary interests differ, the more interesting this collaboration will be. The form your writing takes is up to you (e.g. a dialogue, a co-written essay, etc).

Remember, this option is not simply a compare-and-contrast paper; we are asking you to closely evaluate how these authors are responding to a question they're both asking, and what significance their respective disciplinary positionalities have on how we understand personhood/the brain.

Questions to ask in your reflection:

- Can you identify an issue, question, or controversy to which all of the texts respond?
- What do the texts share in common: terms, definitions, perspectives, values, and/or emphases?
- How do the texts differ from one another?
 - term swapping (X and Y use different terms to refer to the same thing),
 - dueling definitions (X and Y use the same term but define it differently),
 - contrasting assumptions (different assumptions guide X and Y's thinking.),
 - context (you can account for the differences in X and Y because they come from different places or cultures or disciplines and/or operate in different historical eras etc.)
- What are the consequences of the texts' similarities and differences on how we understand the issue at hand?
- What are the limitations of each text? In other words, what do the texts not include? What does one text emphasize that the other tends to de-emphasize? Does one text include a key element that the other text neglects? Assume you are an expert in your own field (even if you haven't declared your major!).

(3) Research paper: This option gives you the opportunity to pursue a topic related to the central themes of our course. This type of essay presents a research question and uses evidence and warrants to explore the significance of this question to the content of our class. You can offer a central claim/argument in answer to your research question, but this is not necessary. You must use at least 2 outside critical sources that were not read in class. They may be pieces written by authors that we've read, just not the same pieces we read in class. These critical sources can be essays, reviews, chapters from books, or films and videos as long as the films and videos are not serving as the main, central text of the paper.

It is your responsibility to choose what is most important and most interesting from your research toward the goal of addressing your research question. This means that your essay is not a list of details or arguments, nor are you expected to address the entirety of any text. The paper should be a cohesive whole where all of the paragraphs relate to one another, and ultimately back to your question.

Use the following basic template to help you craft your research question:

I am studying (name your texts) _____ because
I want to find out who/what/why (imply your question) _____
_____ in order to understand (state the rationale for the
question and the project) _____.

Consider texts individually: What is the main problem or issue that the author is addressing? What is the author's central claim, argument, or point? What assumptions does the author make? What evidence does the author present? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the text? What are possible counterarguments to the text's claims? Why are the problem(s) and the argument(s) interesting or important to you?

Consider texts collectively: How do they relate to one another? Do the authors agree? Disagree? Address different aspects of an issue? Formulate a problem in different ways? In what way (if any) does the information or argument of one text strengthen or weaken the argument of others? Does integrating the claims in two or more of the texts advance your understanding of a larger issue?

The following criteria apply to whichever option you choose:

- 1. Refer to your texts using proper citational format;**
- 2. You must meet with either Antonio or Jessica to discuss your ideas before moving forward;**
- 3. You will present on your final project to the class during the final week of the semester.**

Grading Rubric

	A	B	C	D/F
Focus	Clearly presents and maintains focus on chosen concept/question throughout entirety of paper	Presents and maintains focus on chosen concept/question throughout most of the paper	Maintains limited focus on chosen concept/question throughout the paper	No focus on chosen concept/question throughout the paper
Organization (overall)	Well-planned and well-thought out. Paragraphs are focused progress conceptually	Good overall organization, progresses conceptually but may be unfocused in certain places	There is a sense of organization, although weak or missing in some places, and/or does not progress conceptually	No sense of organization throughout the paper
Organization (paragraphs)	All paragraphs have clear ideas, are supported with evidence and close analysis, and have smooth transitions	Most paragraphs have clear ideas, are supported with some evidence, and have transitions	Some paragraphs have clear ideas, support from evidence is missing, and/or transitions are weak	Paragraphs lack clear ideas or evidence
Content	Well-presented and well-supported ideas throughout; ideas are detailed and supported with specific details	Well-presented and well-argued; most ideas are supported with detailed evidence	Content is sound, but ideas presented are not particularly developed or supported; some evidence used, but of generalized nature; not all required questions from prompt are answered	Content is not sound
Style (sentence structure)	Sentences are clear and varied in pattern, from simple to complex	Sentences are clear but may lack variation or are sometimes awkward	Sentences are generally clear but are often awkward or unclear	Sentences are generally unclear
Style (word choice, tone)	Clear use of a personal and	An attempt at a personal style	Little attempt at style; reads as	No attempt at style

	unique style of writing, suited to audience and purpose; the paper holds the reader's interest with ease	but may be awkward or unsuited to audience and purpose; some parts of the paper may lose the reader's interest	flat and perhaps uninteresting in content, which is generalized and clichéd	
Style (details and examples)	Large amounts of specific examples and detailed descriptions	Some use of specific examples and detailed descriptions; may have extended examples that go on too long or don't fit the paper's focus	Little use of specific examples and details; mostly generalized examples and little description	No use of examples
Mechanics	Chicago Manual of Style used properly; title, page numbers, date, name included			Incorrect formatting