CSCI 3720 Research Paper Assignment Guidelines and Requirements

Project Overview
CSCI 3720 is writing intensive. ETSU policy requires students completing writing intensive courses to write at least 15 pages of graded work throughout the semester. This work must be evaluated based on content, grammar, writing style, and overall presentation. Students must also engage in peer review of another student’s written work. This assignment is designed to provide students with experience in formal business/academic writing and the peer review process in the context of work similar to that done in the profession.

Students have undoubtedly completed research papers in other classes. This assignment requires the completion of two research papers that are one page long. While the length of the paper is shorter, the process to craft a strong submission is the same as if the paper were longer. A one page paper requires extensive editing and refinement to present a meaningful thesis and set of main points on a single page. In many ways it is harder to write than a paper of greater length as each sentence must make an important contribution.

Students will complete two one-page research papers following a strictly defined format and set of requirements such as those typically required in peer reviewed publishing. General research paper topics are set based on course content, but students have liberty to choose a particular focus to their paper that is consistent with their interests. (For example, if the general topic selected is “Business Intelligence,” students could complete papers on “Healthcare Business Intelligence” or “Designing Business Intelligence Software” or “Developing a Data Warehouse to Support Business Intelligence.”)

As indicated in the Course Schedule, students will sign up for topics and due dates via email in first-come first-served fashion. Students are encouraged to begin work on their paper early in the semester and spend time each week working on the assignment. To facilitate the process, there are a sequence of milestones for this assignment, but there is just one grade assigned to the final paper. Lateness in meeting any of the milestone or poor work in any of the required documents will be reflected in the score on the final paper.

The two papers are worth 20% of your course grade. This means that your performance on this project has a two-letter grade impact on your course score. It is generally true that the time put into the assignment is reflective of the grade earned. It is recommended that students budget 10-15 hours per paper towards crafting a strong submission. This is a purposely challenging assignment for an upper level major course!

Overview of the Project
- Author considers the general topic selected and brainstorms specific areas of interest to study and write on.
- Author finds candidate source articles, evaluates them, and selects one to use as the basis of the research paper.
- Author develops the title, a thesis statement, and an outline for the research paper.
- Author sends the article, title, thesis statement, and outline to peer reviewer for feedback.
- Peer reviewer evaluates items and provides feedback in the form of a memo to the author.
- Author incorporates feedback received and writes a complete draft of the paper.
- Author sends the paper to the peer reviewer for feedback.
- Peer reviewer evaluates the paper and provides feedback in the form of a marked-up paper to the author.
- Author prepares the final revision of the paper and submits it for grading.
- At the end of the semester the author assesses the quality of the assistance provided by their peer reviewer.

Peer Review
Each student will team up with another student in the class for the peer review process. Each student will review the work of the other on this project and provide feedback. Students may select their own peer review partner by submitting this information via email. (The email just needs to state “__ and I would like to be peer reviewers for each other for the research paper assignment.”) Before selecting someone as a peer review partner, be sure to check with him or her first. If a student does not select a peer reviewer by the deadline stated in the course schedule, a peer
reviewer will be randomly assigned. To facilitate student scheduling, peer reviewer partners may not be working on the same paper topics.

The role of the peer reviewer is to provide feedback to the author, point out problems, note elements done well, and assist the author in successfully completing the project. **The peer reviewer is not to rewrite the materials sent to him/her, but rather to point out areas in need of improvement or attention and provide feedback that will assist the author in making revisions.** A peer reviewer provides another set of eyes on a document and can assist an author in seeing things he or she might otherwise miss. A successful writer/peer reviewer collaboration on this project can result in higher grades for both parties than they would earn individually.

**Source Selection**

Once a general topic has been selected, the first major task is locating a significant, contemporary, peer-reviewed article to use as a source for the paper. It is recommended that you use article repositories such as the ACM or IEEE Digital Libraries [available online](https://www.acm.org) through the Sherrod Library and find a substantive article on a topic that interests you. Only one strong, content-appropriate article is required for the assignment. Short articles, i.e. those containing 3 full pages or less of text, are of lesser quality. The ideal article is one that is one of the major articles in a particular publication. Articles from trade publications or other non-peer-reviewed publications are not acceptable as a primary source, but may be used to supplement a primary source as desired.

Article selection is an important component in grading. Spend time conducting your search. For each of the topics designated for this assignment there are hundreds of contemporary articles that would be suitable to use as sources. Be creative in finding strong articles by trying a variety of search terms and phrases. Do not simply type the topic into a library search engine and look at the first page that appears. Come up with relevant key words and take time to do an iterative search. In the event you find an ideal article but it is short, add a second strong article to fulfill the page length requirement.

It is recommended that students begin with a set of candidate articles and then make the final article selection after taking time to review each of the candidates. After finding your primary source, read the article at least twice. As you read, highlight or write down on separate paper key points and important ideas that you see presented in the paper. Make sure that as you read you are actually thinking about the content being presented. Consider the material in light of your experiences and knowledge, topics discussed in this class, things learned in other classes, and other resources you can marshal.

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**Paper Content—IMPORTANT!**

The paper written by the student is not to be a summary of the selected source article. The source article is to be used by the student to gain knowledge on the topic. **The paper written is to be the student’s own thesis and main points on the selected topic.** A paper that is a summary of the selected source article is not appropriate for the assignment and will not earn a passing grade. **You are writing your own paper and using your selected source article for background.**

**Beginning the Writing Process**

Begin the paper writing process by deciding the title of your paper and writing the thesis statement of your presentation. The thesis sentence should focus your writing and make it clear what your paper will present. It condenses the main idea of your presentation into a single, salient sentence. For additional assistance in writing your thesis statement, see documents by the Purdue Owl Writing Lab, the UNC Writing Center, the Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services, or other resources of your own selection. Note that care should be put into crafting a well-written, strong thesis statement. Iteration, editing, and refinement will be needed.

Once you have developed your thesis statement, develop an outline of the points you plan to cover in your paper. Do this by listing the main points you wish to cover and then organizing these points into an appropriate order. Develop a
set of main points and sub points. These main points will be reflected in the paragraphs that compose the body of your paper. A well-crafted outline serves as a template for the content in the final paper.

**Preliminary Submission to Peer Reviewer**

At least 3 weeks (21 days) before the paper is due, upload to the specified D2L dropbox and submit via email to your peer reviewer:

1. The source article(s) selected as the primary source for your paper

Your submission should be similar to the example shown below (the formatting of the outline is at your discretion, but it must show both main points and sub points).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: The Competitive Power of Strategic Information Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis: While operational Information Technology (IT) is critical to the success of a contemporary organization, strategic IT is more challenging to achieve, a greater predictor of organizational success, and a source for competitive advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Operational vs. Strategic Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Staffing Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Tasks and Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Characteristics of Strategic IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Agility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Real-time Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Achieving Strategic IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Challenges and Potential Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Long-run Results and Benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The source article(s) should be submitted to the reviewer and D2L as a PDF file containing the document. If submission in that format is not possible, consult with Dr. Pittarese before the due date to discuss alternatives. *URLs that link to documents are not acceptable.*

Pay particular attention to the 21 day deadline stated for this milestone. It is recommended that the work be submitted to the reviewer and uploaded to D2L in advance of this deadline. As noted previously, lateness in meeting this or any other assignment deadline will result in the lateness penalty specified in Course Policies being applied to this assignment’s final grade.

**Preliminary Submission Peer Review**

The peer reviewer is to review the items provided by the author. The reviewer should assess the following elements:

1. The appropriateness of the source article and the paper title
2. The content and appropriateness of the thesis statement
3. The content and appropriateness of the paper outline.

The reviewer should prepare a short memo addressed to the author with his/her assessment of each of the above elements. The reviewer should take care to note things which are clear and well done and those things which seem problematic or are unclear. The memo should resemble the facsimile shown on the following page.
The reviewer should upload this memo to the author’s D2L dropbox and also email the memo to the author.

The memo should be uploaded and emailed no later than 18 days before the author’s paper is due. This gives the reviewer three days to complete the preliminary submission peer review process. If the author submits his/her materials to the reviewer earlier, the reviewer should make every effort to return the review to the author within three days.

Paper Creation
The author will write a one page paper based on the thesis statement and outline. The paper must fill at least one page and may not go longer. The paper should be formatted exactly like the provided paper template. The paper must match the template document in all respects (font, font size, margins, etc.). Download the template document and use it to create your submission. The template contains additional information on the content and format of the document. Note that no title or other pages are used. The final submission is a single sheet. Papers that would be longer than one page should be edited to the specified maximum length. Papers shorter than one full page need to have additional content added.

The paper consists of an executive summary and a main body. Write the main body of the presentation first. The executive summary should summarize the thesis and main points of the body of the presentation, so it must be written after a final draft of the main body has been prepared.

It is important to note that the executive summary is not the paper introduction. It is a summary of the content of the body of the paper. It summarizes the thesis of the presentation and its main points. The executive summary is a 1-2 paragraph encapsulation of the body of the paper. It should not introduce any other content and should only contain content reflective of the thesis and main points of the presentation. Care should be exercised to ensure that the executive summary does not describe the contents of the body but instead summarizes it.

Paper Peer Review
Once a complete draft of the paper has been prepared, this draft will be peer reviewed. A complete rough draft must be uploaded to the designated D2L dropbox and emailed to the peer reviewer at least 14 days before the final submission due date of the research paper.
The peer reviewer is to return to the author and upload to the dropbox his/her feedback on the paper. This should be done using the comment feature in Microsoft Word. The review should be uploaded and emailed no later than 10 days before the author’s paper is due. This gives the reviewer four days to complete the preliminary submission peer review process.

The reviewer should examine the paper in light of the guidelines provided below and the items on the Grammar and Style Guidelines. The reviewer should not rewrite the paper, correct grammar, correct punctuation, etc., but rather note problems and leave it up to the author to fix. That is, if the reviewer sees a poorly worded sentence, he/she should not rewrite the sentence, but rather use the comment feature to note that the sentence is poorly written. If he/she sees punctuation errors, the correct punctuation should not be inserted, but rather the reviewer should use the comment feature to note that punctuation should be corrected. The reviewer should comment on positive items in the presentation and those items where improvement is needed.

Final Paper Draft
The author will revise the paper based on the feedback from the peer evaluation and submit the paper to the D2L dropbox on or before the date specified for the final submission.

Paper Preparation and Review Guidelines

- Since this is a formal academic paper, the paper should be written in an appropriate style. Use third person. (Do not use "I", "me", "my", "you", "your", "our", etc. except in direct quotations.)
- The source article should be cited in the presentation if it has provided supporting facts or quotations. Apart from that contribution, the paper should clearly be a presentation based on the student author’s thesis and main points. The paper should not summarize or repeatedly reference the source article. A common mistake students make is writing a paper that is a summary of the source document they have selected. That is not the purpose of this assignment. This is to be a one page research paper where you make your own set of main points and support them, where relevant, with content from your source document. The source plays a supporting role only; it is your ideas and analysis that should be at the forefront.
- The paper should demonstrate that the student has thought about the topic and how it relates to the entire scope of class content and his/her collegiate experience to this point. Papers should not contain a basic overview of common knowledge of surface facts on a topic. Students should demonstrate advanced knowledge of the selected topic in their presentation. Grading will be based on the student’s ability to present something meaningful on the topic. For example, a B paper may be of very high quality, but is not significant in its content and shows minimal insight into the subject by the student.
- Students should be careful to not plagiarize. All work presented should be your own work presented in your own words. In those instances where quotations or significant ideas are referenced from another source, that source should be appropriately cited. It is recommended that students review the source article several times in the early stages of the project and then set aside the article during the writing process so as to take care to not base their paper on things taken from the source.
- A typical error students make is having the executive summary be either (a) an introduction to the paper, (b) a summary of the source article that was read, or (c) a general description of the body of the paper. It should be none of these things. The executive summary should summarize the thesis and main points that you make in your presentation. The assumption is that if someone read only the executive summary they would know what your thesis and main points were.
- The reviewer should have a copy of this document and the Grammar and Style Guidelines present when conducting the review. Use these documents as a checklist while going through the paper.
Keep in mind that this is an assignment you will want to commit appropriate time to completing. I suggest allotting a minimum of 10 hours per paper, but that is just a general guideline. Especially as you are getting used to writing of this style, you may find it takes more time on the first paper than it will on the second. The hope/expectation is that by the time you read and analyze each paper, and then spend the time crafting the best possible presentation for your thoughts, you will wind up with a meaningful, retained understanding of the topic. This is not intended to be either a quick or easy assignment, as it is our most substantive writing activity of the term. The knowledge you gain should serve you well come testing time, as well as in future career activities.

**Evaluation of Peer Review**

A portion of the overall grade for this assignment is based on the quality of the peer review provided to one’s partner. When the final paper submission is graded, if problems are observed the peer review document will be consulted to see if these problems were noted in the peer review. That is, if a paper is of poor quality grammatically, the peer review document will be consulted to see if this was noted. If it was, the peer reviewer has done his/her job and this will reflect positively on the quality of the peer review. If, however, the problems in the final draft were present in the rough draft and not noted by the peer reviewer, this will lower the peer review score. The peer reviewer and the author have an important partnership. Just as time must be devoted to crafting a paper one authors, so too must time be devoted to peer review.