Guidelines for Term Projects

Everyone taking the course is expected to complete a term project. The purpose of the project is to allow you to explore some specific part of the curriculum in more detail, and explain your findings to the rest of the class.

Here's what to do:

1. Find your partner(s). (It must be from your own tutorial group.)
2. Sign up for a project presentation date. Your TA will keep a list of the dates – first come, first served. Sign up by **September 27th** for a time and topic!
3. Define a project topic. You can pick from the list of suggested topics that you will find on the Avenue to Learn site, or you can adapt one of them. You can define something else that you find particularly intriguing – but check with your TA first if you want to do that.
4. *Your project must be directly related to the course material. It is not appropriate to do a project which is just a variation or duplicate of something else you have done for another course.* Such action could qualify as a breach of academic integrity (see the course Outline). If in doubt – talk with your TA.
5. Submit a **written proposal** to your TA outlining what you want to do. This should be roughly one paragraph long (less than ~half a page) and should be signed by both you and your partner (or if emailed all group members need to be CC'ed on the email message).   The proposal is due by **October 4th.** The proposal should include an outline of the content (in enough depth so that your TA can determine whether or not you're on the right track), anticipated sources/references and ideas about how you plan to present your topic and generate discussion.
6. Your TA must approve the project. If there are any problems to work out at this stage, he/she will talk with you about it.
7. Do the background reading and research on your topic (give yourself lots of time to do this!).
8. On your chosen day, give your **summary presentation** in your tutorial group. Also **prepare a one-page handout summary** of your presentation and post on Avenue by the night before your presentation. **If you use slides make sure you bring a printed copy for your TA, and give it to them before the presentation starts**. Your presentation should be **15 min long, which** will leave **5 minutes** for questions and answers.
9. After your presentation, you will get comments and feedback from your TA.

Other Important Questions

I'm not a scientist. How am I supposed to do any of these projects?

We don't expect you to create projects that look like they were done by PhD students in astrophysics or biochemistry. Pick a way to work on your topic that suits your own academic background. One of the strengths of this course is that we can see the diversity of ways of thinking about, and reacting to, this material. Be creative!

Can I do a project that someone else has picked?

Your project must be different from all the others in your tutorial group. You can select a project topic that someone else in *a different tutorial group* has already picked – but remember, you will be judged on how creative, distinctive, and well thought out your own work was. You will need to do your own research on the topic and find a distinctive slant on it.

Further Notes

- It is your responsibility to make sure you have all A/V video equipment needed for your presentation working. You should test this before your presentation time. If you are using a Mac computer make sure to bring your adapter for the video cable. If you have any questions then you must contact your TA before the day of the presentation.

- If you plan to use computer audio in your presentation you must bring external speakers.

!! **Important Note** !!

When you are doing the background research for your project, you will probably be drawing resources from the Web, other texts, and so forth. Some of these resources are more valuable, and more reputable, than others. *Be aware especially that many things you will see on the Internet are pure junk*. Even worse, they can be *mis*information (i.e. flat-out wrong). Make sure Web references are reputable! Reputable websites (e.g. NASA or scientific journal websites) are preferred over encyclopaedic websites.

Textbooks, and the so-called "peer reviewed literature" (research articles published in specialist journals, which are read and criticized by experts in the field before they make it into print) are quite different – they have a much higher standard of authenticity in general.

You are responsible for verifying the correctness and authenticity of your research sources. *If you are uncertain about their authenticity, how are you going to check up on them?* What or who can you go to? Answer this question and have a plan in mind before you get too far into your research.

Marking Scheme for Term Projects

SIGN-UP   **1 mark**
-   Sign up **on time** for the project (September 27th).

WRITTEN PROPOSAL   **2 marks**
-   Select topic and propose method. Submit to your TA before October 4th.
-   Should be 1 substantial paragraph (<~ half a page) in length (worth 2% of the course grade!)

Presentation

CONTENT   **5 marks**
-   How deeply did you investigate your selected topic?
-   How well did you understand your material?

ORGANIZATION & PRESENTATION   **10 marks**
-   How well matched was your approach to your own backgrounds?
-   How well suited was it to the audience in your group?
-   Did you use the time effectively? (15 min for presentation + 5 minutes for Q&A)
-   Was your presentation engaging and clear? Connection with audience?
-   Did you generate discussion?
-   **Did you answer questions well and generate discussion? Remember the Q&A portion is 25% of your time!**
-   Did you stay on time?
-   Were you creative? Trying to be interesting and engaging! Make your presentation stand out.
-   If you used slides were they attractive? Did they complement the presentation? Did you remember to bring a printed copy for your TA?

CLASS HANDOUT   **4 marks**
-   One-page handout for your tutorial group (with references).
-   Was it clear, concise and complete?
-   Was it useful and relevant?
-   Was is visually appealing?

22 marks for total project

Note the presentation is worth a lot of marks and therefore the <u>expectations are high.</u> Please plan well and come prepared for your presentation!