

PSYC 3025 Short Paper Topics, Outline, & Rubric

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Selecting a Paper Topic

I think that if you're not used to this kind of work, it can be daunting to find and commit to a paper topic. Here are some general recommendations I have for selecting a paper topic:

- If you read something that you had a visceral reaction to (meaning you *really* didn't like it), this might be an idea that you'd be excited to argue *against*. An example that I use below is that Dennetts Intentional Stance seems somewhat ridiculous to me and over simplistic.
- Conversely, if there was something that Andy Clark argued against that you felt he didn't fairly address, perhaps you want to step to this ideas defense!
- Copy and paste the Outline below into a Copilot Chat and have ask it to help you brainstorm topics. It might be wild at first, but you can help it to narrow down into something that feels doable to you.
- If there was something you are already really interested in - like the Reynolds Boids model (or something else) have a conversation with the chatbot about finding a paper topic associated with the thing you're interested in!
- Shoot me an email! If you're feeling stuck in picking a paper topic, please talk to me :)

Outline

Many of you are likely new to writing argumentative papers. I'm going to provide for you a *suggested* (please note that this is only a suggestion, meant to help those who are lost by this assignment) outline that would work for a 1000 word paper.

First, for context: A 1000 word paper is 2 pages long (4 pages, if double spaced). In these papers, you'll want to do the following:

1. Intro: Set the stage
2. Thesis statement: Present the argument
3. Body: Provide your evidence
4. Conclusion: Make your point
5. Citations

1. Intro: Set the stage (150-250 Words)

In argumentative papers, it is important that you first lay out the context from which you are writing.

You need to describe the things you are going to argue about, clearly presenting ideas and defining terms. Do not assume the reader (me) has the context of our class - if you're introducing something, define it.

Your goal here is to set up the next step, "Present the argument", so that when you go to make your argument, everything is defined and in context.

2. Thesis statement: Present the argument (~50-100 words)

You will need to clearly present the argument for your paper. While this is short, relatively speaking, it is the most important part of your paper - it is where you get to insert your thoughts/beliefs into the space of cognitive science, and then "make your case."

The presentation of the argument here is your **thesis statement** - it establishes the purpose and goal of your paper. It also will outline the evidence you are going to provide.

Here is an example of a thesis statement:

Dennett's Intentional stance, while pragmatic, undermines the unique complexity and ethical significance of true cognitive agents. I argue instead that the application of mental state language should be reserved exclusively for entities capable of genuine thought and intentionality. I will draw on recent advances in **neuroscience** that reveal the sophisticated nature of **higher-level planning** and **anticipatory mechanisms** in cognition. My evidence challenges the broader applicability of the intentional stance, highlighting its limitations.

3. Body: Provide your evidence (~500-700 words)

Here, you will lay out your evidence that follows your argumentative thesis statement. The evidence you provide should have been outlined by your thesis statement.

You'll have paragraphs that follow the outline set up in your thesis statement. In the example thesis statement above, I wrote out

"I will draw on recent advances in **neuroscience** that reveal the sophisticated nature of **higher-level planning** and **anticipatory mechanisms** in cognition."

My evidence then should be based on **two** different things:

1. Neuroscientific research in **higher-level planning**

2. Neuroscientific research in anticipatory mechanisms

What my "Evidence" should look like then is the body of my paper, where I will be presenting the research and arguments from neuroscience in each of those domains that supports my case.

4. Conclusion: Make your point

Now that your evidence has been laid out, it's time to "connect the dots" and draw your conclusion. Here, you should be piecing together your pieces of evidence in order to support your argument against (or for) the idea that you laid out in your thesis statement.

A high quality conclusion will make it clear *how* your evidence is connected to your argument - and the conclusion should also be compelling! Use this as an opportunity to convince your reader (me) that I should be on your side!

If you need to write more...

If your paper isn't close yet to 1000 words, consider addressing "obvious" counter arguments that someone might make against the argument you've proposed. This is a great way to further flesh out your idea and strengthen your position.

5. Citations

You'll be required to Cite any ideas that are not your own. This includes Andy Clark's Mindware, or any other ideas you introduce in the paper. Please follow [APA guidelines](#) when citing others in this paper.

YOUR CITATIONS SHOULD BE ON A SEPARATE PAGE AT THE END OF YOUR PAPER, CLEARLY MARKED, AND THEY DO NOT COUNT TOWARDS YOUR WORD COUNT

Grading Rubric:

The paper will be graded out of 100 points, and will represent **15% of your grade in this class.**

These are the guidelines I will use for grading your paper, so there are no surprises:

Section	Point Value
Intro	10 Points
Thesis Statement	20 Points

Section	Point Value
Body	40 Points
Conclusion	20 Points
Citations	10 Points