

## MEMORANDUM

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**To:** English 341 students

**From:** Dr. Newmark

**Subject:** Technical Report Project Guidelines

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with a detailed account of the technical report project. This memo includes detailed information on the four major components of this project:

Proposal  
Annotated Bibliography  
Written Report  
Oral Presentation

### Project Goals

In this project, you will present primary and secondary research information on a topic drawn from your major field of study. Since this is the culminating exercise of our course, you will need to demonstrate the skills you have learned this term in the following areas: researching, organizing, drafting, and presenting information to non-specialist audiences. You will need to make technical information from your major area of study comprehensible to an “average” reader – namely, your classmates and me. All elements of your presentation (ranging from document design to your project-presentation strategies) will need to be accessible to the general reader/listener.

### Proposal

Your project proposal will include the following elements, in any order you deem most suitable to your project. You will need to convince me in your proposal that your project is valuable and that it is a project that can have primary- and secondary-research components. Also, a key feature of your proposal will be an explanation that your project will be translatable for and accessible to non-majors.

- Project summary: What topic do you want to study? Why is this a topic of interest to you? How can you make this topic matter to your audience? In other words, what is your research question?
- Tentative outline: What areas will you cover, and how will you organize your content? Be as specific as you can.
- Outcome: What format will you use for the written report? (Remember, you aren't bound to a hardcopy report. If presenting your topic in an electronic medium such as a web site will work better, then you would propose to do that.)
- Overview of primary research strategies: What kinds of primary research will you rely on to support your report? (Be sure to give as much information as you can here. If you plan to create a survey, tell me who you will survey and for what purpose. How will you distribute the survey? If you plan to conduct a scientific test, briefly describe the test, explaining what you would hope to learn from it.) If you will need **IRB approval**, be sure to mention that, along with the date by which you hope to have approval.
- Overview of secondary research strategies: Within this section, you'll need to list citation information (author, title, journal or publisher, date, etc.) and a **brief overview** for at least three secondary sources pertaining to your topic. In addition to these three sources, discuss what other kinds of journal articles or books you'll look for to support your information in the report. Also tell me what kind of documentation style you will use for the report (ie: APA, MLA, CBE, Chicago).
- Timeline: To meet the course deadlines for each component of the project, you'll need to figure out a work schedule and present that schedule in the proposal. This schedule will me keep track of how far along you are, and it will help you to stay on task. Do not just reiterate the schedule I give here.
- Feedback from sponsor: First, tell me who your sponsor is. Your sponsor will need to be someone – your faculty advisor, another professor, etc. – who can read your report and speak to you regularly regarding the **primary research** and **technical aspects** of your project. Discuss the role you would like your report sponsor to play. How often do you plan to seek feedback from your sponsor? In what form (via email? Face to face meetings?) will you seek feedback?
- Questions or concerns: What questions or concerns would you like to present to me at this point?

Treat this proposal as you would any other technical document—organize it in a way that will best present the information to the audience (me), anticipate your user's questions by providing detailed information, define and explain any unfamiliar terms or concepts, and use document design strategies (including headings, lists, white space, images if appropriate) to convey the information.

### Annotated Bibliography

Find at least eight secondary sources relating to your topic (three of these eight sources can come from the proposal, but you'll want to change your brief overview of them into a detailed annotation). Include the citation information for each source, followed by a paragraph that **summarizes** the source and **evaluates** the quality of the source. You can choose which documentation style you would like to use (please use the style most common in your field.) Please see my website for examples of citations in MLA, APA, and IEEE formats:

<http://juliannenewmark.com/writingcenterpeertutors.html>.

See the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University for examples of and information about annotated bibliographies.

### Written Report

Depending on your topic, the structure you use for your report will vary. Please reflect on our discussion of report styles from class and refresh your memory by reviewing the relevant chapter of your textbook. You must use one of the recognized report methods listed in your textbook (most will choose recommendations reports, feasibility studies, or "findings"/lab reports). No matter what kind of report you choose, you must include primary and secondary research. Primary research would be scientific tests, interviews, surveys, or documents such as technical specifications, laws, or user manuals. Secondary research would include articles published in technical and scientific journals, articles published in online technical and scientific journals, chapters in edited books, recent books on the topic, conference proceedings, information from credible web sites, etc. You should have at least six secondary sources and you must **quote** from them all and properly cite them in-text. (Note that for the annotated bibliography assignment I require you to include eight secondary sources. If all eight of those sources are appropriate and relevant for your report, feel free to use all of them.) You must include at least one kind of primary research (an experiment, a survey, an observational study, an interview, etc.). If you did more than one kind of primary research, that is fine.

The format of your report must include **a title page, a table of contents, a list of figures or tables, and an abstract. These items all come before your main content. You may also include appendices at the back of your report if appropriate.** Please refer to the checklist on page 535 of your textbook.

**Note:** Your report must use a documentation style (APA, MLA, CBE, Chicago) to properly and consistently cite information you receive from outside sources. You will include in-text citations as well as a list of references at the end of your report. Please note that this list of references is *not* the same as an annotated bibliography. (For the annotated bibliography you summarize each source; for the list of references, you are *only* including the author, title, journal or book, publisher, date, etc.)

Page length: **approx. 10-15 single-spaced pages including graphics**

### Oral Presentation

In a fifteen-minute oral presentation, you must present your report to the rest of the class and your sponsor (and anyone else you'd like to invite). Your presentation must include images, and you may choose whether to use PowerPoint or another medium. Your peers will evaluate your presentation. More details on the presentation will be posted.

### Important dates

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Monday, March 29    | Technical Project Proposal draft due for peer review (bring two copies) |
| Wednesday, March 31 | Technical Project Proposal final version due                            |
| Wednesday, April 7  | Annotated Bibliography due  |
| Wednesday, April 14 | Technical Report draft due for peer review (bring one copy)             |
| Monday, April 26    | Technical Report final version due                                      |

### Presentations take place on the following dates:

Monday, April 26  
Wednesday, April 28  
Friday, April 30  
Monday, May 3  
Wednesday, May 5

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This Technical Project  
description was based on  
one designed and assigned by  
Dr. Julie Ford,  
Director of the Technical  
Communication  
program at NMT.  
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