Term Project

The purpose of the term project is to provide you with an excuse to pursue a project of interest related to language. This might be an exploration of a topic covered by your text or in class, or might be a topic not covered during the semester. Language is as broad an area of study as there is. We cannot possibly explore all of it this semester, so this is your chance to spend some time with a topic we might otherwise miss.

YOU WILL NOT BE CHOOSING A TOPIC TO EXPLORE!

Rather than allowing you to choose a broad topic, I am asking that you do a project based on an article you find in the popular press (newspaper, magazine, online news site dedicated to presenting science to the general audience such as Scientific American, Science News, Live Science, etc.).

Articles on sites dedicated to a specific audience are NOT acceptable (for example, sfari.org, feralchildren.com), nor are blogs (for example, http://meredithsseniormentorproject.blogspot.com/).

For example,

Wired magazine has an article, "The QWERTY Effect: How Typing May Effect the Meaning of Words" at http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/03/qwerty-effect-language/

which refers to a scholarly article,

http://www.springerlink.com/content/y22087242663u647/fulltext.pdf

which is an article of the same name by Kyle Jasmin and Daniel Casasanto in Psychonomic Bulletin & Review, dated March 3, 2012 and available to you through the Penfield Library.

Now, read the popular press article and read the scholarly article on which it was based. Those two must form the basis of your project!

You might choose to write a (boring) term paper explaining the scholarly article to your grandmother and perhaps whether Wired got it right or was incomplete. The paper could look at some parts of the scholarly article to expand it - for example, the article says, "People who know how to type implicitly activate the positions of keys when they read words." - This means, I gather, that folks are sort of thinking about moving their fingers in order to type the word when they read. How do they know that? Check out the reference (Logan & Crump, 2011) and explain THAT experiment instead of the current one. The article also talks about measuring handedness - how do they do that? What does the measure actually describe? How valid/reliable is it? etc. etc. etc.
So one popular press article could lead to lots of possible projects.

Note that I keep saying “project” and not “paper” – You have free reign in how you present your project – I’ve had students submit podcasts, narrated powerpoints, a video of a debate between Skinner and Chomsky (acted by students) concerning the topic of the popular press article, and many other ideas. Do not think you are limited to a typical (boring!) term paper! Writing a "Professor's Notes" piece on your articles would be a great project. Follow something of interest! And don’t forget to examine it from a psychological perspective!

But the foundation article MUST be a popular press article dated NO EARLIER than January 1, 2011 (that is, within roughly the past 5 years).

The project should run from seven to ten pages of text in length (that is, the page count is exclusive of title page and references). There is no need to get carried away fiddling with margins, etc. Your goal is to provide a succinct presentation of a topic of interest. Your grade will be based on your presentation and not the "importance" of the topic you choose to address. If your project is a podcast, then the podcast should take about the amount of time it takes to read a 7-10 page paper. If your project is a voice-over powerpoint presentation, again it should take about as long to run as a 7-10 page paper.

You will need to provide complete references in your paper, starting with the popular press article and the source scholarly article. You can include other primary sources as needed. You may include references to a newspaper, a weekly news magazine, or other popular press article that you cite in addition to any scholarly references, but not in lieu of them. Do not include a reference for anything you have not completely read (that is, no citations to books unless you have actually read the book!).

I will ask everyone to choose and notify me of a popular press article. First, I want to know what your article is going to be and be able to help you narrow the topic, if needed. Second, I do not want to see you put off the paper until the week before it is due. Consequently you will need to provide a brief email to me describing the topic along with at least one complete and relevant reference by March 11. I'll remind you of this due date from time to time. I will also provide you with additional milestones to meet during the semester with regard to this project so that you stay on track and complete your work in a timely fashion.

Finally, only one student per popular press article is the rule. So when a student finds an article of interest and they submit it to me (and it is approved), no other student may use that article as the foundational piece for their paper. As I receive and approve an article, I’ll list it on Canvas.

To summarize:

- A title page, with a project title, your name, and date.
- A references page (at the end of the document).
- 7-10 pages of text, a Word, Rich Text Format, or .pdf document, Times New
Roman font, 12 point, 1" margins on all sides, double-spaced, page numbers in the upper right corner. This does NOT include the title page and reference page.

- all references and citations in APA style.
- PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, USE YOUR WORD PROCESSOR’S SPELL AND GRAMMAR CHECKER!
- topic description with a popular press article’s URL due by March 11.
- Term project due no later than May 6, submitted by emailing it to david.bozak@oswego.edu