

Paper outline/approval

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How to choose a topic

- 1 Define a domain by language, social group, situation.
- 2 Choose a phenomenon that occurs naturally in that domain (not polite terms of address in academic papers).
- 3 Naturally occurring data is of course of the greatest interest for this course.
- 4 Having said that, data collection should, ideally, be over when you start this paper. Pre-existing corpora are great, but they need to be appropriate for your topic (see previous point). If you don't have appropriate pre-existing data, begin collecting data at once, and begin sampling collected data at once, to guarantee that you are indeed getting instances of the phenomenon you want to write about.
- 5 Everyone should get their chosen topic approved by me by the **paper approval deadline** given on the course outline about their topic.

Possible outline headings (besides conclusion)

- I. The Problem: Identify the phenomenon. State how it relates to the subject matter in the course. If there is no literature section, this section should identify a body of literature on your topic, and “create a research space” (CARS), that is, identify a gap in the literature that this paper begins to fill. That “space” or “gap” in the literature should be intimately tied up with your statement of what the problem is.
- II. Data: Describe collection process or an existing dataset
- III. Literature: Optional. Include this if you need to discuss the claims of one or more papers in some detail, for example, if you are going to specifically refute some paper.
- IV. Approach: This section discusses how your data analysis and collection will proceed. If you are using an existing data set, explain how you will select a relevant sample.

Outline donts

- 1 Don't have outline subheadings that are the names of chapters in Levinson's book or Birner's book; identify a specific phenomenon in the **data** that you will focus on.
- 2 Don't write about looking at data without having looked at it. You need to be able to state some specific fact of interest that you **have** observed that is interesting. So avoid: "We will search the entire text of *Don Quixote* looking for generalizations concerning the use of *por favor*."