

Final Paper Prompt

Submit in Canvas by class time

Format: Please submit as a Word document (doc., or .docx).

18 points

In this course, we have learned to collect “public” data from YouTube and Twitter, and we have learned basic computational skills to start analyzing that data and creating data visualizations. However, we have also talked about the limits of this data and the ethics around collecting and using it.

Your **main task** in this paper is to develop one of your earlier mini-papers into a longer paper (**1,200 – 1,700 words** before citations) to make more nuanced and well-supported **claims** about your data, considering both the limitations of the data and the ethical questions that come up with this data. While in your mini papers, you mostly used data visualizations and other representations, in this paper you will add **close qualitative analysis** through concordance analysis or one of the other frameworks we read in class.

The paper will use an **academic writing style and prose**. I recognize the validity of multiple languages and grammars. However, since I am your audience for this paper, please broadly follow the standard academic conventions in the papers that we have read. This means you will include in-text and end of paper references for scholarly sources.

We will talk about it in class, but please make sure to talk to me about your topic before the paper is due.

Successful papers will:

1. Have a **clear central thesis statement or claim**. The paper should be unified around the claim, which should be **specific** and **focused**. The paper will need to maintain a narrow focus to engage in depth. For clarity about what I mean when I refer to claims, please see the Claims Handout.
2. Include relevant background information and context to tell me why this claim matters. This means you will use (appropriate and credible) popular sources and scholarly sources from outside of this class. Please include **three** scholarly sources.
 - Think of this section as creating a “gap” for your research question. [e.g., “X thing is happening/communication and media scholars have said Y. So, I ask... Z.” or “In X job, people often do Y kind of work. So, I ask Z question because it is the type of question I would try to find out in my job.”]
3. A **research question**. We have generated a lot of questions over the course of this semester. Ideally, you could expand on one of the questions that you ended on with your “mini-papers.” However, you can use other questions. Just clearly state the question you are trying to answer.

*This assignment meets the course outcomes (1) Define big data, explain some of the challenges it poses for communications researchers, and develop and refine research questions that are appropriate for “big data” research. (2) Use basic data scraping tools from TAGS (Twitter) and the Digital Methods Initiative (YouTube), and create simple data visualizations like Word Clouds, Timelines, and Networks, through browser-based tools and simple programs like Excel. (3) Critically evaluate and analyze big data and data visualizations and add qualitative analysis to those big data to compose well-supported arguments.

4. **Methods.** Like with the mini-papers, tell readers **what you did and why**. Be sure to include data **limitations** and **ethical considerations**. This time, include more about your qualitative analysis too (what did you choose to focus on, why, etc.). Remember that transparency is important because it lends you credibility as an author. You should also include any limitations to your research and **cite** at least one author from this class about those limitations and ethical considerations.
5. **Evidence.** Include some sort of data visualization that we created this semester, even if it is as simple as a word chart. Make sure to include and **describe** your **evidence** to support your claim somewhere in the paper. For clarity about what I mean when I refer to evidence, please see the Evidence Handout. We have been collecting and analyzing evidence all semester in your “mini-papers” so I suggest starting there, and then adding qualitative analysis to what you have already done. So, your mini-papers used a lot of statistical evidence. Start using more **testimonial, anecdotal, and analogic** evidence to expand those mini-papers here. However, you should only include evidence that is **relevant** to your claim at this point.
 - Any data visualization should be appropriately labeled with basic things like legends for timelines and figure labels in appropriate [MLA](#) or [APA](#) format.
6. **Analysis.** **Analyze** your evidence to support your **unifying, specific, focused, and well-supported claim** above. Look back to the Evidence handout to recall how evidence needs to be analyzed to develop a claim. For clarity about what I mean when I refer to claims, please see the Claims Handout. This analysis may be incorporated in around your evidence, or it can stand as its own section. Decide what works best for your paper.
 - Make sure to limit your claims to the **scope** of the evidence. You should look back to the sources that we have read all semester about the limits of our data here, and incorporate them into this tentative analysis. Make sure to think about how the evidence that you use might limit your claims (e.g., we cannot make claims about the intentions of people without talking to them.).
7. **Conclusions/Further Research.** At this point, you will not be posing further humanist questions like we did on our earlier mini-papers. Instead, tell readers why what you found matters. Why should I care? What are the implications of what you found? Situate these findings in your introduction and background.
8. **References/Works Cited.** Since you will be citing sources telling me why you made certain choices, what data collection tools you used, and what analysis tools you used, you will also have a references and works cited page that is not included in the page count requirement.

Resources:

You can see how to take screenshots on Windows [here](#) and [here](#).

You can see how to take screenshots on Mac [here](#).

You can see how to include images in Word documents [here](#).

Organization:

You can organize this paper however makes the most sense to support your claim. Social sciences often use the IMRaD format, which you can read about [here](#), but many communication and media scholars, and humanities more generally, use a more topic-focused approach. You can use either style. However, please be thoughtful about your organization.

- Include topic sentences, and use unified **paragraphs** that focus on that topic.
- Use transition phrases to help me understand the connections between your ideas.

- Define terms when you introduce them, and introduce terms where they are necessary.
- Give readers **relevant** background information and incorporate that information in to the paper where necessary for the reader.
- I also highly recommend headings, although they are not necessary.

Examples of Final Paper Questions and Topics:

- **Mini-Paper:** What tags are the most common on videos that YouTube's algorithms deem the most relevant for X topic? Why does this matter for Y (creators, people affected by that topic, etc.)? **Add for final paper:** How do creators use that tag the same or differently? What are the qualitative effects? (Go back and qualitatively analyze those videos using one of the methods from class).
- **Mini-Paper:** What words are commonly associated and used with videos that YouTube's algorithms deem the most relevant for X topic? Why does this matter for Y (creators, people affected by that topic, etc.)? **Add for final paper:** How are those words used in context? Are they associated positively? Negatively? Neutrally? How are they used differently and why? Do they mean different things to different people, or when they come from one creator instead of another? Analyze the qualitative context to tell me why it matters. (Go back and qualitatively analyze those words in context with concordance analysis and/or using a methods from class).
- **Mini-Paper:** How do the videos that YouTube's algorithms deem to be the most **relevant** for X topic differ from those that are the most widely **viewed** on X topic? Why does that matter and what might that say about viewing practices? (You would have to pull two sets of data from YouTube here.) **Add for final paper:** What, if anything, is qualitatively the same or different about those videos? What, if anything, is qualitatively different about the creators (be ethical when reporting on creators though)? Again, why does that matter? (Go back and watch some of those videos and analyze them using methods from this course).
- **Mini-Paper:** When do people interact with YouTube content in comments? Do they interact most right after a video is posted, or is their engagement sustained? **Add for the Final Paper:** What types of comments appear in different spikes? Or find a video that had sustained user engagement, and ask what are the qualitative differences between the types of content that engage commenters over the long-term, rather than in spikes? Why does that matter? What are the qualitative differences in what people say on videos (considering ethical reporting practices. Consider how to ethically represent these comments.).
- **Mini-Paper:** If you pull YouTube videos based on the most recently posted, were there any spikes in your timeline about when those videos were posted? Did those videos address a specific event? **Add for final paper:** How did those videos talk about events or issues differently? Did associate a topic with a specific event and talk about it one way during one spike, and associate it with a different event in another spike? Qualitatively, did talking about specific events situate those events in historical context? Or, if there were no spikes, did people talk about a topic differently at the beginning of your data set than at the end? How? With what effect? (Go back and watch some of those videos and analyze them using methods from this course).

- **Mini-Paper:** Who are some of the most prominent people Tweeting about X issue during Y time period? Who do they “talk” to the most frequently on Twitter? **Add for final paper:** Since quantitative metrics just tell us *that* they talked, qualitatively, how did those people talk to each other? What was their qualitative relationship like, and more importantly, why does it matter? (Is one person an expert on a topic? Does one person have another publishing platform?) Context will be especially important here; consider power relationships between different users and use ethical reporting practices. (Go back and qualitatively analyze Tweets between these people and analyse them with methods from this course. Consider how to ethically represent these Tweets.)
- **Mini-Paper:** Who are some of the most prominent people Tweeting about X issue during Y time period? Do those people share anything in common, or why does it matter that they are talking to each other? **Add for final paper:** Again, Since quantitative metrics just tell us *that* they talked, how did these people talked about a topic to each other? Context will be especially important here; consider power relationships between different users and use ethical reporting practices. (Go back and qualitatively analyze who is Tweeting and how they are talking to each other using methods from this class. Consider how to ethically represent these Tweets.)
- What words are people using most often when they talk about X topic on Twitter, and how are those words correlated? **Add for final paper:** Since saying that a word appears often tells us nothing about how that word is used, qualitatively analyze how people use that word, and how it is associated with other words (positively, negatively, neutrally, or, as is likely, in a range of ways in between). **Bonus:** Do different clusters of people who interact frequently that you identified in your network analysis talk about a topic qualitatively differently? If so, how, and why does that matter? (Go back and qualitatively analyze those Tweets and how people use that term using methods from this class. Consider how to ethically represent these Tweets.)
- **Mini-Paper:** When do people Tweet about a particular topic? Were there any spikes in your timeline about when those Tweets were sent? Did those Tweets address a specific event? **Add for final paper:** With qualitative analysis for the final paper, you can expand on this question and ask what qualitative language appear in different spikes. As with YouTube, think about if people who were talking about specific events situate those events in historical context? Or, if there were no spikes, did people talk about a topic differently at the beginning of your data set than at the end? How? With what effect? (Go back and qualitatively analyze those Tweets and how people talk about a term at different times using methods from this class. Consider how to ethically represent these Tweets.)

Rubric

Please note: I have included this rubric here for clarity and transparency about my expectations. However, all of these criteria are linked to each other and cannot be separated.

	Excellent	Good	Developing
Claim 2.5 points	<p>The paper makes a clear, specific, and focused claim that is backed up by evidence. All points in the essay directly go back to support the claim. The claim is not simply descriptive, but is makes insightful and nuanced argument that adds to existing discussions.</p> <p>The claim addresses any glaring counterarguments.</p> <p>The claim is <i>clearly</i> stated, and is specific to the case analyzed (“I claim...”).</p>	<p>The paper makes a claim, although that claim is less clear, less specific, and the paper may lose focus, where not all points clearly connect back to the claim.</p> <p>The claim may be tangentially related to the evidence presented, but the connections are not clear.</p> <p>The claim is goes beyond description, although it is less clear how that claim connects or adds to existing discussions.</p> <p>The claim does not address any glaring counterarguments.</p> <p>The claim is there, but may not be <i>clearly</i> stated.</p>	<p>The paper does not make a clear claim, or that claim is not specific, and the paper frequently loses focus, and it is unclear how all points connect back to the claim.</p> <p>The claim is not at all supported by the evidence presented, and/or the connections are not clear.</p> <p>The claim is simply descriptive with little analysis.</p> <p>There is no analysis to explain how the claim adds to existing conversations.</p> <p>The claim does not address any glaring counterarguments.</p>
Research Question and Methods 4 Points	<p>The research question is clearly stated and feasible to answer.</p> <p>The question can be answered by the methods and tools that we used.</p> <p>The methods, tools, and decisions are described in enough detail for a non-expert reader (peer) to</p>	<p>The research question is clearly stated and although it may not be feasible to answer given the methods and tools we talked about and used in this class.</p> <p>The methods, tools, and decisions are described, but without enough detail for a non-expert reader (peer) to understand. The author may answer some of the following</p>	<p>The research question is not clearly stated.</p> <p>The research question is not be feasible to answer given the methods and tools we talked about and used in this class.</p> <p>The methods, tools, and decisions are not described at all, or they</p>

	<p>understand. Be sure to answer things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tools you used. • What those tools can feasibly tell you • What exactly you did (search terms, limiters you put on your data, why you picked those terms) • When you used these tools and why <p>The limitations to the methods and tools that the author used are clearly outlined, and the author cites at least one reading from this class to explain why this is a limitation.</p>	<p>elements, but they may ignore some crucial details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tools you used. • What those tools can feasibly tell you • What exactly you did (search terms, limiters you put on your data, why you picked those terms) • When you used these tools and why <p>The limitations to the methods and tools that the author used are clearly included, but only in a cursory manner, and without much engagement. The author cites at least one reading from this class to explain the limitation.</p>	<p>are not described in with nearly enough detail.</p> <p>The limitations to the methods and tools that the author used are not included clearly included, or they are only cursorily mentioned.</p> <p>The author does not cite at least one author from this class to explain the limitation.</p>
<p>Evidence and data visualization</p> <p>4 Points</p>	<p>The paper includes at least one data visualization that meaningfully connects to the research question.</p> <p>The author describes the visualizations and tells readers what the visualization represents.</p> <p>The author describes other relevant statistical evidence and other types of evidence.</p> <p>The author appropriately labels the visualizations in MLA or APA.</p> <p>The author expands the data visualization by meaningfully adding other relevant kinds of evidence, including qualitative testimonial, anecdotal, and/or analogic evidence. This new</p>	<p>The paper includes at least one data visualization although the visualization is less clearly connected to the research question.</p> <p>The author describes the visualizations and tells readers what the visualization represents, although the author may be inaccurate or unclear in some places.</p> <p>The author describes other relevant statistical evidence and other types of evidence. Again, the author may be inaccurate or unclear in some places.</p> <p>The author appropriately labels the visualizations in MLA or APA, although there may be minor issues with the labels.</p>	<p>The paper either does not include a visualization, or it does not connect the visualization to the research question at all.</p> <p>The author describes the visualizations in very little detail, and/or does not accurately explain what the visualization represents.</p> <p>The author either does not include, or does not accurately describe other relevant statistical evidence and other types of evidence.</p> <p>The author does not appropriately label the visualizations.</p>

	evidence should clearly support and connect back to the claim.	The author expands the data visualization by adding other relevant kinds of evidence, including qualitative testimonial, anecdotal, and/or analogic evidence, although this evidence may be less meaningful or purposefully incorporated into the paper. This new evidence may less clearly support and connect back to the claim.	The author does not expand the data visualization by adding other relevant kinds of evidence, including qualitative testimonial, anecdotal, and/or analogic evidence. Alternatively, this evidence may not be meaningful or purposefully incorporated into the paper, and this new evidence may not connect back to the claim at all. Failure to add any new types of evidence or will result in no points for this criteria, even with the inclusion of a data visualization.
Analysis 4 Points	<p>The author thoughtfully begins to analyze this evidence in light of the limitations of their data collection tools and methods.</p> <p>The analysis does not extend beyond the scope of the evidence that we collected.</p> <p>The analysis presents a well-developed and supported interpretation of the evidence.</p> <p>The author clearly uses their analysis to connect their evidence back to their claim.</p>	<p>The author begins to analyze their evidence, although they may be less mindful of the limitations of their data collection tools and methods.</p> <p>The analysis may try to extend their claims beyond the scope of the evidence that we collected.</p> <p>The analysis begins to interpret the evidence, although that interpretation may be less well-developed and supported.</p> <p>The connection between the analysis and the claim may be implicit, but it is less clear.</p>	<p>The author does little analysis of their evidence, and they are not mindful of the limitations of their data collection tools and methods.</p> <p>The analysis goes beyond the scope of the evidence that we collected.</p> <p>The analysis does not interpret the evidence, and the interpretation is not well-developed or supported.</p> <p>The connection between the analysis is entirely unclear.</p>

<p>Conclusions</p> <p>1 point</p>	<p>The paper ends with a clear conclusion and takeaway, and the paper tells readers why they should care. It connects to ongoing conversations and concerns, and it poses suggestions for further research.</p>	<p>The paper ends with a clear conclusion and takeaway, although it is less clear why readers should care, or it is less clearly connected to ongoing conversations and concerns. It may pose suggestions for further research, although the necessity of this future research is less clear.</p>	<p>The paper does not end with a clear conclusion and takeaway, and it is unclear why readers should care. The conclusion is not clearly connected to ongoing conversations and concerns. It does not pose any directions for future research.</p>
<p>Meets Assignment requirements and language</p> <p>2.5 points</p>	<p>The basic assignment requirements are met.</p> <p>The language is clear and adheres to academic writing well, with few issues. Writing is coherent and expresses the writer's ideas well. Teachers and peers can understand the text with little difficulty.</p> <p>The text is broken up into paragraphs and meets the required word count.</p> <p>Follows appropriate reference style format (headers, reference pages, etc.) (APA or MLA for this course) <i>Remember: I am your audience.</i></p>	<p>The basic assignment requirements are met.</p> <p>There are a few grammatical, word choice, or spelling issues that deviate from academic writing, or the language is cumbersome or wordy enough to make the ideas unclear for teachers and peers.</p> <p>Paragraphs are very long, or there are transitions that do not make sense.</p> <p>The paper meets the required word count.</p> <p>Mostly follows appropriate reference style format (headers, reference pages, etc.) (APA or MLA for this course). <i>Remember: I am your audience.</i></p>	<p>The basic assignment requirements are not met.</p> <p>Writing is confusing and hard to follow for teachers and peers, and there are many issues with grammar and spelling that interfere with readers' understandings.</p> <p>The paper has few or no paragraphs.</p> <p>The paper is under word count.</p> <p>The paper barely follows appropriate reference style format (headers, reference pages, etc.), or the paper does not follow an appropriate reference style format at all. (APA or MLA for this course). <i>Remember: I am your audience.</i></p>