

## Description of Final Paper (Roos, Soc. 501, Fall 2005)

Here are some hints for the final paper. Try to shoot for 15-20 double-spaced pages.

**Introduction:** Start off with several general paragraphs that introduce the reader to the research tradition in which you are working. What will this paper be about (in a general way). Write this in a way that will hook people in to read beyond the Intro. Somewhere in the first two pages, you should say something along these lines: "In this paper, I...." This statement will clarify for the reader exactly where you are going in the rest of the paper. Write in active voice!

After a few introductory comments that clarify why you're writing the paper, you'll turn to the literature review part of the Intro. The point is to review the extant literature, which lets people know that you've read the relevant literature. Don't simply tell the reader what the articles/books are about, but rather how they move you along toward your own "contribution to the literature." Be careful not to over-quote. Try to paraphrase people's arguments and findings, oriented toward how they will help you to make *your argument*. Obviously you still want to cite people, but don't let them speak for you. Use your own voice, and not their words, or you run the risk of plagiarizing. Cite like this (Smith, 2002) at the first mention of the article. If you use a page number, cite like this (Smith, 2002:23) and put the full references in the back. Use elaborating footnotes at the bottom of the pages, but put all bibliographic information in the back in the references section.

At the end of the Intro, you'll want to make "your argument." How will your paper "move the field forward?" What are you doing that's different from what others did before you? What's your contribution to the literature? Here is where you should include the set of specific research questions and hypotheses you'll address in the paper.

**Data and Methods:** The "argument" section at the end of the Intro will set up the remainder of the paper. In the methods section, you'll explain how you'll go about this methodologically. First, you'll write a "data" paragraph, where you'll describe the GSS--the GSS site has some information about the survey, use it to describe what the data are (e.g., representative sample of the U.S., etc.). Second, you'll write your methods, describing how your variables are conceptualized, operationalized, and recoded (if you have a lot of variables, you might want to include a table that summarizes your operationalization decisions). Typically you'll start with your dependent variable, and then move on to the independent variables. Explain any important recoding. Toward the end, describe what analytic techniques you'll use to address your research questions.

**Results:** This is the guts of the paper. Here is where you'll put all your tables, and your interpretation and analysis. Number all your tables sequentially, and refer to them as you move through the section (e.g., Table 1 shows . . .). Put all the tables together at the end of the text, for easier readability, but include an indication in the text where the tables should go ("[insert Table 1 here]"). You'll probably want to subdivide the results section, perhaps one section for each research question described in the Intro, or group related research questions into substantively relevant subsections.

**Conclusions:** Here is where you sum it all up: what have you found, has it moved the field forward? In what directions should researchers be going, in light of what you found.

Good luck, let me know if you have any questions.