

SAGES First Seminar: "Life of the Mind"  
Tobin and Turner: Fall 2008

Final paper overview  
Length: 1700-1800 words  
Due: December 5

The object of the final paper is to write an extended, well-organized **presentation** of a topic to do with intersubjectivity, social cognition, and communication--that is, taking one or more of our class readings as its starting point. This assignment is not make-work, in which you pretend to do real scholarly research and produce something that no one other than your instructor will ever want to read. This paper will be a genuine example of what it claims to be, and will be useful to your fellow students or anyone else interested in the subject matter of this course.

You are not yet in a position to do the original research necessary to stake out a new position on open research questions in the field. Instead, you will produce a thoughtful and coherent **review** and **discussion** of what is at issue in the scholarly literature on a **SMALL, well defined, existing** question, method, or phenomenon. We will look at different examples of professional review articles to help you to get familiar with this very real genre of scholarly writing.

Your paper should be a useful, readable, accurate, clear, and specific overview of the research on your chosen topic. Any of us should be able to read it and feel that we have been given a good starting understanding of the important findings and open questions in this research area, a good introduction to the major players in research on this topic, a sense of who should care about this research, an idea of what its major applications are or might be: in general, a fine pocket history of research on this subject and the state of that research today.

You'll find, as you do your reading and become more expert on the work being done on a given subject, that you will have to do plenty of work to get this information organized into a clear and comprehensible narrative. You also may find that you need to zero in on a smaller sub-question than the subject you originally set out to research, in order to do the subject justice in the amount of space you have.

The thesis of your paper will be a claim about what you see as one, two, or three major features of the history of research on your chosen topic: a signpost for your reader toward the story you plan to tell.

- For example, you might want to claim that research on topic X was transformed in some important way by the introduction of some particular technology or research method.
- Or you might want to say that researchers on topic Y fall into two major categories: proponents of theory A and proponents of theory B.

- Or you may argue that researchers using methodology M generally agree on one interpretation of their results, but researchers using methodology Y have called those results into question for reasons P and Q.
- Or you could claim that research on topic Z has raised more questions about related issue R than it has answered.

You get the idea. You're going to look at what you've learned and figure out what the (accurate!) story you can tell about that history is going to be. Then, whatever you choose for this central claim, you'll use it as the organizing principle for your presentation of several selected important individual studies. So the articles you cite should be in your paper because they illustrate, or add nuance to, this central narrative, and when you summarize the research described in those articles, you will concentrate on the aspects that are most relevant to the focus of your paper.