

The Final Paper

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1 Basic Expectations for the Term Paper

As noted in the course syllabus, your final paper must be related to the cultural assimilation of immigrants and their descendants in any part of the world. Your topic does not need to be tethered to the present day or wedded to any specific intersection of time and space—i.e., as long as you are explicit about your analytic choices, you are free to broaden your temporal horizon. Moreover, you are free to revisit or build on any of the case studies covered in class (e.g., European immigrants in the United States, Muslim immigrants in the European heartland, and so on and so forth). If you choose to go this route, you *must* engage with supplementary studies or research programs that go beyond our core reading list.

2 Structure of the *Final Paper*

2.1 The Introductory Section

In your introductory section, you have to present the **central thesis** of your paper with lucidity and precision. What follows should sound quite familiar—your introductory paragraphs must provide a *brief* summary of the literature you are in conversation with and offer a clear roadmap for your exposition: i.e., what is the central question, puzzle, problem, or idea being addressed? What are the key claims being made or propositions being adjudicated? How will different theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks be syncretized to advance your arguments? Answering these questions is vital.

2.2 The Literature Review

In your second section, you should provide a more detailed overview or exegesis of the existing literature. How have other scholars studied your phenomenon of interest? What conclusions have they drawn? What are the evidentiary bases of these conclusions or claims? Identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments pervading the extant literature. Are there any “gaps” or lacunae worth filling? If so, how will *your* analysis fill these gaps and push the study of phenomenon x forward? Here, you should artfully restate your central thesis—but with more depth and specificity.

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2.3 The Central Argument

You should apply—and ideally, *synthesize*—insights from the theoretical frameworks covered in [Part I](#) of this course (e.g., classical assimilation theory, segmented assimilation theory, neo-assimilation theory, boundary-making) to clarify your phenomenon of interest. To this end, you must draw on some of our core readings—although the best papers will weave in supplementary material as well. You are free to use publicly available data to advance your central argument, but this is not required. That said, adducing some “empirical” evidence (e.g., by citing mass opinion or sociodemographic data) or using *exemplars* (e.g., theoretical models that illustrate the point being made) may be helpful. More generally, although some of the concepts discussed in [Part I](#) are contested and multivocal in nature, students should not mischaracterize any of the arguments sketched by the scholars we have engaged with in class.

3 Formatting Conventions

The final paper should be 10-20 pages in length, inclusive of references. The text must be double-spaced and formatted in a 12-point Garamond or Times New Roman font. Margins should be set to 1 inch on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right). You are free to use either an [APA](#) or [ASA](#) citation style to manage references and bibliographies. If you haven’t done so already, you may want to invest in [Zotero](#) to manage your citations. More generally, you must use subheadings to organize your arguments.