

IS390S Outline

The purpose of an outline is to break your project into smaller sections that can be addressed independently, and figure out how they fit together to form a story or argument. Breaking a large project into sections is a crucial skill for managing projects of any type, and thinking in terms of relationships between sections can help structure an otherwise unmanageably large project. This strategy scales indefinitely; a series is made of books, a book of chapters, a chapter of sections, and a section of examples or arguments. Each should, ideally, be planned so that it can be worked on in relative isolation and later integrated into the larger project. Modularity—it works in software, and it works in writing too.

1 Due Date & Upload Instructions

The proposal is due Friday, October 19 by 11:59 pm. Please upload a Microsoft Word (or LibreOffice) document by attaching it to the assignment item in Sakai under “Assignments.” Please title that document with your last name, an underscore, and the word “outline” (e.g. smith_outline.doc). If you are working in a group, use both names in alphabetical order (e.g. doe_smith_outline.doc) and have each member of the group submit a copy of the initial hand in.

2 Assignment

Your outline should contain the following items:

2.1 Abstract & Thesis Statement

Write an abstract for your project, providing a little background about your subject, and concluding with a clear thesis statement of your argument, or the central discovery or point of interest of your story or project. What have you come to believe (if only tentatively for the moment) is going on

with your topic that would be surprising or interesting to your reader? (200 words)

2.2 Logical Sections

Divide your project into a few logical sections and write a paragraph describing each and how that section relates to your central thesis and the other sections (100 words each)

Sections might be distinct events or texts to discuss, as in Kline's divisions of his paper into cybernetic background, the correspondences surrounding McCarthy's editing of *Automata Studies*, and the documents detailing the negotiations for the Rockefeller funding for the Dartmouth conference. They could also be thematic groupings of collections of related observations, as with Hoffman's distinction between flipping, partitioning, and collapsing in his discussion of the CML and DRG research labs. If you are writing a short story, these divisions may be scenes you plan to write, or even characters you want to profile. For a programming project, these might include milestones for the completion of the project. Sequence these sections in the order they will appear in the text, or in some other logical order if you are not composing a linear text. Those with non standard formats who are having difficulty conceptualizing their project in logical units are encouraged to talk it over with the instructor.

2.3 Sources, Arguments, and Plot Points

Take the list of 10 sources or arguments from the proposal and group them under the appropriate logical sections of your project (at least 10 total, aim for a good balance between sections).

If one section is about background context, for instance, list all the sources relevant to discussing the background under that section. This should give a sense of the things you plan to write about in each section. You may, of course, add, remove, or modify any item from the proposal while composing the outline, as it is expected that your understanding of the topic will change, but you should still end up with at least 10. Note that this does not have to be a literal "source" you want to discuss, but could just as easily be a point you want to make in the appropriate section.

Sequence these items within each logical section in the order you imagine they will appear within that section. If it makes sense, you might want to include further logical subsections within a logical section to better structure your project, but it is not required.

3 Revision Policy

As per general course policy, as long as you hand in a draft by the initial due date that meets the basic length requirements, you can continue to revise it, with feedback, until it passes, up until the last day of class.