

# Final Conference Paper Abstract & Presentation

The final assignment for our course will provide an opportunity for each of you to explore more fully an issue related to the course topics in which you are most interested. This final assignment will also give you practice in a specific form of scholarship: a humanities-style conference paper. This assignment has three main components.

1) **Abstract.** (Due in to Moodle by class time on Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.)

Your abstract should be a three paragraph document (no more than one page, single-spaced) that succinctly describes the topic you are exploring, the argument you plan to make about it, and why your argument matters. Your abstract **must begin with a title**. As a basic guide, the 3 paragraphs that follow should cover the following:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph: Situating Your Argument** *Describe enough basic/background information about your topic or the particular texts you plan to explore so that your reader can understand your argument. It should be clear from this first paragraph what your topic is, and what key questions you are raising about this topic.*
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph: Your Argument** *This paragraph should describe what you will “do” in your paper. It should contain a very clear statement of your argument (for example, “In this paper, I argue that...”). Typically, it will contain many active verbs describing the marvelous things you will be doing with your paper (i.e., “Through an analysis of..., I reveal...”).*
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph: The Stakes of Your Argument** *While this paragraph may, to some degree, continue unfolding your argument, the key question this paragraph needs to address is: “So what?” Why does your argument matter? Why should your reader care about this topic? Think of this as your final “pitch” for your paper; your last attempt to convince your reader that your paper is important, fascinating, and should be selected for the conference.*

Your abstract will be worth a total of 20 points, or 5% of your final grade, calculated according to the following rubric:

Title	2 pts	<i>Includes an informative, thoughtful title that compels audience interest</i>
Adherence to Assignment	2 pts	<i>Abstract follows the specified three-paragraph form</i>
Situating the Argument	4 pts	<i>Provides necessary background information; clearly introduces the topic; identifies the key questions you are raising about the topic</i>
The Argument	4 pts	<i>Clearly states the argument you will be making and suggests the basic grounds/reasoning for the argument</i>
Stakes of the Argument	4 pts	<i>Speaks to why the argument is important and compels the reader’s interest in your paper</i>
Style & Mechanics	4 pts	<i>Written in a first-person voice; chooses words for their precise meaning and uses an appropriate level of specificity; tone of essay appropriate for audience, sentences are varied, well-structured and focused; Free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, especially those that confuse the reader or block his or her ability to understand the argument</i>

2) **Conference Presentation.** (Due 11/5, 11/7, 11/12, or 11/14. Dates will be assigned after abstracts have been submitted and papers have been grouped into themed panels.)

In the final two weeks of class, you will present your conference paper (reading it aloud) as part of a panel before an audience. Your presentation should last ~15 minutes (the equivalent of ~7-7.5 double-spaced pages). Once all the papers are delivered, you should expect to answer questions from the audience. Your peers and your professor will provide you with written feedback about the quality and coherency of your argument which you may use for revision before you hand in your final paper.

This oral delivery of your conference paper will be worth a total of 40 points, or 10% of your final grade, calculated according to the following rubric:

Clarity of Central Argument	6 pts	<i>Clearly communicates a central idea/thesis/argument near the beginning of the presentation that is specific, arguable, non-obvious and argued throughout the rest of the paper</i>
Introductory Materials & Stakes	4 pts	<i>Introduction engages the audience by revealing the stakes of the argument; defines any essential terms; gives clear sense of topics/argument to come; establishes the speaker's first-person voice</i>
Organization & Coherence	6 pts	<i>Claims arranged in a logical order; transitional devices and verbal signposts help move from one idea to the next and guide the reader through the progression of ideas; each new point clearly relates to paper's central idea</i>
Conclusion	4 pts	<i>Conclusion is clearly signaled to the audience; provides a satisfactory summation and relates back to the introduction; ideally reminds reader of argument's stakes and further possible questions/implications/directions for investigation/action</i>
Use of Evidence & Sources	6 pts	<i>Offers appropriate evidence in support of claims; explains connection between evidence and main ideas; avoids generalizations; verbally identifies the source of information wherever necessary; sources are credible and authoritative</i>
Verbal Presentation/ Use of Language	4 pts	<i>Uses language familiar to the audience and appropriate for the setting that helps to establish the speaker's credibility; speaks with grammatical correctness, clear articulation and pronunciation; limited use of filler words ("um" or "like")</i>
Non-verbal Presentation	4 pts	<i>Confident, well-paced, dynamic delivery; good posture; good eye contact with entire audience; effective vocal variety, rate, volume, articulation, effective use of pauses; responds with poise, confidence and precision to audience questions</i>
Audience Connection	3 pts	<i>Connects with audience via eye contact, humor, personal appeals or questions, emotiveness, etc.; audience remains engaged throughout presentation; communicates how stakes of argument are relevant to the audience</i>
Time Management	3 pts	<i>Stays within 14-16 minutes</i>

3) **Formal Conference Paper.** (Due to Moodle by 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.)

After receiving feedback from your audience following your presentation, you will have an opportunity to revise your conference paper in any way you might wish. A copy of your final conference paper will be due by the end of our scheduled exam time. This formal paper will be worth 60 points, or 15% of your final grade, calculated according to the following rubric:

Thesis Statement	5 pts	<i>Clearly communicates a central idea/thesis that is specific, arguable, non-obvious and argued throughout the rest of your paper</i>
Introductory Materials & Stakes	4 pts	<i>Defines any essential terms; gives clear sense of topics to come; provides the stakes of your argument</i>
Organization & Coherence	8 pts	<i>Claims arranged in a logical order; transitional devices help move from one idea to the next; each paragraph clearly relates to paper's central idea; guides the reader through the progression of ideas</i>
Conclusion	4 pts	<i>Conclusion clearly addresses/completes the opening argument; provides necessary summary without redundant rehashing; ideally reminds reader of the stakes of the argument and further possible questions/implications/directions for investigation or action</i>
Use of Evidence	10 pts	<i>Offers appropriate evidence in support of claims; explains connection between evidence and main ideas; avoids generalizations; with textual evidence, uses direct quotation, dialogue or specific visual descriptions in place of empty plot summary</i>
Sources & Citations	8 pts	<i>Evidentiary sources are credible and authoritative; citations (both in-text and in your works cited) are in a clear and consistent citation style (MLA or APA) and include all necessary information; Works Cited is arranged alphabetically and citations are complete and accurate</i>
Writing Style	5 pts	<i>Written in a first-person voice; chooses words for their precise meaning and uses an appropriate level of specificity; tone of essay appropriate for audience, sentences are varied, well-structured and focused</i>
Mechanics	5 pts	<i>Free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, especially those that confuse the reader or block his or her ability to understand the argument</i>
Engagement with Materials & Originality	6 pts	<i>Essay's claims and discussion of them show a deep level of thought and engagement with the text/ideas; Ideas expressed reflect original thought</i>
Quality of Revision	5 pts	<i>Final version of essay reflects clear attention to incorporating suggestions for revision from peers and/or Professor</i>

# Sample Call for Papers

## N.A.N.A.S.

NORTH AMERICAN NETWORK IN AGING STUDIES CONFERENCE

Aging and Age Studies: Foundations and Formations  
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, May 19-22, 2015

The North American Network in Aging Studies (NANAS) was established in 2013 to bring together scholars and researchers from across a variety of disciplines—humanities, arts, gerontology, anthropology, sociology, health care, and others—interested in critical examinations of how age is conceptualized, defined, experienced, performed, and critiqued. At this inaugural research conference, we seek to build on the foundations and define new formations in this vital and growing field of inquiry.

We invite scholarship and research that provides fresh insights into the changing manifestations and interpretations of age through engagement with cultural texts (e.g., literature, history, media, public policy, adaptive technology), as well as qualitative or other meaning-based approaches. Presentations might investigate local and global implications of age and aging; consider how diverse approaches to studying age can enable richer understanding in traditional academic disciplines; develop new, cross-disciplinary methodologies that expose the often-unacknowledged effects of age relations and age assumptions; and/or examine ethical, political, philosophical, or practical questions about what it means to be humans living through time. Additional topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Intergenerational relations: philosophical, historical, literary and/or gerontological insights
- Problematizing age: other ways to organize human life
- Memory and forgetting as personal and cultural phenomena
- Age narratives
- Creativity and imagination as a site of knowledge in old age
- Age and the environment; the meaning of space and place
- Hegemony of biological and non-biological models of aging
- Morality, spirituality and ethics as mediated by age
- Age across cultural, regional, or historical differences
- Gerontology meets age studies: crossroads of science and meaning
- Age and the body
- Age across cultural, regional, or historical differences
- Gerontological literacy and illiteracy
- Beyond the young/old binary
- Disciplinary challenges in an interdisciplinary field
- Age and personal objects
- Age, technology, and new media
- Illustrating, dramatizing, choreographing, composing, and/or performing age
- Defining age through public policy
- Age across cultural, regional, or historical differences
- Geography, politics, economics, and the lived experience of aging
- Age in the classroom
- Age and sexuality
- Age and identity
- Age-based roles in celebrations, ceremonies, and/or other public events
- Age and dis/ability
- Imagining age
- Age, nation, development: postcolonial paradigms

- ANY TOPIC THAT RELATES TO COURSE MATERIALS/DISCUSSIONS FROM AGING, SEX & THE BODY

**Abstracts (of no more than one page, single spaced) are due to Moodle by 9:40 a.m. on Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup>. Each submission must include your name and the title of your paper.**

## Advice for Preparing & Delivering Conference Papers

### **Time and Length**

A general rule of thumb is that it takes approximately 2 minutes to read aloud one double-spaced page typed in 12-point font. Thus, for an approximately 12-15 minute presentation, your paper should be approximately 5.5-7 pages in length. You will need to time your presentation before delivering it to ensure that it stays within the 12-15 minute time range.

### **Format**

Writing a conference paper is not the same as writing a traditional humanities paper. The most important difference to keep in mind as you write is that this will be an *oral* presentation; thus, you need to ensure that what you write will effectively translate to speech. Here are some specific ways to help make this happen:

- Avoid long, complex sentences, especially ones with extra punctuation used to help make the sentences clear. Your audience won't be able to see your dashes, semi-colons and parentheses, and will be more likely to get lost in the point you are trying to make.
- Make your transitions very clear and provide oral clues. Things that might sound ridiculous in a written paper—such as “I have three points. The first of these...”—will often be very helpful when read aloud.
- If you include quotations, indicate this to your audience by saying “quote....end quote.” If you're planning to use lengthy quotations (not a great idea in general), consider providing your audience with a handout, or putting the quote up on a PowerPoint slide for your audience to follow along with. You might also provide them the entire quote in this way, but choose to only emphasize a portion of the quote by reading it aloud.
- Try to hear the text aloud in your head as you write and make sure that the writing voice sounds like *your voice*. You have to feel comfortable reading this, after all! Certainly, read the text aloud to yourself as you revise. This will help you to identify places where your writing is awkward, too wordy, or too confusing.
- Whether you choose to include these in the written paper you hand in or not, know that you are welcome to include moments of extemporaneous speech. Think of these like an “aside” where a character in a play directly addresses the audience. You might take a moment to explain a comment, add a quick story or joke, etc. Such moments of unscripted, direct connection with your audience are likely to make for a much more varied, interesting and effective presentation.
- For the written paper you hand in, you will need to provide correct citations (in any citation style you prefer) and a bibliography for any works you have referenced. Clearly, you won't be reading your citations aloud to your audience, so make sure that if you need to credit any ideas, quotations, etc., you name the author/work/etc. within the talk you are delivering.

### **Presentation**

In humanities conferences, the expectation is that presenters will read their papers aloud instead of speaking from notes or an outline. However, this does not mean that writing the paper is the only “preparation” you need to make for your presentation! Here are some tips for how to deliver an effective conference paper:

- Practice, practice, practice! Run this presentation by your peers, your professors and in front of the mirror. The more you read through it, the more comfortable you will be with the material, the more you'll be able to look up from your paper, and the more you'll know when you need to offer your audience aural cues (see the next point).
- Identify the parts of your paper that your audience may not as readily follow, or the places where you are making your most important points, and make notes to yourself to offer aural cues to your audience. For example, you can tell yourself to pause, to emphasize certain words or phrases, to stop and look directly at the audience as you say something, to add inflection to your voice to indicate emotion, etc. (Typically, such notes to yourself would be hand-written notes on the copy of the paper you are reading from, but not included in the formal version you hand in.)
- Maintain eye contact with your audience as much as possible. This may be hard while reading from a paper, but this is the reason you need to practice delivering your paper (so you know parts of it well enough to look up at the audience as you finish your thought). Remember, too, that it can be helpful to build in pauses where you look directly at your audience.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Make sure you are breathing normally. Relax!
- While visual aids are not necessary, you are certainly welcome to prepare hand outs or a Power Point presentation to accompany your talk. However, such visual aids should NOT function as an outline of your talk. They would be there only as a supplement (for example, to show your audience images or link to a video of a performance you are talking about, to provide a visual reference for a lengthy quote you are referring to, to show pictures from your various experiential learning experiences that supplement the verbal descriptions you are offering, etc.). If you are planning to use any visual aids, practice with these beforehand as well. You will likely need to make notes on the presentation copy of your paper to remind yourself when you need to pass something out, change to a new slide, etc.
- Do not go over your time limit. The only way to ensure this is to practice your presentation beforehand.