

Final Paper Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for your **Final Paper** (which, as discussed at the beginning of the course, is worth 30% of your overall grade):

1. The paper should be approximately 1,500–1,750 words long. (This is approximately 6–7 pages double spaced with 12-point font for most fonts.)
2. You should present your personal “reading” of a science fiction “text.”
3. By “reading” I mean present an interpretation—an argument about how we *ought* to read or understand a text.

For example, my personal reading of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is that it is less a “trolley problem” story, and more an attack on the trolley problem, and on the propaganda in mainstream society that argues for trolley-problem-like solutions to the moral dilemmas that face us as a modern society.

4. By “text” I mean any creation of SF: a short story or novel, a film or television series, a comic book or graphic novel, a podcast, or any other work is acceptable. The one rule is that the work should originally be in English, and you should engage with the English language content. (Reading a translation is okay to help yourself, but you should also engage with the original English content.)

5. Your midterm paper will **NOT** be graded on the following criteria:

- correct use of citations/footnotes
- grammar and punctuation
- whether your view and the professor’s align or agree

6. Your midterm paper **WILL** be graded on the following criteria:

- quality of engagement with the text: how deeply or attentively are you trying to “read” the work? What parts of the text get your “alarm bells” ringing, and what understanding do you gain from reading those moments closely?
- quality of engagement with core concepts and questions of our course: how is this work SF, and how does that shape our reading of it? How does this work relate to other SF texts we’ve studied? What kinds of questions occur to you while “reading” the text?
- quality of ideas: what kinds of “answers” or “responses” do you offer to the questions raised by the text?
- paper length (not too long, not too short)

Of course, my ability to assess your ideas, reading, and engagement depends on my ability to understand what you are expressing in your work. For that reason, your English writing ability may impact your grade if I cannot understand what you have written. However, I will make an effort to consult with students first before assigning a grade in such instances.

7. You will not use any AI in the writing of your paper. You can use a dictionary or translation software, but should not use any AI for any purpose when writing your paper.

8. You will submit your final paper online using **Blackboard**. It will be due ~~at the end of Week 15~~ **on the first day of Week 16**. A submission link for submitting your paper will be provided in the **Week 16** folder. This folder will be available from at least **Week 15** onward.