

Tips for paper writing Psy 20
Prof. Camerer

0. For Spring 2002, I have extended the deadline to Wednesday June 5. Since this is an extra 9 days after the original deadline announced in the syllabus at the start of class, no extensions will be granted except for medical excuses with notes from the health center or a doctor.

1. The paper should be 8 pages or a little longer. Use a 12 point font, 1.5 line spacing, and 1" margins. You should consult 3-5 sources. Be sure to distinguish between serious scientific research (say reported in journals or texts that cite journals) and opinions, pseudo-science, and so forth. (In the domain of psychology, the way in which public perceptions-mental models-interact with scientific data can itself be an interesting topic. For example, if you wrote about repressed memories the most interesting topic is why therapists are utterly convinced by their patient's memories but cognitive psychologists are more skeptical.)
2. One way to get started is by looking at Trends in Cognitive Science (very nice short reviews, a little bit "insider" but you should be able to read many of them or get the main points) or the Annual Review of Psychology. "Trends" has short articles and the Annual Review is longer. They will give a good overview and you can then dig back into the literature some from there.
3. The goal of the paper should be for you to broaden what you know by writing about a topic we have not covered (or only briefly) in class, or deepen what you know by writing about a topic we covered, but going into more detail. Write about something you are personally curious about. (I also use the papers as a kind of "marketing research" to develop topics for the class in future years.) That could include numerical cognition (see packet readings), scientific genius, bilinguality (if you are bilingual), and so forth. If you want to email me with a paper topic idea feel free and I'll try to respond within half a day.
4. Papers I really enjoyed reading in recent years included: What is the neural chemistry of being in love? How does drug addiction work? What is Capgras delusion? Many others were on less offbeat topics but very thorough. Here are some topics I'm interested in if you don't have anything else that grabs you: "Theory of mind", mirror neurons and imitation, pathology and scientific creativity (is the "maniacal creative genius artist/scientist" stereotype often true?), moral judgment, emotion, etc.
5. I grade based on whether I feel that you presented a clear case that was well-researched and interesting. I define "interesting" as an idea which was not obvious, but understandable after it was discovered, potentially important in

practice, and leads to more interesting questions. (In patent law, patent applications must pass three tests-nonobviousness, novelty, and utility-which are similar to my criteria for interestingness.) Your paper should address the following questions: Why is this important? What's known? What has been learned recently? What are the surprises (unexpected discoveries)? What is the scientific frontier?