

# Critical Academic Writing: Guidelines for the Writing Assignments

Semester 2, University of Warsaw, Faculty of Psychology, 2026

For this class, you are to turn in several writing assignments. They build on each other: the literature review leads to the knowledge gap statement, which leads to both the critical analysis of an article and the introduction to your research. The final paper is a revision of the previous assignments, plus some new writing.

The assignments are to be turned in on the class date, as indicated in the syllabus. The final paper has its own specific due date. I expect text – bullet points and tables are not allowed. The format is Word docx or ODT. I will not accept PDF or Google Drive Docs. Assignments have a word count. I will accept assignments over the word count only at my discretion. If you use ChatGPT or other AI assistants, you must acknowledge its use at the beginning of the assignment. I used ChatGPT for portions of this assignment guide. Your name, the date, the course name, and the assignment name should be at the beginning of these assignments. Your assignment files should be properly named, i.e. your name, course acronym (CAW), assignment name, and date. Please email assignments to [jdubrow2000@gmail.com](mailto:jdubrow2000@gmail.com)

## At a glance

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Note</b>
Notes on “Leadership Lab”	Class 2	ca. 200 words
AI-assisted thesis statement and title	Class 3	ca. 200 words
Literature review	Class 4	min. 5 academic sources (500 words, plus references)
Knowledge gap statement	Class 5	100 words
Critical analysis of an article	Class 6	A critical analysis of an article published in a psychology journal (300 words)
An introduction to your research	Class 7	300 words
Final Research Report	One week after the last class	1100 words

I grade these assignments based on (a) how well you have understood the elements of each assignment, communicated in class and your readings, (b) the extent to which you follow the directions in these guidelines, and (c) basic grammar, meaning that I understood what you wrote and there is an acceptable level, according to me, of grammatical and spelling errors.

## More about the assignments

### Literature review

A literature review is a synthesis of extant research on a specific topic within your research field. It should provide a structured and systematic understanding of the current state of knowledge and prevailing relevant theories. It will help you to identify gaps in the extant literature and contextualize research questions, thereby drawing the boundaries of the knowledge gap and the contribution the article (or MA thesis) will make to the field.

You are to write a literature review using five academic articles in the field of your research. Begin with a sentence that introduces the topic. Then, spend the rest of the ca. 480 words left on presenting the five academic articles' key facts and insights.

### Knowledge gap statement

All valuable research articles must contribute to the field. To identify the contribution, the writer must tell the reader what we know, and what we do not know, about the specific portion of the field that your empirical research article is about. E.g. the format of “whereas we know this...” and “we do not know that...” The presentation of what we know and what we do not know is the knowledge gap statement.

Based on the literature review from the previous assignment, write a brief knowledge gap statement.

### Critical analysis of an article

As we build toward the introduction, we move from mere summary of the literature to a critical analysis of that literature. A critical analysis of an article is a careful and systematic examination of the content, arguments, and methodology used by the author(s) to evaluate the article's strengths and weaknesses. Consider the following: Assess the clarity and relevance of the research question and hypotheses in terms of how well they fit the literature they cite. Assess whether the author(s) provided a clear and convincing theoretical foundation to support their research. Explore the data and methods, e.g. whether the measures fit the concepts, whether the sample is appropriate, etc. Of the conclusion and/or discussion, assess how well the author(s) addressed the research question.

Choose any article, in English, published in a major journal in psychology in the last 10 years. Provide the citation of the article in APA format.

## An introduction to your research

A traditional introduction has a problem-solution format: it provides the topic, the knowledge gap statement, the research question, and a statement as to how the research addresses the knowledge gap. You frame the problem in the knowledge gap statement and the research question. A solution is the statement of what the paper will do to address, or “fill,” the knowledge gap.

You are to write the introduction to an empirical research article. This introduction is based on revisions to previous assignments – literature review and knowledge gap statement – in 300 words. Below is a suggested outline of the introduction.

1. Statement of the topic
2. Two sentences on what we know about the topic
3. Two sentences on what we do not know about the topic
4. Research question
5. Statement of how the article will address the research question

## Final Research Report

You are to write a paper based on the previous assignments, plus one new section. It consists of revisions to: (a) abstract; (b) Introduction, this time including a thesis statement and research question; (c) Critical literature review; and (d) Data and methods section. The final paper is to be 1100 words.

We discussed the introduction above. In the structure of empirical research articles in psychology, a critical literature review is a part of the Introduction. The data and methods section should be brief. You may not be at the stage where you have data and methods. As such, choose something that you may be able to do for this research article. In this section, you describe the mode of data collection and form of analysis. Please follow this outline and suggested word count for each.

- Title of the paper (ca. 10 - 20 words, not included in the word count)
- Your name (not included in the word count)
- Abstract (200 words)
- Introduction (ca. 300 words)
- Critical literature review (ca. 400 words)
- Data and methods (ca. 200 words)
- References (at least five, not included in the word count)