Guidelines for the final paper

I told you repeatedly early in the semester that if you too care on the early assignments, the last part of the course would be pretty easy. Welcome to the last part of the course. The comments below should help you think about how to put that all together into an original research paper.

If you have any questions, email me at any point.

**The Writing Center.** As I’ve said in class a couple of times, you need to go to the Writing Center for an individual session. You need to have most of your material together and be started on writing before you do it. Go here to get an appointment: [http://www.writing.wisc.edu/Individual/index.html](http://www.writing.wisc.edu/Individual/index.html). On homework 8, you will need to give me the time of the appointment and the name of the person you met with. (You can take this sheet with you to the appointment if you want … the instructor may find it helpful in giving you guidance.)

**Goal.** Your job with the final paper is to contribute to our understanding of language and immigration in Wisconsin. For some, that’ll be a case study of one community, for others, that’ll be gathering and analyzing data about how English is spoken in Wisconsin (with connections to immigration), and for yet others, it’ll be using existing historical and other sources to draw new conclusions about how language works in Wisconsin socially, educationally and historically. These are all important areas. Your first job is to state your specific goal clearly and cleanly.

**Developing the paper.** Once again, the Writing Center has great resources: [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PlanResearchPaper.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PlanResearchPaper.html). What you’ll see is that we’ve spent the semester doing the main pieces of preparation: The whole semester has been about finding, narrowing and focusing topics and finding and reading sources. What you need to do now is organize what you have around your hypothesis or research question in line with the goals above. (Some people have already written outlines and some people don’t use outlines at all. Do what works for you.) The meat of the guidelines linked above cover the introduction, body and conclusion. Use those!

**Drawing on previous material.** For all of you, you’ll be able to draw on what you’re writing for assignments 7 and 8 — they should feed the paper directly. For some of you, the final paper builds very directly on earlier assignments. You are free to use material from any of all of those assignments in the final paper. This will not mean using the same prose, but integrating what you found in those assignments into a bigger picture.

**Length.** As the syllabus indicates, the first draft of the final paper should be over **2000 words** of text. (That means counting footnotes but not references.) That’s just part of meeting the CommB requirements. For most of you, the draft will be longer and for virtually everybody the final version will be considerably longer. But as I’ve said in class and above, we’re concerned with
making a real contribution to understanding language and immigration in Wisconsin than in length. If you can do that in 2000 words, that’s absolutely fine.

Mechanics.

• You need a clear organization and structure. In linguistics, we do this in two key ways. First, we divide papers into numbered sections, like “0. Introduction” and “1. Background”. There’s no rule on what sections you need or how many, but this helps the reader know where we are in the argument. Second, we give a ‘roadmap’ paragraph, usually at the end of the introduction. (You’ve seen these in some of our readings, in fact.) That just tells the reader what’s coming: Section 1 will do this and section 2 will do that, etc., so that we can see the big picture of how the argument will flow.

• You will be citing previous research. The Writing Center has very good guidance on how and when to do that: http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Documentation.html. Make sure that you cite work you use appropriately and fully.

• The Writing Center gives you links to the main citation styles (American Psychological Association, Modern Language Association, etc. Linguistics has only recently developed its own style. You’re free to use any of these, but I prefer the linguistics style (hey, I helped develop it — I’m not neutral!): http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/unified-style-sheet.