

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**  
**Fall Semester, 2005**

**MIT 6.805/6.806/STS085: Final papers**

The major factor in your grade will be work on a project or paper. You can work alone or work with a partner. This will be a major project, and you should expect to devote a lot of time to it throughout the rest of semester. The project can be purely a research paper, or it can involve design and implementation (but this still requires a paper).

**Projects**

If you'd like to do a project, you and your partner (if you are working with a partner) should send mail to 6.805-staff before day of the midterm exam, describing what you would like to do. Note that much of the discussion below for papers applies to projects as well (and the project will need to produce a final paper as a report), but we'll arrange requirements and deadline after you contact us.

**Papers**

The final paper should be a substantial piece of work. We're expecting papers about 20 pages (one author) or 40 pages (2 authors), but we're more interested in quality than in length. Papers associated with projects could be shorter than this. We'll make specific arrangements for each project.

For examples of the level of work you should aspire to, look at some [posted examples of 6.805 papers from Fall 2003](#). This is a bit of a stretch goal, since two of the papers here ended up being published.

**Topic**

We'd like you to pick a topic in the area of privacy and transparency. But if there is something else related to Internet policy that you feel passionate about, we'll consider approving that as a topic.

**Approach and Scope of Paper**

We are certainly interested in your opinions and ideas. But you should treat this paper as research and analysis, not just venting or making unsubstantiated assertions. On the other hand, we **do** expect you to have opinions and a point of view on your topic -- not to just write a book report or a summary of what other people have said.

Your paper should have a *thesis*, i.e., an idea, claim, or argument that you are putting forward and defending in the paper. We expect that your paper will start out by stating the thesis in the first one or two paragraphs, and that you will proceed to support the

thesis in a focused and coherent way. If you are unclear on what we mean by this, have a look at note from the UNC Writing Center: [Thesis Statements](#).

Paper grades will take into account both the quality of your ideas and the quality of your writing. If you got feedback from rotisserie assignments suggesting that your writing needs improvement, please take that advice seriously.

Be sure to back up your arguments with facts and by citing source material. There is a tremendous amount of reference material available on-line in the course archives and other places on the net. If you cite unpublished on-line material, you can include citations or links to the appropriate URLs in the bibliography.

Note: For citing material published on the Internet, list the URL followed by a note that says "(visited XXX)" where XXX is the date that you last visited the page. For an explanation of how to cite legal cases, see [Introduction to Basic Legal Citation](#) by Peter W. Martin of Cornell Law School. The easiest place to start is in the example section (chapter 3).

## Schedule

Here is the schedule of milestones for your work:

- **Day of the Midterm Exam:** For projects: Project proposal. This should be one or two paragraphs explaining the project you'd like to work on. Send this by email to 6.805-staff
- **L8:** For papers: Write a 1-page description of the topic you plan to investigate in your paper, and how you propose to go about this. For example, who are you planning to talk to? What sources do you plan to consult? This will be due on the rotisserie, and we'll get back to you with comments.
- **L10:** Turn in a couple of paragraphs that include the issue or problem/question you are addressing, a tentative statement of your thesis (that answers this question), the major arguments you will make in support of the thesis, and at least six references (or people) that you have consulted in doing your research.

Les Perelman of the Writing Program will be available between Nov. 17 and Dec. 12 to provide helpful feedback to individuals and groups on the writing quality of papers. To schedule a session, email TA. He will email back possible times plus a request for the person or persons to send a draft in advance.

- **4 days after L11:** Turn in a complete draft of the paper. This should be a nearly finished draft, with all sections written, and needing only some polish and revision in response to our feedback.
- **6 days after L12:** Final paper due.

## Turning in the final paper

We'll say more about this later in the semester. For now, we'll just point out that we require good quality writing. Papers with spelling, grammatical, or stylistic errors will be penalized in grading, or might even not be accepted. Good resources on writing are [The Mayfield Handbook of Technical and Scientific Writing](#), by Les Perelman, Ed Barrett, and Jim Paradis (available on the Web at MIT only), and [Grammar and Style Notes](#) by Jack Lynch.