

5 'Ready-Made' Research Paper Topics

Stuck finding a research paper topic? The following topics are available to help you to develop a passing research paper over the next few weeks, including suggested 'starter' sources. **For all students:** *Remember I am more interested in your critical thinking—your ideas and arguments about several of your sources—backed up by several citations. Don't try to 'report' or summarize on all your sources; instead, try to create a thoughtful 'conversation' about your topic with your thoughts on several of your 'core' sources.* **IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC, PLEASE CHOOSE ONE OF THE TOPICS BELOW AND WRITE IT UP FOR YOUR MILESTONE #1 WITHIN THE NEXT 48 HOURS. DO NOT CHANGE YOUR TOPIC IF YOU ALREADY HAVE ONE.**

◆ **SAMPLE TOPIC 1 -- The Portrayal of Autism in *Temple Grandin***

1) Starter Source 1

Temple Grandin (2010) (movie = MAIN TEXT)

The citation for this film is here: <https://bit.ly/3uNVZ4H>

2) Starter Source 2

Find a film review of this movie on www.nytimes.com.

3) Starter Sources 3 & 4

Find encyclopedia articles on 'autism' and 'Temple Grandin' in the Gale Virtual Reference Library.

THESIS QUESTION

Is this movie accurate or not in its portrayal of the causes / symptoms / outcomes of autism (and the real life story of Temple Grandin)?

◆ SAMPLE TOPIC 2 -- The Portrayal of Artificial Intelligence in *The Matrix*

1) Starter Source 1

The Matrix (1999) (movie = MAIN TEXT)

The citation for this film is here: <https://bit.ly/3uNVZ4H>

2) Starter Source 2

Find a film review of this movie on *ProQuest Historical Newspapers / The New York Times* (a review from 1999).

3) Starter Source 3

Find an encyclopedia article on 'artificial intelligence' in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

4) Starter Source 4

Find an interview or article with Stephen Hawking (or Elon Musk) on the dangers of future AI in *LexisNexis / Nexis Uni*.

THESIS QUESTION

Is this movie pessimistic or optimistic about the possibility that machines could think like humans and will there be an existential risk from this kind of artificial intelligence?

◆ SAMPLE TOPIC 3 -- The Portrayal of Human Cloning in *The Island*

1) Starter Source 1

The Island (2005) (movie = MAIN TEXT)

The citation for this film is here: <https://bit.ly/3uNVZ4H>

2) Starter Source 2

Find a film review of this movie on www.nytimes.com.

3) Starter Source 3

Find an encyclopedia article on 'human cloning' (or 'therapeutic human cloning') in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

4) Starter Source 4

Find a journalistic article on ‘3D organ printing and stem cells’ in *LexisNexis / Nexis Uni*.

(We probably won’t need ‘therapeutic human cloning’ to create replacement organs like in *The Island*. Today, medical researchers are using stem cells and 3D printing to create organs in labs – outside of human bodies.)

THESIS QUESTION(S)

How does this movie describe the ethical dangers of using human clones for replacement body parts? Is this movie pessimistic or optimistic about this kind of human cloning? By portraying the characters Lincoln Six Echo and Jordan Two Delta as real people – not carbon copies without their own thoughts and imaginations as in many other sci-fi movies about clones, what does this suggest about future human clones?

◆ SAMPLE TOPIC 4 -- The Promise and Peril of Social Media and Its Effects on Our Attention Span

1) Starter Source 1

Nicholas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” – MAIN TEXT

The online article is here:

<https://theatlntc/2lw3T3f>

2) Starter Source 2

Find an encyclopedia article on ‘attention span’ in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

3) Starter Source 3

Find a video interview with Nicholas Carr on YouTube where he explains the possible negative effects of the Internet / social media on our attention spans.

4) Starter Source 4

In September 2021, The Wall Street Journal did a series of investigative articles on Facebook’s impact on young users -- and its denial of the negative impact of its apps. You can find it here -- <https://on.wsj.com/3oJKOdo>. (Remember as a CUNY student you have a free WSJ digital subscription if you are prompted for a logon to read these articles!)

THESIS QUESTION(S)

Can Facebook and social media affect our attention spans (and happiness) negatively? Are there problems with social media? How are social media platforms like Facebook engineered to keep us swiping? (And are there any ways to fix this?)

◆ **SAMPLE TOPIC 5 -- The Promise and Peril of iPhones and iPads for Apple Factory Workers**

1) Starter Source 1 – MAIN TEXT

Charles Duhigg and David Barboza, “In China, Human Costs Are Built into an iPad”

The online article is here:

<https://nyti.ms/1hZjObW>

2) Starter Source 2

Find an encyclopedia article on ‘factory labor’ in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

3) Starter Source 3

Apple iPad 2010 Original Ad – Corporate Advertisement

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twzRX982DNQ>

4) Starter Source 4

Apple Chinese Factory – Foxconn Nightline – MSM Journalism

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmLsV9cSk0o>

5) Starter Source 5

The Truth of the Apple iPad Behind Foxconn’s Lies – Citizen Journalism

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3YFGixp9Jw>

THESIS QUESTION(S)

Apple is a very successful company that was one of the first companies to have a market value over \$1 trillion. Millions of Apple consumers love their iPhones and iPads, which are treated as consumer objects of desire.

In fact, the ways these magical devices are created do not match the official version from Apple. For years and even today, Apple factory workers (in Foxconn plants in China) are overworked and underpaid. Does it matter that these devices are created under conditions that most of us would not want for ourselves or a family member? (And why don't consumers care?)