

Research Paper Topics List. Guidelines and Marking Rubric

Topics List:

1. Jewish Identity and how it was preserved throughout the ages
2. Giving selfishly vs. giving selflessly
3. Purpose vs. meaning
4. Charity: the world's view vs. the Torah's view
5. Charity: giving vs. taking
6. Charity: How much am I supposed to give?
7. Rights vs. responsibilities
8. The role of *mitzvot* (the 613 commandments) in Judaism
9. *Mitzvot*: the connection between the G-dly and the mundane
10. The Ten Commandments vs. the U.S. Constitution
11. Kosher
12. *Tefilin*
13. The *mezuzah*
14. Shabbat: laws, rituals, customs, and history
15. Jewish holidays: laws, rituals, customs, and history
16. The effect of Shabbat on the way the modern-day week was constructed
17. Unplugging: the positive effects of disconnecting and truly connecting, and the Torah's role in this concept
18. The Jewish calendar
19. Relationships: love/soulmates
20. *Taharat Hamishpacha*: marriage, the Jewish way (*mikveh*)
21. Jewish secrets for lasting love
22. The high divorce rate: causes and solutions
23. Love and marriage as seen throughout the Torah
24. The Jewish wedding: customs, rituals, reasons, and meaning
25. "*Tumah*" and "*tahara*": ritual purity and impurity
26. Modern-day ethical and moral dilemmas: What does the Torah have to say?
27. The evolution of the Oral Torah
28. The process of deriving Jewish law from the Torah
29. Chabad Chasidim: history and philosophy
30. Kabbalah: history's role in the spread of kabbalah
31. Chabad: the inside out approach
32. Anxiety and depression: How can we overcome it?
33. Mashiach: the future Redemption

34. Jewish survival and continuity
35. The value of life
36. The Torah's view on privacy
37. The Torah's view on automated vehicles
38. What is my role in the world?

The following guidelines were developed to inform your writing of a research paper or essay.

The key difference between a research paper and an essay is that research papers contain a greater extent of scholarly works to support the central claim.

- Research papers analyze previous research by others in order to build a scholarly argument and develop new approaches to a topic. Research papers contain a methodology section that articulates why specific primary or secondary sources were selected. In this section, consider presenting the area of expertise of the cited scholar or researcher (you do not need to do this for such prominent Jewish scholars as Rashi or Maimonides). Superficial internet searches to gather information are not appropriate for research papers.
- Essays set forth your point of view on a topic that is based on a solid evaluation of what others have written but do not seek to develop new knowledge. While one will want to refer to the views of others, and to provide footnoted documentation to those contributors, the main point of an essay is to put forward and develop a logical argument representing your own point of view. Essays should demonstrate analysis of Torah sources as well as secular materials, conceptual organization, and original thought regarding the application of Torah principles in today's world.

We offer these two formats in order to allow you to either discuss and interpret the work of scholars and scientific papers or to write essays that allow them to expand

upon or develop their own ideas and commitments. In both formats, you are expected to go beyond what you learned in the Sinai Scholars course. Please keep in mind that we expect papers to be well-written, well-researched, and well-argued. Research papers and essays are judged based on the advancement of knowledge, clear definition and significance of the topic, analysis and discussion of the issue, and clarity and cogency of the writing.

Guidelines:

- Minimum 2,500 words
- Include primary and secondary sources and footnoted documentation
- Must be well-written, well-researched, and well-argued
- Express the topic's relevance to the contemporary Jewish student.
- Follow mainstream academic writing guidelines, such as MLA, Chicago, or APA.
- Paper must be double-spaced, using a 12-point basic font, with one-inch margins at the top and bottom and a 1.25-inch margin on each side
- Pages must be numbered.
- Be sure to cite all sources quoted or referenced

Plagiarism:

All students must adhere to the highest ethical and moral standards. Any form of plagiarism will lead to rejection of the paper and forfeiture of the stipend. Plagiarism involves taking credit for the work of others without giving them appropriate credit. This includes presenting or paraphrasing a phrase, sentence, or passage of a published book, article, or translation (including material found on the internet or delivered orally) in a paper or essay without quotation marks and attribution of the source (in a footnote or in parentheses); submitting a research paper or essay written by someone else; submitting as your own work any portion of a research paper or essay that you purchased from any person or commercial firm; and presenting in any other way the work, ideas, data, or words of someone else without attribution and due credit. As we learn in the Ethics of the Fathers, "One who quotes something in the name of the one who said it, brings redemption to the world."

Grading Rubric:

Your research paper will be marked and graded based on the following rubric.

	Exemplary (4)	3	2	Incomplete (1)
QUALITY OF ARGUMENT’S CENTRAL CLAIM	Central claim is clearly communicated, and is limited enough to be manageable.	Adequate but weaker and less effective claim, possibly because the idea is too broad or because claim is presented in general terms or with use of platitudes or clichés	Does not have a clear central claim or has a claim that is too vague or too obvious to be developed effectively	Lacks a clear central claim
QUALITY OF REASONING— ORGANIZATION	Uses a structure well-suited for the paper’s goals, one which clearly communicates the logical relations between paragraphs and sections of the paper. Guides the reader through a chain of reasoning or progression of ideas	While each paragraph may relate to the central idea, the logic and structure of the paper is not always clear. Paragraphs or sections may be overly general, and structure of the paper may lack coherence.	May have random organization, lacking any clear overarching structure and using few or inappropriate markers for transitions. Paragraphs or sections may not all relate to the paper’s central claim, or may be too general or too specific to be effective.	No appreciable organization; lacks structure, transitions, and overall coherence

<p>QUALITY OF REASONING—</p> <p>QUALITY OF ARGUMENT</p>	<p>Excels in developing a persuasive argument which develops multiple objections and responses (i.e., why would someone object to your argument?).</p>	<p>Argument considers multiple objections and responses, but does not fully develop or explain some of the connections between objection and response.</p>	<p>May describe some objections, but does not consider any responses or provides insufficient explanation of connections.</p>	<p>Argument is superficial and unpersuasive, fails to consider possible objections to the main claim, or is incoherent.</p>
<p>APPLICATION OF JEWISH CONCEPTS</p>	<p>Accurately applies Jewish concepts to new ethical, theological, historical, or ritual questions (i.e., beyond examples discussed in the Sinai Scholars course), and is able to consider full implications of the application</p>	<p>Accurately applies Jewish ethical concepts to new ethical, theological, historical, or ritual questions, but does not consider the implications of the application</p>	<p>Applies a Jewish concept(s) to an ethical, theological, historical, or ritual question using only examples discussed in the course</p>	<p>Does not apply a Jewish concept(s) to an ethical, theological, historical, or ritual question.</p> <p>A historical paper that rarely or never refers to a Jewish concept</p>
<p>QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR CLAIMS</p>	<p>Uses examples or evidence to support each point appropriately and effectively, providing sufficient explanation to convince the reader of the relevance and persuasiveness of the example or evidence.</p> <p>Uses an array of scholarly works to support central claim, and properly cites references in the paper and in the bibliography. Almost all of the references are from scholarly works (and not from superficial internet searches).</p>	<p>Offers examples or evidence to support the points, but they are frequently ineffective, either because they are too varied or are not sufficiently supported by the explanation of the connection or relevance.</p> <p>Uses scholarly works to support central claim, but also uses material from superficial internet searches</p>	<p>Often uses generalizations to support points instead of examples or evidence. May use examples that are not obvious or not relevant. May assume that the example speaks for itself and needs no further explanation.</p> <p>Less than half of the references are from scholarly works. Relies mostly on superficial internet searches</p>	<p>Uses irrelevant examples or evidence, or fails to provide support altogether. Content of the paper may be primarily summary rather than analysis.</p> <p>Does not use scholarly works, relies on only superficial internet searches, or improperly cites references.</p> <p>Uses personal or family anecdotes instead of scholarly works to support central claim</p>

DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEXT AND CONCEPTS	Background, context, or concepts required to appreciate the argument are introduced and clearly articulated. Includes any explanation or background material required to motivate the discussion and comprehend the support for central claim	Background, context, or concepts required to appreciate the argument are introduced, but may not be clearly explained. Relationship between background material and structure of argument may not be evident or developed.	Background, context, or concepts required to appreciate the argument are either only partially present or are mentioned but not explained or developed. Lack of information or explanation may impede understanding of significant steps in the argument.	Background, context, or concepts required to appreciate the argument are not provided. Absence of this material makes it difficult for readers unacquainted with the subject to comprehend the argument.
CREATIVITY	Offers a novel topic or original insights. Draws together disparate ideas into a coherent whole in order to arrive at well-reasoned and well-supported inferences	Attempts to offer original insights and sometimes succeeds, but more often does not	Offers only a reformulation of a collection of available ideas	Offers only a summary of what was learned in the course or personal/family experiences
APPLICATION TO JEWISH COLLEGE STUDENTS	Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how the insights described in the paper are relevant to Jewish college students who must navigate a complex society with many choices	Recognizes the possibility that the insights described in the paper may have relevance for today’s Jewish college students.	Implies but does not explicitly state that the insights described in the paper may have relevance for today’s Jewish college students	Fails to identify the relevance to today’s Jewish college students