

Comprehensive 5-Category Research Paper Outline

Formal Title: [Specific, Descriptive, and Academic Title]

Working Thesis: [Complex, defensible claim requiring five analytical dimensions]

Target Length: 2,000+ words (2,500-3,500 ideal)

Discipline: [e.g., History, Sociology, Literary Analysis]

Keywords: [3-5 core conceptual terms]

I. Abstract (Target: 150-250 words)

- **Research Problem:** State the specific scholarly gap, debate, or problem addressed.
- **Methodology/Approach:** Briefly note analytical framework (theoretical lens, comparative method, etc.).
- **Five-Category Framework:** Name the five analytical categories.
- **Key Findings/Synthesis:** State the core argument that emerges from the synthesis.
- **Significance:** Conclude with the contribution to the field.

Abstract Draft Notes:

- Core problem phrasing: _____
 - Key finding to highlight: _____
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II. Introduction (Target: 300-400 words)

- **Contextual Hook:** Place the topic within a current scholarly conversation or real-world phenomenon.

- **Literature Review Synthesis:** Succinctly summarize relevant scholarship, identifying the precise gap.
 - *Established View:* "The prevailing scholarship on [Topic] has effectively demonstrated [Aspect 1] and [Aspect 2]..."
 - **Gap Identification:** "...yet it has largely neglected [Dimension 3], failed to reconcile [Tension 4], or overstated [Claim 5]."
- **Research Question(s):** State 1-2 central guiding questions.
- **Thesis Statement:** Present the full, nuanced argument that the five-category analysis will substantiate.
- **Roadmap & Justification:** Preview the five categories *and* briefly justify this structure as the necessary apparatus to answer the research question.

Source Integration (Intro):

- Key source establishing the "established view": **Author (Year)**
 - Key source identifying/gaping the gap: **Author (Year)**
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III. Theoretical Framework & Methodology (Target: 250-350 words)

- **Defining Key Constructs:** Provide operational definitions for central, potentially contested terms.
- **Analytical Lens:** State the primary theoretical framework (e.g., Feminist theory, New Historicism, Institutional Analysis).
- **Methodological Approach:** Explain *how* you will analyze evidence (e.g., comparative analysis, close reading, case study selection).

- **Scope & Delimitations:** Clearly state the boundaries of your inquiry (temporal, geographical, conceptual).
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IV. The Five Analytical Categories

Category 1: [Foundational/Historical/Textual Category] (Target: 350-450 words)

- **Analytical Purpose:** Establishes the essential baseline or primary evidence.
- **Topic Sentence:** Links category to thesis as the necessary starting point.
- **Source-Driven Analysis:**
 - **Evidence A:** [Source 1] + Analysis.
 - **Evidence B:** [Source 2] + Analysis.
 - **Evidence C (Optional):** [Source 3 or Primary Data] + Comparative/Contrasting Analysis.
- **Interim Conclusion:** Summarize this category's contribution to the overall argument.
- **Transition to Cat. 2:** Explicitly state the unresolved question or limitation that necessitates the next category.

Source Integration (Cat. 1):

- Primary Source/Data: **Source Citation**
- Supporting Scholarship: **Author (Year), Author (Year)**
- Potential Counterpoint to address: **Author (Year)**

Category 2: [Contextual/Structural/Formal Category] (Target: 350-450 words)

- **Analytical Purpose:** Examines the surrounding systems, structures, or forms.
- **Topic Sentence:** Introduces this category in relation to Category 1.

- **Source-Driven Analysis:**

- **Evidence A:** [Source 1] + Analysis linking back to Cat. 1.
- **Evidence B:** [Source 2] + Synthesis.

- **Interim Conclusion & Transition:** State how Cats. 1 & 2 interact and point toward the need for Cat. 3.

Source Integration (Cat. 2):

- Key Theoretical Source: **Author (Year)**
- Contextual/Historical Source: **Author (Year)**

Category 3: [Complicating/Critical/Agency-Focused Category] (Target: 350-450 words)

- **Analytical Purpose:** Introduces nuance, exception, or active response, challenging determinism.
- **Topic Sentence:** Positions this category as the crucial complicating factor.
- **Source-Driven Analysis:**
 - **Evidence A:** [Source 1] + Analysis showing complication.
 - **Evidence B:** [Source 2 or Primary Evidence] + Deepened analysis.
- **Interim Conclusion & Transition:** Articulate the more complex picture formed by Cats. 1-3 and introduce the synthetic need for Cat. 4.

Source Integration (Cat. 3):

- Source providing "complication": **Author (Year)**
- Case Study/Primary Evidence: **Source Citation**

Category 4: [Comparative/Synthetic/Integrative Category] (Target: 350-450 words)

- **Analytical Purpose:** Actively synthesizes insights from prior categories to build new understanding.
- **Topic Sentence:** Frames this as the integrative stage of the argument.
- **Source-Driven Synthesis (This is key):**
 - **Synthesis Point A:** Draw on Cat. 1 & Cat. 2 to make a new point, supported by Source.
 - **Synthesis Point B:** Draw on Cat. 2 & Cat. 3 to make a new point, supported by Source.
- **Interim Conclusion & Transition:** Present the integrated argument and introduce the final, implicative category.

Source Integration (Cat. 4):

- Source aiding synthesis: **Author (Year)**
- Additional evidence for integrated point: **Source Citation**

Category 5: [Implicative/Evaluative/Forward-Looking Category] (Target: 350-450 words)

- **Analytical Purpose:** Draws out consequences, evaluates significance, or proposes future directions.
- **Topic Sentence:** Presents this as the culminating category deriving from the synthesis.
- **Source-Driven Implications:**
 - **Implication/Evaluation A:** Supported by scholarship (**Author, Year**) and linked to prior analysis.
 - **Implication/Evaluation B:** Points toward future research or application.

- **Section Conclusion:** Conclusively state how this category completes the argument demanded by the thesis.

Source Integration (Cat. 5):

- Source on implications/the "so what": **Author (Year)**
 - Source suggesting future directions: **Author (Year)**
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V. Synthesis & Discussion (Target: 300-400 words)

- **Restatement of Synthesis:** Begin by stating the core synthesized argument that has emerged.
- **Dialogue with Existing Scholarship:** Re-engage with sources from the intro/lit review. How does your five-category analysis confirm, complicate, or contradict them? Use **Author (Year)** citations.
- **Addressing Limitations:** Thoughtfully acknowledge the limitations of your study (scope, source availability, etc.).
- **Significance Reinforced:** Clearly articulate the contribution to the field.

Synthesis Planning Section:

- **Primary Synthesis Mechanism:** (e.g., "My argument synthesizes by showing how **Category 4**'s model resolves the tension between **Category 1** and **Category 3**, as framed by **Category 2**, leading to **Category 5**'s implications.")
 - **Key Scholarly Debate to Enter:** _____
 - **Two sources to directly converse with:** 1. **Author (Year)**, 2. **Author (Year)**
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VI. Conclusion (Target: 200-250 words)

- **Concise Summary of Journey:** Briefly recap the analytical path taken through the five categories.
 - **Definitive Answer to Research Question:** Provide the clear, evidence-based answer.
 - **Broader Implications:** Place the specific findings into a wider intellectual, social, or practical context.
 - **Final, Resonant Statement:** A polished closing that underscores the importance of the inquiry.
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VII. References (Works Cited)

- **Format:** [APA 7th, MLA 9th, Chicago, etc.]
 - **Preliminary List:** [Begin listing sources here as you outline]
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Advanced Cohesion Checklist for 5-Category Papers

- ☐ **Non-Repetitive Categories:** Each category represents a distinct *type* of analysis (e.g., historical, formal, biographical, theoretical, evaluative).
- ☐ **Narrative Arc:** The sequence tells a logical story: Foundation → Complication → Synthesis → Implication.
- ☐ **Source Distribution:** Sources are used strategically across categories, not all clustered in one.
- ☐ **Synthesis is Active:** Category 4 or 5 explicitly creates new insight by combining earlier categories.

- ☐ **Transitions are Conceptual:** Moves between categories are justified by the argument's needs, not just sequence.
- ☐ **Thesis Evolution:** The final synthesis is richer than the initial thesis statement, showing the analysis deepened it.

Next Step: Use this outline as a living document. Fill source citations as you research. Write the **Synthesis Planning Section** before drafting the body to ensure analytical depth.

