Term Paper

Basic purpose
This is not intended to be a full-length paper; instead, it is supposed to be an opportunity for you to take the approach to prosody that we’ve explored in this course (i.e., the AM-model) and apply it in a way that interests you/is relevant to your own work. That is, this is an opportunity to try to see how your own research can be enhanced by considering prosodic data, now that you are trained in a systematic way to approach such data.

Basic Guidelines:

Topics:
Whatever you like, but keep in mind that this is a linguistics program, we’ve been developing a linguistic model of prosody, and ultimately what we want to understand is something about linguistic structure and/or processing in human languages. (This doesn’t rule out computational approaches to these questions, however). Topics could include exploring the psychological reality/perceptual validity of AM phonological categories; exploring the semantic/pragmatic interpretation of different prosodic categories or structures; exploring variability in the phonetic realization of these categories (and the implication of this variation for a phonological model); exploring how prosody influences sentence processing; many others (see also the list of general topics on the syllabus).

Length and components
This should be around 4-8 pages max (single-spaced). What it needs to accomplish in that amount of space is the following:

To motivate and outline a future study—one that you could further develop on your own (possibly as a QP-type project, or a project in the context of an independent study). The literature review therefore does not need to be extensive at this point, but should be enough to that your study’s questions are in fact motivated by previous work.

Utilize concepts from our class in some way; if your proposed project doesn’t draw upon the tools that we learned about (i.e., if this project could have been designed by someone who’s never heard of AM theory), then that’s a problem. That’s not to say you have to assume AM theory is the last word on prosodic representation—you just need to use the tools it offers to the extent that they are, well, useful tools for approaching things systematically. Attempting to disprove their adequacy in some specific way is an excellent approach to this, assuming you actually demonstrate an understanding of the theory. Note that criticism (especially vague criticism) that fails to result in any kind of insight is not very valuable, however—and thus doesn’t represent much in terms of scholarship.

If your project is an experiment (many probably will be), this will mean you give the traditional (though abbreviated) intro/motivation section, a section outlining your research questions explicitly, a methods section (you don’t need to have all of your stimuli, but at least a few fleshed-out example stimuli), and you should also have some explication of your predictions in there somewhere (a good place for this is in the same section as your research questions). If you’re doing some kind of corpus work, be sure to describe basic properties of the corpus, and why it’s an appropriate/feasible-to-use corpus for the study.