

Your Capstone Notebook: NotebookLM

One notebook, all your sources, all semester — required from Week 2.

PSY 460 · Senior Research Seminar · Fall 2026 · Prof. Michael W. Magee, Ph.D. · St. Joseph's University New York ·
Full guide: coolpsychology.com/psy460/notebooklm.html

What NotebookLM is — and why this course requires it

NotebookLM (notebooklm.google.com) is a free research tool from Google with one property that makes it different from every chatbot you have used: it is **grounded**. You upload your sources — the actual PDFs of the articles in your literature review — and it answers questions using only those documents, citing the exact passage every claim came from. Ask ChatGPT about your topic and it answers from the entire internet, sometimes inventing citations that do not exist. Ask your notebook and it answers from *your* fifteen articles, with a footnote you can click to see the original sentence.

That property matters here for three reasons. First, your sources live in one place: scattered across downloads folders and email attachments, PDFs rot; in one notebook they are searchable as a collection, which is exactly how a literature review has to treat them. Second, it lets you interrogate your literature as a whole — the Week 4 skill of synthesis, rehearsed every time you query the full notebook. Third, every answer is checkable: the citation takes you back to the source, and going back to the source is the habit this course exists to build.

A notebook does not read for you, and it does not write for you. It is a filing cabinet that answers questions and shows its receipts.

Setting it up (fifteen minutes, once)

1. **Sign in with your SJNY account.** Go to notebooklm.google.com and sign in with your SJNY Google account — the University's license covers NotebookLM, and the course requires the SJNY account because your notebook must be shared within the sjny.edu domain (step 5). The source limit is far more than this project needs.
2. **Create one notebook** named **PSY 460 Capstone — [Your Topic]**. One notebook for the whole semester — not one per week or per assignment.
3. **Upload your PDFs.** Starting with your ten candidate articles in Week 2, add each *full-text* PDF as a source. Never the abstract alone: abstracts are advertisements, and a notebook full of advertisements answers like one.
4. **Rename each source to its citation** — *Neff (2023)*, *Baumeister & Leary (1995)* — so that when the notebook cites a source you instantly know which paper it means.
5. **Share it with me.** Click Share and add mwmagee@sjny.edu as *Viewer* — required, by the end of Week 2. This mirrors your seminar Docs, just in reverse: the notebook lives on your account, and I

have a window into it. Viewer access means I can see your source list and ask your notebook questions while preparing for our meetings — but I cannot change anything.

6. **Keep it current.** Every article that enters your synthesis matrix enters your notebook the same day. "How many sources are in your notebook?" is no longer a question I have to ask — I can see for myself, and a notebook that grows steadily tells the same story your journal does.

Using it well, week by week

Week 2 — collection. Upload your ten candidates, then ask: *"What research questions do these sources address? What methods do they use?"* Ten minutes with the answers tells you whether your candidates form a literature or a grab bag — before your topic locks.

Week 3 — dissection (in that order). Complete your article-dissection worksheets *yourself first*; the worksheet is the skill. Then ask the notebook about the same article and compare. Where it surfaced something you missed, go back to the PDF and find it.

Week 4 — synthesis. Ask cross-cutting questions: *"Which sources measure self-esteem, and how do their measures differ?" "Where do these studies disagree?" "What populations has this literature ignored?"* The answers are leads to verify against the PDFs — not rows to copy. The matrix you submit must be built, and worded, by you.

Weeks 5–6 — the gap and the outline. Pressure-test your gap statement: *"Do any of my sources already test whether X affects Y?"* Better to learn it now than from me. While outlining, ask which sources speak to each planned section — a fast way to spot the section resting on a single reference.

Week 8 — measures. Ask what instruments your sources use for each construct and what reliability they report — then pull the actual numbers from the PDFs for your scales table.

Weeks 7, 10–12 — writing and revising. The notebook is your fact-checker: *"Did Neff (2023) actually claim this, or am I remembering it wrong?"* Checking a claim against the source before you cite it is the single most professorial habit you can steal.

The bright line. NotebookLM output is AI output. It goes in your AI log, and it never goes in your paper. Grounded is not the same as yours.

The AI policy, applied to NotebookLM

The course's disclosed-use AI policy applies to NotebookLM exactly as to any other AI tool. The notebook's answers are AI-generated summaries — and submitting AI-generated summaries as your own writing is never permitted, in any draft, worksheet, journal entry, or matrix. Do not paste notebook output into your seminar Docs. Do not lightly reword notebook output and type it in; paraphrasing a machine is not writing.

Sanctioned uses: storing and organizing your sources; locating which source said what; checking your comprehension after you have done the reading; asking cross-cutting questions whose answers you verify in the PDFs; and fact-checking your own claims against your own sources before you submit.

Log it. Substantive queries — anything that shaped your thinking, matrix, or draft — get an AI log entry: date, tool ("NotebookLM"), what you asked, what you did with the answer. "Asked my notebook which sources measured anxiety; verified in the PDFs; added two rows to my scales table" is a perfect entry, and an honest log entry is never penalized. Routine housekeeping (uploading, renaming) needs no entry.

This arrangement protects you: your writing happens in seminar Docs whose revision history I can see, and your notebook use is disclosed in your log. A student who reads deeply, queries the notebook, verifies against sources, and drafts in their own words has nothing to fear from any integrity question — the whole trail shows the work is theirs.

What it cannot do

It cannot find literature. A notebook only knows what you feed it. Searching happens in PsycINFO and Google Scholar.

It cannot replace reading. Weekly meetings are conversations about your articles, and thirty minutes of questions reveals within about ninety seconds whether your understanding comes from the papers or from summaries of the papers.

It can still be wrong. Grounding makes fabrication rare, not impossible — it can misread a table, over-generalize, or miss the qualifier that changes a claim's meaning. Every citation is clickable: click it. Never move a notebook-sourced claim toward your paper without seeing the original passage with your own eyes.

Quick start checklist: SJNY Google account → one notebook named "PSY 460 Capstone — [topic]" → full-text PDFs uploaded as you collect them → every source renamed to its APA citation → shared with mwmagee@sjny.edu (Viewer) by end of Week 2 → kept current all semester → substantive queries logged.