

Fall 2009

Research paper

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Repository Citation

Crockett, David A., "Research paper" (2009). *Information Literacy Resources for Curriculum Development*. 87.
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Research Paper. You are required to write a short analysis of a single political topic or conflict. This may be a law passed by Congress (or a bill that failed to be passed into law), a presidential action, a Supreme Court controversy, or some similar activity involving the various branches of the federal government (i.e. treaty negotiation, confirmation battle, impeachment). You are to research the facts and history of the topic, and then analyze and evaluate it in light of the concepts discussed in this course. This paper serves as a proxy for a cumulative exam, as well as an exercise in reinforcing the information literacy goals of the university. The more tightly you wed your analysis to major themes in this course, the better you will do. In order to ensure some measure of historical perspective, the topic you pick **must** pre-date the last full presidential term (i.e. 2005). The assignment will be conducted in four parts:

Part one emphasizes the information literacy goal to UNDERSTAND the varieties of information sources available. Early in the semester students will attend an orientation session in the library about the various sources available for political science research.

Part two emphasizes the information literacy goal to ACCESS information efficiently and effectively. To accomplish this objective you will need to pick a topic (see the list of options below) and construct a preliminary list of acceptable sources. You must cite at least four different bibliographic sources in the paper, all of them drawn from scholarly books (other than your course material) or academic journals (*Time* and *Newsweek* and the like do not qualify). You should make use of course material (other than your textbook) for your evaluation of the topic you choose, but they do not count as one of your four required sources. Book reviews and encyclopedias are also unacceptable as scholarly sources. You may use internet sources only to access academic journals, court cases, and other public documents. You must also make substantive use of at least one hard copy book from the library. If you have **any** questions about this criterion, see me. On Wednesday, November 11, at the beginning of class, you will hand in to me a document not exceeding one page in length, containing your name, your paper topic, and an annotated list of sources that meet the criteria listed in this paragraph. For each source you must include a brief statement answering the following three questions: Is the work a primary or secondary source? How did you locate the source? How will you use it in your analysis? Your grade on this assignment will be based on the extent to which you comply with the standards set forth in this paragraph, and will comprise 10 percent of the assignment's final grade.

Part three emphasizes the information literacy goal to USE ETHICALLY the sources of information you choose. This part comprises the bulk of your assignment. The paper must be typed, 6-8 pages in length (not including title page and bibliography), stapled, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font. On your title page put your Trinity ID number (**not** your name) and course title and number. Please recall all of the documentation requirements listed in Part Two of the assignment. Your paper must conform to all elements of standard usage, style, pagination, and documentation. You must employ the reference-in-text format of documentation (also known as the author-date format), using page numbers where appropriate. Footnotes should be reserved for providing substantive information. Cite **all** material derived from other sources – not only direct quotations. For clarity concerning citation options, consult the library's web page on citing sources at <http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/index.shtml>. Proper grammar and spelling are important. Clear reasoning and logical organization are essential.

The goal of this assignment is for you to exercise and hone your research and writing skills through the exploration of a specific topic, develop your analytical skills by forcing you to evaluate actors and actions through a specific framework, develop the habit of clear and professional presentation of material, and further develop your facility with information literacy. Papers must begin with a clear statement of your argument. Continue with a brief summary of the facts, placing players and events in historical context, and supplying a summary of the important facts you will use in your analysis. The bulk of the paper should be comprised of your evaluation of the subject based on the criteria established in this course. I do **not** want you to take extraordinary efforts to mention every single concept discussed in this course in a

burdensome effort to relate it to your specific topic. Pick those areas that appear to be most pertinent, and explore them in detail. For example, if federalism is not a factor that impacts on your topic, you do not need to discuss it. If, on the other hand, separation of powers or the institutional dynamic of Congress played a part in the topic you choose, you ought to deal with them. As always, the final product should be professional in appearance. Take pride in your work!

Exercise judgment and wisdom. You will do much better if you focus your efforts on one or two areas and explore them completely than if you take a shotgun approach and try to hit every possible aspect of your topic. The substantive part of your paper **must** conclude with your own scholarly evaluation of your topic's place in the larger context of American politics. Your grade will be determined by your ability to integrate the facts of the case with the larger themes of this course in a well-reasoned argument. Keep in mind that all aspects of these instructions are important in evaluating your work. Sloppy grammar and style, inconsistent citations, injudicious choice of topic – all are signs of careless thinking and a disorderly mind.

Part four emphasizes the information literacy goal to EVALUATE information and its sources. As part of your paper, you will write a brief addendum (separate from the overall page requirement) not exceeding one page reflecting on your experience making use of various sources of information when researching your topic. You will be graded on how well you discuss the different TYPES of information that are available for your use and any barriers that exist in the research process. Your grade on this reflection will also comprise 10 percent of the assignment's final grade.

Following is a list of possible paper topics. You are not limited to this list, but you must confirm with me *in writing* the suitability of a different topic.

Washington and the Neutrality Act	Internment of Japanese-Americans
Alien and Sedition Acts	Truman's firing of MacArthur
Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase	Eisenhower's Formosa Resolution
Jackson and the Indian removal case	Eisenhower and the Little Rock Crisis
Tyler and the veto power	Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs invasion
Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus	Tonkin Gulf Resolution
Impeachment of Andrew Johnson	War Powers Act
Tenure of Office Act	Impeachment of Richard Nixon
Cleveland and the Pullman Strike	Carter and the Panama Canal treaty effort
Wilson's intervention in Mexico	Robert Bork confirmation battle
Treaty of Versailles ratification battle	Bush's invasion of Panama
Roosevelt's court-packing plan	Clinton and the failure of health care reform

The paper is due Tuesday, November 24, by 5:00pm. For every day your paper is late, I will drop its grade one full level (i.e. from a B+ to a C+). **No electronic submissions!**

QEP ASSESSMENT, PLSI 1301 (American Politics)

The following rubric is used to assess student success in complying with and mastering the various syllabus criteria for the research paper in PLSI 1301, American Politics.

1. Does the student make use of appropriate bibliographic sources in the assignment?

Not at all		Deficiencies in number/type		Superior job
1	2	3	4	5

2. Does the student employ the proper documentation style and citation practice in the assignment?

Not at all		Inconsistencies/minor errors		Superior job
1	2	3	4	5

3. Does the student comply with all syllabus instructions with respect to presentation requirements?

Not at all		Inconsistencies/oversights		Superior job
1	2	3	4	5

4. Does the student present a clear thesis statement and scholarly conclusion?

Not at all		Present but incomplete/inadequate		Superior job
1	2	3	4	5

5. Does the student write clearly, cogently, persuasively, and coherently, connecting the presentation of facts to an evaluation of those facts?

Not at all		Factual errors/shallow analysis		Superior job
1	2	3	4	5

6. Is the student appropriately reflective about the challenges of doing scholarly research in political science?

Not at all		Shallow/cursory/commonplace		Serious/analytical
1	2	3	4	5