

Scaffolding of Assignments with learning objectives building up to a research paper in political science.

1. Informal First Draft Research Design assignment:
 - a. Objective: Students will understand what is involved in planning political science and how each element fits within the larger synthesis and process.
 - b. Activity: Students will briefly explain various components of a research paper specific to their topic:
 - i. Research question
 - ii. Concepts
 - iii. Theory
 - iv. Hypothesis
 - v. Data sources
 - vi. Expected findings
2. Informal Theory post/essay
 - a. Objective: Students will understand the role of theory in political science research.
 - b. Activity: Students will use, perhaps 2 sentences, or some other short essay that describes at least two theoretical approaches that would inform the research questions
3. Informal discussion post or small essay on the method they would use to answer the research question.
 - a. Objective: Students will understand that research methods come from research questions, and students will learn the vocabularies involved with different methodologies.
 - b. Activity: Students explain how they would go about systematically answering the question they have posed.
4. Formal Annotated bibliography
 - a. Objective: Students will understand how literature builds in a field. They learn to evaluate sources, and they will learn to apply political science literature to a problem.
 - b. Activity: Students will assemble an annotated bibliography of 15 sources, 10 of which come from peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to the question. Students must explain what the source argues, why they selected it, and what they can claim after reading it.
5. Informal Logic Narrative
 - a. Objective: Students will learn to synthesize social concepts and facts in a way that progresses logically to account for broader political conditions which answer their research question.
 - b. Activity: Students, without citing any sources, will create a one-page “story” that explains why the question is important, how at least 2 social dynamics influence the question’s answer, and what they believe the findings would be (the bottom line).
6. Data Source
 - a. Objective: Students will learn how to find and evaluate data sources.

- b. Students will identify a relevant data source, and will explain why this is a reliable and representative source of empirically observable data.
- 7. Formal Revised Research Design
 - a. Objective: Students will be able to apply research lessons to their own questions in a systematic way.
 - b. Activity: Students will use the other assignments to re-write their entire research design.
- 8. Formal Research Paper
 - a. Objective: Students will learn how to create a political science research paper using the lessons on method, etc..., completed throughout the semester.
 - b. Activity: Students will write a formal 1000 word research paper with the following components:
 - i. A clearly stated research question.
 - ii. A discussion about the importance of this question.
 - iii. A discussion about at least two competing theories that would have different answers.
 - iv. A explanation of the most appropriate method for answering this question.
 - v. Explanation of reliable data relevant to the question.
 - vi. Simple data analysis using the method described (if possible).
 - vii.** Discussion and Conclusions