

POLS/GRS95 Introduction to Mexico

Writing Assignment 1, Descriptive Essay

Fall 2016

Due Date: September 23. A hard copy of this assignment should be handed in at the beginning of class. Grades will be reduced by 5% for each business day late. Emailed assignments (without a hard copy) will be reduced by an extra 5%.

Format: Papers should be in Times New Roman 12 point font. Double-spaced. Pages numbered.

Assignment: Pick a topic about Mexico that interests you. You may NOT write about the drug trade. Read at least three basic reference sources on the topic. What are the five most important issues that emerge from these readings? Write a three-page paper explaining these five issues.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to learn basic information about your topic so that you can develop a research question for the final paper. Be thinking about possible research questions while you work on this paper. A revised version of this paper will serve as the “background information section” of your final paper.

Sources:

1. Please look at the special guide for our class on the library webpage <http://researchguides.uvm.edu/grs95fall2016>
2. Start out with *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations*. You can access this source from the library webpage. Go to library.uvm.edu. Under FIND, select “articles and more”. On the right hand side choose “W”, then scroll to *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations*. To find the Mexico entry, choose “Americas” volume. Also check out the *Europa World Plus*.
3. Once you have an idea of what you want to study go to the Bailey-Howe Library Reference Section. Find *The Encyclopedia of Mexico*, Werner F1210.E63 1997. (Ask the reference librarian working at the reference desk for help finding the book.) Hopefully you will find a full chapter in this encyclopedia related to your topic. Keep in mind that this source was published in 1997. Think about how your topic may have changed over twenty years. Check out *Encyclopedia of Modern Mexico* David Dent F1234.D364 2002, also in reference section.
4. Go to the circulation desk in Bailey-Howe Library and get *Iconic Mexico* F1204.I38 2015 from the Course Reserves. Look for entries related to your topic.
5. You may need to look for more sources. Talk to the reference librarian about other reference sources. Look for reference books on your topic and see if there is an entry on Mexico. For example, if you are interested in music, look for an encyclopedia of world music and read the Mexico entry. Try the Gale Virtual Reference Library and Oxford Reference Library. You can find both of these on the UVM library webpage under FIND, “articles and more,” scroll down to “reference sources.”

6. Other sources can be found on the Global Studies Research Guide on UVM Library website. From library.uvm.edu, under HELP, select "research guides by subject," then select "Global and Regional Studies," then select "reference sources" tab at the top of the page. Also try Latin American Studies Research Guide on UVM Library website.

How to write the paper: Your goal is to SYNTHESIZE the material you read to produce a new piece of writing. You should not be merely summarizing someone else's work. Here's a step-by-step guide:

1. Find at least 3 good general sources that provide an overview of your topic. This should be at least 30 pages total. (If each of your sources is only 1 or 2 pages long, you don't have enough information to write this paper and you need to find more sources.)
2. Read each of these sources carefully.
3. Take very few notes, do not copy any direct quotations from the source into your notes. Write only a few words to summarize the main points, about one sentence per page you read.
4. After you have read all three sources, determine the 5 most important issues raised in the readings.
5. Write a list of those 5 issues.
6. Without looking back at the sources, look only at your notes, write one paragraph for each of the five issues on your list. Write in your own voice (not in the voice of the authors you are citing). Do not take direct quotations from the sources.
7. These five paragraphs will be the body of your paper.
8. Write an introduction to offer an overview of the paper
9. Write a conclusion to summarize and conclude the paper.
10. A good essay fits together like a jigsaw puzzle. Everything has a place and fits together perfectly. It should NOT fit together like a collage, where you paste random interesting thoughts together in no particular order.

Citations: Use Chicago Scientific (Author-Date) style.

1. The library webpage has guides for lots of different citation styles. Under HELP select "Citations and Style Guides." Scroll down to Chicago Sciences.
2. Note that the Chicago Scientific (Author Date) style does NOT use footnotes. The in-text citation is a parenthetical citation (Smith 2002) in the text, then a list of sources at the end in alphabetical Order.

It would be a great idea to see a tutor in the writing center to talk over your work. The tutors are free and they can be very helpful – even for those of you who are very good writers. It never hurts to have another set of eyes look at your writing. You can make an appointment for the writing center online at <http://www.uvm.edu/wid/writingcenter/>

Student Name _____

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Grading Rubric for Descriptive Essay

	Weak	Good	Excellent
Content			
Clear introduction that offers an overview of the essay			
At least three appropriate reference sources			
Provides clear overview of topic, focused on five main points			
Information is synthesized, not summarized.			
No direct quotations are used.			
Other:			
Writing Style and presentation			
Clear and logical organization			
Virtually no typos or grammatical errors			
Virtually no awkward phrasings or unclear sentences			
Transitions between ideas and paragraphs are effective			
Uses University of Chicago Author-Date system correctly for in-text citations.			
Other:			

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Annotated bibliography

Due October 31. A hard copy of this assignment should be handed in at the beginning of class. Grades will be reduced by 5% for each business day late. Emailed assignments will be reduced by an extra 5%.

1. Write your research question at the top of your paper.
2. Find 3 scholarly (peer-reviewed) articles on your topic.
 - a. Use Academic Search Premier to find peer-reviewed articles.
 - b. These should be full length research articles (about 25 pages long). Book reviews or short opinion pieces are not acceptable peer-reviewed sources.
 - c. These must be articles you have found on your topic. You may not use articles that are assigned readings for this class or other classes. (You may of course use assigned readings from this course and others as sources in your final paper, in fact if there are assigned readings from this class related to your topic that you do not cite in your final paper, your grade will suffer, but the purpose of the annotated bibliography is for you to find other sources outside of assigned readings for your paper).
3. Create an annotated bibliography.
 - a. A bibliography is a list of citations to sources (books, articles, films, websites, etc...) that you've used when researching a topic. An annotated bibliography includes additional information about each source. The contents of annotations vary according to their purposes. For this class, your annotations should include:
 - i. A complete citation of the source using the Chicago Scientific Style, Author-Date system. See the citation guide <http://library.uvm.edu/guides/citation/ChicagoStyleSciences2013.pdf>
 - ii. An explanation of the main purpose of the source. Why did the author(s) write the text?
 - iii. A brief description of the methods employed in the work. What kinds of evidence did the author(s) use to support their claims? Interviews? Statistics? Surveys? The writings of journalists or other scholars?
 - iv. A brief description of the main findings of the work.
 - v. An assessment of why the work is a valuable contribution to the question you are researching
 - b. Each annotation should be about 300 words long. Each annotation should be written in paragraph form.
4. I will use the following rubric to grade your papers.

Student Name _____

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Grading Rubric for Annotated Bibliography

	Weak	Good	Excellent
Research Question: Clearly stated, reasonable and appropriate			
Three scholarly (peer-reviewed) articles: Articles are peer reviewed and appropriate for the topic			
Annotations:			
Complete citations using Chicago Scientific			
Main purpose of the source clearly identified			
Methods clearly described			
Main findings clearly described			
Clear assessment of value of source for topic			
Writing Style and presentation			
Clear and logical organization			
Virtually no typos or grammatical errors			
Virtually no awkward phrasings or unclear sentences			
Other Comments:			

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Final Research Paper

Due December 2. TWO hard copies of this assignment should be handed in at the beginning of class. I need TWO copies because the WID program is evaluating first year writing and will be using your papers (with names blacked out) to assess first year writing.

Grades will be reduced by 5% for each business day late. Emailed assignments will be reduced by an extra 5%.

Turn in your first paper with my comments and your annotated bibliography with my comments along with your final draft.

Papers should be in Times New Roman 12 point font. Double-spaced. Pages numbered.

1. Write a 10 page research paper to answer your research question.
 - a. Introduction (1 page)
 - i. Clearly state your research question. You may want to simply write: “My research question is X.”
 - ii. Explain your research question and why it is interesting and important.
 - iii. Explain your main argument, which is the answer to your research question. You may want to simply write: “My main argument is A, B, and C.”
 - iv. Provide an overview of the paper. “In this paper I will first provide some background on X, then I will explain A, B, and C.”
 - b. Background information – This section should present basic background information on your topic that your reader will need to know before she can understand your argument. This may be a revised version of your first paper (3 pages)
 - c. Presentation of argument and evidence – This is the answer to your research question. It should consist of your argument backed up with evidence (properly cited) from research you have done. This should build on the summaries from the annotated bibliography (5 pages). This is NOT your opinion. In scientific research, no one cares about your opinion.
 - d. Conclusion – restate your research question and main argument. Explain the consequences of your argument and its relationship to broader questions about Mexico. (1 page)
2. A good essay should fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. Each piece should fit into its place perfectly. It should NOT fit together like a collage where disconnected, unrelated interesting passages are pasted together in no particular order.
3. I will use the following rubric to grade your papers.

Student Name _____

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Grading Rubric for Final Paper

	Weak	Good	Excellent
Content			
Clear introduction that offers an overview of the essay			
Clear and appropriate research question			
Appropriate background information			
Clear argument to answer research question			
Sufficient and reliable evidence and high quality sources			
Conclusion summarizes and brings paper to a close			
Other:			
Writing Style and presentation			
Clear and logical organization			
Virtually no typos or grammatical errors			
Virtually no awkward phrasings or unclear sentences			
Transitions between ideas and paragraphs are effective			
Uses University of Chicago Author-Date system correctly for in-text citations.			
Met with WID mentor			
Other:			