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Course number: PLSC 3347
Course name: Government and Politics of Africa

What are the student learning outcomes related to information literacy for the assignment?

Students who take the course will develop:

- Strategies for locating scholarly sources
- Strategies for locating reliable non-scholarly sources and raw data
- Their ability to understand scholarly research and writing
- Their ability to evaluate the credibility and persuasiveness of sources
- Their ability to integrate different types of sources in their writing, particularly in terms of combining generalizable political science theories presented in scholarly articles and books with case-specific quantitative and qualitative data drawn from both scholarly and non-scholarly sources
- Their ability to cite sources using a consistent citation style
- Their knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it
- Their ability to use GIS mapping software

Please describe your assignment and/or learning activities.

At the beginning of the semester, students will select an African country and become the class's expert on that country. Students will build and demonstrate this expertise through all of their written work and through their in-class participation. In-class Participation: Each student will be responsible for independently researching his or her country's history, economy, and politics, such that he or she is prepared to talk in class about each day's reading and lecture topic as it relates to the country. Students will also make a brief in-class presentation introducing their countries to the rest of the class, in which they discuss three important and/or unique features of their countries' politics and take questions from their classmates. Through both general class participation and the oral presentation, the class as a whole will learn about many different African countries and particularly about the diversity of African countries. Daily Summaries: On ten dates throughout the semester, students will submit a 1-page summary presenting relevant details about their countries that relate to that day's reading and lecture topic. Summary topics require both descriptive and analytical responses (for example, "Describe your country's experience with colonialism," or "Explore the extent to which your country can currently be considered a democracy"), and are designed to prepare students to contribute productively to class discussion. Country Briefs: Each student will submit three 5-6-page papers about his or her country. The papers will focus, in turn, on some aspect of the country's experience with post-colonial political institutions, conflict, and development. The student will pose a research question about his or her country, propose an answer to that question, and then provide relevant evidence to support the answer. Rather than simply summarizing existing scholarship on the student's question, the paper will make an original contribution by using country-specific data to evaluate how well existing (general) political science theories explain the student's specific case. This will require the student to make use of scholarly articles and books that advance general

theories as well as reliable sources of qualitative and quantitative data on his or her country. The purpose of both the daily summaries and country briefs is for students to develop detailed knowledge of at least one African country, and to think about the applicability of broader political science theories and concepts in explaining specific cases. Students are required to use Chicago Style author–date format for in-text and bibliographic citations in all of their written work. Students will be able to gradually build up their information literacy skills over the course of the semester, since they will repeat the major writing assignments multiple times and can use feedback they receive early on to improve their subsequent efforts. Additionally, students will be encouraged to participate in the SMU Library’s Humanitarian Mapathon project for extra credit. Many African countries still need detailed mapping to facilitate disaster response by humanitarian agencies, and thus students who participate in the Mapathon will learn about Africa’s geography and humanitarian needs while simultaneously learning to use GIS software.

How do you intend to collaborate with your department's liaison librarian?

Social Sciences Librarian Julia Stewart will provide an in-class information literacy session demonstrating the use of relevant primary, secondary, and data-centered web resources and databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, LexisNexis, Freedom House, UNdata, and the World Bank DataBank. Ms. Stewart will also collaborate with the faculty member to compile a course-specific resource guide that will be made available on the SMU Library website. Finally, Ms. Stewart will facilitate students’ participation in the SMU Library’s Mapathon.

Please describe your plan for assessing the information literacy learning outcomes.

Oral Presentation:

- The presentation includes relevant and accurate information
- The presentation organizes information effectively
- Conclusions are supported by the information presented

Daily Summaries:

- The paper draws from reliable and relevant scholarly and non-scholarly sources
- The paper demonstrates comprehension of the reading materials under review
- The argument is supported by sufficient and appropriate evidence
- In-text and bibliographic citations conform to Chicago Style author–date format
- The paper includes in-text and bibliographic citations for all ideas that are not the author’s own
- The paper paraphrases accurately and places all direct quotations in quotation marks

Country Briefs:

- The paper draws from relevant scholarly literature
- The referenced scholarly literature is representative of the diversity of theories present in the relevant literature as a whole
- The paper draws from reliable and relevant non-scholarly sources
- The paper demonstrates comprehension of the reading materials under review
- The paper effectively integrates scholarly and non-scholarly work
- The argument is supported by sufficient and appropriate evidence

- In-text and bibliographic citations conform to Chicago Style author–date format
- The paper includes in-text and bibliographic citations for all ideas that are not the author’s own
- The paper paraphrases accurately and places all direct quotations in quotation marks