

General Research Seminar
Spring Quarter 2017
Professor Diascro

Infographic Assignment

Purpose: To present evidence on **one side** of a current policy debate using a visual format. This assignment gives you the opportunity to think in a uniquely creative way, and to think about evidence and evidence-based arguments differently than you do in more typical writing assignments.

****It can be unsettling to do work outside your comfort zone! Try to embrace this assignment as a way of exercising your right brain capacity; and, if that doesn't work for you, then know that this accomplishment will be a great addition to your resume.****

Substance: (1) You may pick from the topics below or identify a topic of your choosing that is NOT related to your research paper (with my approval). You will create an infographic that presents **data or other evidence that is used by the proponents of one side** of the debate to support their preferred outcome. (2) Importantly, you may find that the amount and type of evidence available may vary from topic to topic, and from position to position within a topic. In fact, you may find that there is little or no evidence to support one side of the debate. If that's the case, you will need to choose the other side, or pick another topic.

Topics. There are numerous topics from which you might choose for this assignment. There are some obvious topics, such as vaccines, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), organic foods, pesticides, gun control, and climate change. In the wake of the 2016 election, there are many other topics of intense debate, like immigration, crime, trade, economic growth, and national security. Other perhaps less news-worthy but important issues of debate are stem cell research, Wi-Fi radiation, crumb rubber, abortion pills, and food allergies.

Thesis: You must present the thesis statement of your argument on your infographic. The evidence you include will support this thesis.

Evidence. You will use evidence presented by proponents in support of the side of the debate you've chosen. You should present **4-5 pieces of evidence from at least 2 different sources**. You may find that the evidence is quantitative and/or qualitative. You are to decide how to graphically communicate the evidence in the infographic (see Format below).

When investigating the debate, you want to **seek the most reputable sources of evidence**. This doesn't mean that they have done a thorough or reliable job of presenting evidence to support their position! In all likelihood, they have cherry-picked evidence that meets their needs. So as you examine the evidence, remember to:

(1) **Use primary sources.** Go directly to the organization or person making the argument for the evidence they use to make their case. You may want to start with a news article or a Wikipedia entry, for example, but this should not be where you stop; rather, use these resources to get to the primary source of the argument. The more direct the source, the less interpretation by others, and the more accurate account of the debate you will have.

(2) **Use original evidence.** Dig as deep as you can for the original evidence that is used by the organization or person making the argument. Often the evidence presented will be a vague summary statement about a fact or figure (e.g. GMOs are safe; GMOs are not safe); try to find the original fact or figure that supports the contention.

(3) **Seek the most recent sources of evidence available.** Debates evolve over time, but sometimes the news and public discussion does not. Be sure that you're addressing the most current state of the debate.

When in doubt about a source or evidence, **ask me!**

Format: Everyone should use Venngage to make your infographic. I have added all students to my account, which gives each of you premium access to the software. This means that you should be able to choose a template of your choice, and use all the tools available. If you have difficulty, let me know. **Keep the size of your template to 8.5" x 11" if you can; make it no larger than 8.5" x 14" (legal size).**

Citation: Despite the unique format of an infographic, **you MUST cite your data and information sources**. (1) On the infographic, you should use brief citations (e.g. just the URL or an abbreviated citation to keep it short and uncluttered); (2) on a Work Cited page attached to the infographic, you should use full citations in one of the official formats (see PurdueOwl for formatting information).

Evaluation: Your grade will be based on whether you have followed these directions, so read them carefully and ask questions. As always, all writing assignments are evaluated for grammar, spelling, and composition.

Due: **Tuesday, June 6, by midnight (11:59p)**. You will email me a PDF version of your infographic (instructions forthcoming). I will print them in color and post them in class the next day. As always, you may submit the assignment before the due date.