

Writing sequence overview
POLI 99 (Tans), Fall 2020

During this course, you will write a review article that includes a research question, a critical review of the literature, a theory and an hypothesis. To facilitate the project, the paper is divided into four parts that will be due separately throughout the quarter, as follows:

Part	Assignment	Due date
1	Research question	October 2
2	List of sources	October 16
3	Arrow diagram	October 30
4a	Review article draft	November 13
4b	Review article	November 20

While the project may seem daunting when viewed all at once, please don't be discouraged. Each part of the paper will build on previous work that you have done in order to maximize the time you invest. In addition, we will workshop in class each step of the sequence to provide step-by-step guidance as you develop the paper. By the end of the quarter, you will have all the pieces in place so that the process of compiling all the parts into a single document will be a matter of fitting them together, like closing a zipper.

The goal of the assignment is to provide an opportunity to practice research and writing skills that will help you academically (e.g. writing papers in other classes) and professionally (e.g. reviewing academic literature, analyzing data, writing memos).

The next page provides a brief description of each part of the assignment. In addition, I will circulate more detailed instructions for each part as we proceed through the quarter.

Part 1: Research Question

The first part is a brief essay that will introduce the topic you would like to research. It should 1) clearly and concisely state a research question, 2) communicate the significance of the research, and 3) describe how the outcome of interest varies across cases. The assignment lays the foundation for the review article, and it is an opportunity to practice formulating good research questions.

Part 2: List of sources

The second part is a list of scholarly sources that are in some way related to your research question. It will consist of a list of twenty sources (that is, citations with bibliographic information) and brief (one-sentence) summaries of the research findings for each of those sources. This assignment should also group the sources according to “schools of thought” that represent different answers to your research question. If part one lays the foundation, part two supplies the raw materials that are necessary to produce the review article.

Part 3: Arrow diagram

The third part of the assignment is an arrow diagram that depicts a causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. Guided by this diagram, you should formulate a hypothesis that describes the relationship between the variables that you expect to see in the real world if your theory is true. Part three generates a figure that visualizes the answer to your research question, which you can import wholesale into your review article.

Part 4: Review article

To complete the project, you will write a 6-8 page review article that compares and contrasts two or three distinct answers to your research question. The review article will incorporate all of the previous parts. It should begin with the research question and its significance, then describe the schools of thought and state which one is most useful for answering your research question. Finally, it should propose a testable hypothesis that logically follows from your chosen school of thought. By completing the review article, you will gain an understanding of the literature on a research question that interests you, learn how scholars anchor their empirical research in prior scholarship, and practice critiquing existing scholarship.