ROOTS OF THE MODERN WORLD
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In this project you will examine a modern geo-political issue and its historical background. Your issue should be one that has international ramifications of some kind (whether political, military, economic, human rights, etc.). Your overall goal in the project will be to explain the issue to your audience, detail the historical events that influenced the present situation, and evaluate the expert opinions on the future significance of the situation. The project will be divided into several sub-assignments.

• DEVELOPING A RESEARCH QUESTION (DUE: RESEARCH QUESTION)
  ○ Formulate the question that you will answer through your research. The question should define and direct your efforts. It should pare down your topic to a specific problem (i.e., “Poverty” < “Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa” < “Poverty in former British Colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa” < “Poverty in former British Colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa and how it relates to international crime” < etc.).
  ○ Read the “Developing a Research Question” handout for more direction.

• IDENTIFY THE “BOUNDARIES” OF THE ISSUE (DUE: ISSUE MAP)
  ○ By reading modern journalism on the issue (the economist, BBC, New York Times, etc.), map out any and all connected causes & effects you can find. Even if something seems only slightly related to the issue, map the connection anyway. Your goal is to note every possible vein of investigation and causality on your map – once that is done, you’ll use the map to decide what parts are important/relevant enough to include in your research.
  ○ Make notes as to where you got each piece of information so that you can easily reference it later when writing the paper. For ideas on how to keep research notes, read the “Research Journaling” handout.
  ○ Read the “Creating an Idea Map” handout for website addresses and tips on how to use various idea mapping services.

• RESEARCH THE HISTORY OF THE ISSUE (DUE: THREE CRITICAL REVIEW DRAFTS)
  ○ Using the modern journalism and your idea map as a guide, begin to investigate the historical background of the issue (this may or may not have been well-covered already by the modern journalism). Your goal is to identify what you consider the “root causes” of the issue (i.e., the key events and changes that lead to the current situation).
  ○ Beginning with the “Pick Six” exercise (see assignment description online), you will need to find at least three academic articles that deal with your topic. You will write critical reviews on at least three of the articles that you find. You may write more if you wish – at the very least, you should read each with the same scrutiny and attention.
  ○ Keep notes when reading and researching.

• SET THE BOUNDARIES OF YOUR PAPER (DUE: REVISED ISSUE MAP)
  ○ Using the information you gained from the expert opinions you found when researching academic articles, revise your Issue Map to include the new knowledge you have gained. As in the first mapping steps, include anything you think is relevant, even if you don't think it will be included in the paper.
  ○ Once you have included the new relevant information, use the Issue Map to decide what you are going to include in the paper itself. Look at the connections you have made and decide what is necessary to include, what you'd like to include if you have space, and what you'll likely need to exclude.
• **Create Your Paper Outline (Due: Paper Outline)**
  - Using your revised Issue Map, decide how you want to organize your paper. Things to keep in mind while outlining:
    - Have the question you’re answering clearly in mind – has it changed since you began? Exactly what are you asking and answering for your reader?
    - Put yourself in your reader’s place – if you knew nothing of the issue, what would you need to know first? Then what would make the most sense to discuss after that? Think about how the issues connect naturally (look at the connections on your Issue Map) and use that as your guide.
    - Look at the “Research Project – Written Portion” guidelines below and make sure your paper is doing all four things listed.

• **Presentation on the Research Process (Due: Two short presentations)**
  - Shortly before your first draft is due, you will give two short (1-2 minute) presentations to the class. The two presentations will be given back to back, with a short pause in between. The primary purpose of the presentations is to give me an opportunity to provide feedback on your public speaking and to get you to think about your research process thus far.
  - The first presentation should provide a short summary of your research process – what have you done, what was difficult, what changes you made after first defining your issue, etc.
  - The second presentation should be a “teaser trailer” of the full presentation to come. It should lay out your research question and give a hint as to the sorts of things you will detail in your work.
  - Re-read the “Public Speaking – Basics of Body Language” and “Public Speaking – Speech Organization & Preparation” handouts.

• **Research Project – Written Portion (Due: Multi-Page Written Work)**
  - Write a paper that accomplishes the following objectives in a cohesive and rhetorically compelling manner. Your paper should:
    - Describe the issue in question and its effects in the world today
    - Detail the history leading up to the issue (i.e., the root causes)
    - Detail the various expert opinions on the issue
    - Describe and evaluate the various expert opinions/predictions/policy recommendations
  - In short, after reading your paper, your audience should be able to answer the following questions: what’s the problem, why does it matter, how did it get this way, how do people suggest fixing it, and what do you (as the author) think of those suggestions based on everything you’ve read and learned.

• **Research Project – Presentation (Due: 5-6 Minute Oral Presentation)**
  - The final portion of the project is to take your written work and condense it down into a 5-6 minute oral & visual presentation. Your presentation should convey the “heart of the matter”, i.e., what you have identified as the most significant elements of the issue and the most interesting and compelling expert opinions on the matter.
  - Realize that you will need to edit your written work down significantly to reach the 5-6 minute time frame. When preparing from a manuscript (i.e., every word of the speech written out on the page), approximately one page will take two minutes in presentation.
  - I suggest that you deliver your speech extemporaneously (i.e., just your main points and relevant facts on the page), since that will afford you the greatest opportunity to interact with your audience, but you may choose to work from a manuscript if you wish. In either case, use the “Public Speaking – Basics of Body Language” and “Public Speaking – Speech Organization & Preparation” handouts as you prepare.