

Global Issue Project

Purpose: Global issues are complex! These challenges transcend state boundaries and require a collective response because no single entity (like a government, nation, organization, group or individual) possesses the ability to deal with or solve these issues by itself. The changing nature of the world requires us to use of a variety of perspectives to develop a holistic understanding of any global problem. That is where interdisciplinarity becomes handy. International Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study as it draws upon multiple disciplines and perspectives. In this project, you will engage in a multi-step interdisciplinary research process to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of a global issue. You will identify multiple and often conflicting perspectives on the issue, recognize them as partial understandings of the subject, critically assess them, and develop capacity to integrate knowledge and different modes of thinking. This is an opportunity to apply your education experience and skills to real-world problems beyond the university!

Skills: The goal of this class is to prepare you for meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in this course and professional life beyond school:

- understanding interdisciplinary knowledge and methods/tools.
- applying interdisciplinary knowledge/tools to problem-solving.
- analyzing and synthesizing disciplinary insights.
- creating a new more comprehensive interpretation of a problem.

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:

- comprehensive knowledge of a major global issue.
- knowledge of diverse frames of reference and alternate perspectives.
- knowledge of major terms, concepts, methods, and principles in international studies.

Assignment Tasks

Step 1: Identify a global issue of interest to research as a class and develop a complex research question about the issue researchable in interdisciplinary sense.

Step 2: Identify all potentially relevant disciplines in investigating the issue. Conduct an initial literature review to finalize the list of 2-3 most relevant disciplines to consider as a class and reevaluate the research question, if needed.

Step 3: Students will be divided into small groups. Each group will be assigned a discipline to draw insights from. Conduct a comprehensive literature review to discover disciplinary scholarly knowledge on the topic and develop adequacy in your assigned discipline: identify disciplinary perspective on the issue, assumptions, concepts, theories, and methods in order to understand the disciplinary insights concerning the issue. Summarize your findings in a group literature review data table and present your findings to the class.

Step 4: As a group, reflect on your disciplinary understanding of the global issue and evaluate insights using disciplinary perspectives, major assumptions, and consider strengths and limitations.

Step 5: As a class, integrate disciplinary *insights*. Identify conflicts between disciplinary insights and reflect on why these conflicts exist. Create common ground between disciplinary insights to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Assignment Guidelines

Step 1:

Overview: From the list of topics covered in class, identify one global issue of interest to research as a group and develop a list of complex research questions (RQ) about the issue researchable in interdisciplinary sense.

In-class assignment:

1. Pick a topic from the list below.
2. Complete Crafting a Research Question workshop.
3. Generate a list of potential RQs.
4. Submit the Handout 1 on Canvas (one submission per group).

List of Global Topics

- Globalization and its effects
- Sovereignty
- Global governance
- Conflict
- Terrorism
- Cyberterrorism
- International political economy
- Migration
- Sustainable development
- Hunger/food insecurity
- Climate change
- Peacebuilding
- Genocide
- Poverty
- Global health
- Human rights
- Transnational advocacy networks

Crafting a Research Question

Coming up with a good research question is essential for any research! To learn about the process of generating a good RQ, complete [Crafting a Research Question Workshop](#) developed by UCLA Undergraduate Research Center to (1) generate potential RQs, (2) refine and improve your RQs, and (3) explain broader significance of your RQ. Students will be divided into groups of 4-5. Groups will complete the workshop together, fill out the handout below, and submit it on Canvas (one submission per group).

Step 2:

Overview: Identify all potentially relevant disciplines in investigating the issue. Conduct an initial literature review to finalize the list of 2-3 most relevant disciplines to consider as a class and reevaluate the research question, if needed.

In-class assignment:

1. Identify all potentially relevant disciplines, including their perspectives and major assumptions (a handout with disciplinary perspectives, phenomena they study, and epistemologies will be provided in class).
2. Visit https://library.uncw.edu/guides/international_studies and conduct an initial literature search using the databases provided.
3. Finalize the list of 2-3 **most relevant** disciplines to consider as a class and reevaluate the research question (RQ), if needed.
4. Submit Handout 2 on Canvas (one submission per group).

Step 3:

Overview: Students will be divided into small groups. Each group will be assigned a discipline to draw insights from. Conduct a comprehensive literature review to discover disciplinary scholarly knowledge on the topic and develop adequacy in your assigned discipline: identify disciplinary perspective on the issue (assumptions, concepts, and theories) in order to understand the disciplinary insights concerning the issue. Summarize your findings in a group literature review data table and present your findings to the class.

At-home assignment:

1. Develop your research plan.
2. Submit Research Plan on Canvas (one submission per group).
3. To develop adequacy in assigned discipline, conduct a comprehensive literature review to discover disciplinary scholarly knowledge on the topic and create a data table that permits easy data retrieval of critical information from the disciplinary insights (complete Handout 3).

4. Submit Handout 3 on Canvas (one submission per group).

In-class assignment:

1. Present your group findings to the class.

Step 4:

Overview: As a group, reflect on your disciplinary understanding of the global issue and evaluate insights using disciplinary perspectives, major assumptions, and consider strengths and limitations.

At-home assignment:

1. Identify the most relevant disciplinary insights in a short group paper.
2. Prepare a group presentation about the disciplinary understanding of the global issue.

In-class assignment:

1. Present major findings on the disciplinary understanding of the issue to the class.
2. Class discussion: Evaluation of disciplinary insights.

Step 5:

Overview: As a class, integrate disciplinary insights. Identify conflicts between disciplinary insights and reflect on why these conflicts exist. Create common ground between disciplinary insights to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

In-class assignment:

1. Class discussion: Integration of disciplinary insights to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of the issue.

Handouts

Handout 1:

List of Potential RQs		
RQ Tips: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good RQs in interdisciplinary studies are complex and researchable in interdisciplinary sense. • State your RQs as questions. This will help guide you to seek an answer, not just a description of the problem. • Good RQ identifies the focus of the study, defines scope of the study, avoids disciplinary jargon and bias, as well as personal biases. Use Create Research Question tool developed by the Randall Library to help identify key concepts and related terms for your RQ.		
Potential RQ 1		
Potential RQ 1 Checklist		
Is the RQ stated in a way that is appropriate for interdisciplinary study?	YES/NO	Explain:
Is the scope of study clearly defined?	YES/NO	Explain:
Explain broader significance of your RQ		
Potential RQ 2		
Potential RQ 2 Checklist		
Is the RQ stated in a way that is appropriate for interdisciplinary study?	YES/NO	Explain:
Is the scope of study clearly defined?	YES/NO	Explain:
Explain broader significance of your RQ		
Potential RQ 3		
Potential RQ 3 Checklist		
Is the RQ stated in a way that is appropriate for interdisciplinary study?	YES/NO	Explain:
Is the scope of study clearly defined?	YES/NO	Explain:
Explain broader significance of your RQ		

Handout 2:

List of All Potentially Relevant Disciplines
Identify as many potentially relevant disciplines as possible. Relevant information sometimes comes from unexpected sources! Consider each discipline's perspectives, major assumptions, and phenomena they study when determining its relevancy to your RQ (see handout with disciplinary perspectives, phenomena they study, and epistemologies).
Potentially Relevant Discipline 1:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
Potentially Relevant Discipline 2:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
Potentially Relevant Discipline 3:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
Potentially Relevant Discipline 4:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
Potentially Relevant Discipline 5:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
Potentially Relevant Discipline 6:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
Potentially Relevant Discipline 7:
Explain why you think this discipline is relevant to your RQ? Based on the class discussion and your own thoughts, what questions do you think a researcher in this field might ask about the topic?
<i>*Use additional pages to list more potentially relevant disciplines, if needed.</i>

Initial Literature Search

Watch [Searching as Strategic Exploration](#) and [Research as an Iterative Process](#). Start gathering information about the problem by skimming disciplinary insights from the potentially relevant disciplines identified above. Skimming or cursory reading means reading without the intent to fully comprehend the author's argument/findings.

This process will:

- help you identify **most relevant** disciplines for your RQ;
- help reveal if there is too much or too little information on your RQ;
- help reveal if your RQ is too broad or too narrow.

Visit https://library.uncw.edu/guides/international_studies and use databases provided to identify disciplinary scholarly journal articles, books, and other relevant materials. Look for key components, such as abstract, preface, introduction, table of contents, chapter headings, conclusions, etc. If you are not finding relevant publications on the topic from a discipline that seems relevant, consider changing the keywords in the search box (remember that different disciplines employ terminology differently). If the disciplinary source of insight is not immediately evident, conduct a Google search of the author's name, which should reveal the author's disciplinary affiliation (note that some authors may have an interdisciplinary affiliation). Focus on quality of results rather than quantity.

Answer the questions below.

What results did your library search produce?

Did you change your keywords/search statement to get better more relevant results in the library catalogue? Why or why not?

List of 2-3 most relevant disciplines for your RQ.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is your RQ at this point of research?

Handout 3:

Your Research Plan				
When it comes to research, a little planning goes a long way. Complete Your Research Plan Workshop to come up with a group research plan. Assign roles to group members, create a timeline and a group meeting schedule.				
Submit your Research plan on Canvas.				
Data Table				
Creating a data table is an effective way to capture and organize information during research. It will help you track the overall progress of your research.				
Disciplines Consulted	Author(s)	Focus of Insight	Author's Thesis	Evaluation of Insight
<i>Example:</i>				
<i>Political Science</i>	<i>Jones</i>	<i>Focuses on the effect of globalization in general terms on Middle Eastern societies</i>	<i>Insert direct quote form the text</i>	<i>Very useful</i>
Source: Repko A., <i>Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies, 2 Ed.</i> SAGE Publications: 2017.				