Internationalizing General Education: The First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination and Internet-Based Political Research

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ABSTRACT. This article explores ways by which first-year students develop global awareness, discover the academic expectations of college life, and confront moral issues that emerge from political conflict. Specifically, it describes the model of a first-year seminar on political self-determination, developed at Elizabethtown College, in which students prepare case studies of contemporary conflicts and present research at an undergraduate research conference. Moreover, attention is given to how students can perform effective research on global affairs through the Internet, how Internet resources can enhance teaching of introductory courses in international relations, and how research assignments are best evaluated through an assessment rubric.

KEYWORDS. First-year seminar, internationalizing general education, Internet-based political research, undergraduate research paper assignment, use of technology

Among the recent trends in education reform over the last 25 years is the movement to promote global learning in undergraduate higher education. This movement has several strands, including efforts to increase knowledge about global issues, link global awareness to diversity and multicultural education, and encourage practical engagement and global citizenship (Hovland, 2006).

Global learning can also be a general education objective and provide a context for the development of liberal learning skills. Our article adopts this framework, using the theme of political self-determination to promote general education objectives for first-year students. Our approach follows suggestions for curriculum reform from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), which has

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become a leader in the global learning movement (Hovland, 2006; Musil, 2006). In its influential 2002 report, *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*, AACU stated that liberal education in the 21st century should aim to produce "global thinkers" capable of participating effectively in the international arena (AACU, 2002).

Effective international participation means that students should not only possess a core of knowledge about global and cross-cultural communities, according to the *Greater Expectations* document, but also master intellectual and practical skills and become responsible for personal actions and civic values. The report called for a practical test of a quality liberal education, "when studies reach beyond the classroom to the larger community, asking students to apply their developing analytical skills and ethical judgment to concrete problems in the world around them, and to connect theory with the insights gained from practice" (AACU, 2002, pp. 25–26).

To meet the challenge of producing global thinkers, faculty should introduce students to global issues and promote intellectual skill development early in the college career. At Elizabethtown College, first-year students who take the First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination explore the politics and morality of how nation-states deal with the demands of ethnic, cultural, and religious groups for greater political independence. The course aims to provide students with the conceptual tools and direct encounters useful in analyzing active self-determination conflicts such as China and Taiwan, Spain and the Basques, Israel and the Palestinians, and the aspirations of indigenous peoples throughout the world.

While a major objective of this course is fostering global awareness, First-Year Seminars at Elizabethtown also introduce students to the academic expectations of college life and promote the development of critical thinking, writing, researching, and oral communications skills. To address those learning objectives, the centerpiece of this course is a Research Project on Political Self-Determination. In this assignment, students examine how recent self-determination conflicts originated, what parties

are involved and what claims they are making, what strategies are being used to achieve the parties' aims, and what outcomes have unfolded. Furthermore, students conduct comparative analysis of the conflicts they are studying, evaluate why conflicts have and have not been resolved, and provide recommendations for dealing with such conflicts in a more peaceful and just way. Research findings are presented at an annual undergraduate research conference, featuring faculty members as moderators of student panels.

Successful research on recent political conflicts around the world depends on effective use of the World Wide Web. The *Greater Expectations* report specifically mentions "interpreting, evaluating, and using information discerningly from a variety of sources" as an important skill for "empowered learners" to master (AACU, 2002, p. 22). The First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination provides instruction on the use of Internet sources in teaching and research in comparative politics and international relations, such as news, information, data, documents, reports, scholarly articles, and archival material. Students learn where to locate such materials through guides, directories, and limited area search engines, and how to evaluate what is quality information and what is unworthy.

This article has three components: (a) explanation of the First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination and its purposes; (b) description of the Research Project on Political Self-Determination; and (c) discussion of how faculty and students can most effectively use the Internet to conduct research in international affairs. We hope to show that the course and its strategies for teaching and learning represent good practices that contribute to the ongoing discussion over how to improve undergraduate education.[1]

THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR ON POLITICAL SELF-DETERMINATION

First-Year Seminars (FYS) at Elizabethtown College were established in 1989 as part of a reform of the College's general education

program. All first-year students are required to take the FYS in the Fall semester. In contrast to the student success or college survival model of FYS, which stresses social, personal, and career development issues as well as academic development (Hunter, 2000; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989), First-Year Seminars at Elizabethtown are academically rigorous courses that are complemented by first-year faculty advising and peer mentoring programs. The Elizabethtown FYSs are topical in nature, with the content determined by individual instructors from any department or discipline. All seminars promote seven student learning outcomes, including the following:

- Demonstrating the academic expectations of college
- Showing improvement in critical thinking and communications skills
- Locating information and evaluating its accuracy, quality, timeliness, and usefulness
- Writing an appropriately researched and documented academic paper

Developed in 2001 by McClellan, the First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination uses a multidisciplinary, case study approach to understanding conflicts that revolve around the claims of ethnic, cultural, and religious groups for greater control over their collective destinies. Drawing from historical and contemporary examples from the American experience and the international arena, the course examines the kinds of claims minority groups have made on majorities, ranging from protection from discrimination to political independence, and how majorities have responded. It also addresses the questions of what rights minority cultures should possess and what moral justifications exist for secession. Ultimately, students are asked to consider how majority–minority conflicts can be resolved peacefully and justly.

After students are introduced to the concept and theories of nationalism,[2] the course begins with a self-determination dispute familiar to U.S. students, the American Civil War. Arguments used by proponents and opponents of Southern secession, as found

in thousands of letters and diaries of Civil War soldiers, are analyzed in the work of the historian James McPherson in his book, *For Cause and Comrades* (1998). The book begins with McPherson contemplating what made the 12,000 Confederate soldiers involved in Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg march a mile uphill to almost certain death, and the course takes up McPherson's query. As they read McPherson, FYS students take a field trip to the Gettysburg battlefield to become aware of the large stakes and human costs that self-determination conflicts bring. The key point of this section is to remind students that national self-determination struggles that lead to violence, from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War to the Indian Wars, have defined the American experience.[3]

The second part of the course moves the examination of secession from the realm of empirical social history to that of normative theory. The political philosopher and ethicist Allen Buchanan places the discussion of American secession in a more contemporary context, comparing the reasons used to support and oppose secession in the U.S. to those used by Eastern Europeans during the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia or by separatists in Quebec (Buchanan, 1991). From these and other cases, Buchanan attempts to derive a moral theory of secession, sorting out "good" reasons for secession from "bad."[4] In *Secession* and his later works, Buchanan discusses less dramatic ways, such as federalism and special group rights, through which groups can achieve greater autonomy (Buchanan, 1991, 2004). Readings from the political theorist Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship* (1996) provide a fuller description of these alternative political arrangements.[5] Films such as *No Man's Land*, *Hotel Rwanda*, and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, as well as classroom debates of historical, contemporary, and hypothetical cases, help students internalize Buchanan's arguments and sharpen their moral sense in understanding self-determination conflicts.

Concluding the course is a selective survey of recent controversies, centering mainly on student research projects (discussed below). The current edition of the seminar requires a

book of case studies featuring ethnic conflict (Schneckener & Wolff, 2004), which students can use as a model for structuring their own empirical analyses, and Samantha Power's critical analysis of U.S. policy toward genocide, *A Problem from Hell* (2007). Among the virtues of Power's book is the way it dramatizes how the reality of power politics, internationally and domestically, can trump moral values in dealing with human rights abuses around the world. Advocates of greater U.S. and international intervention to prevent or stop genocide must therefore devise political strategies.

Earlier versions of the course included analysis by the scholar-advocate (former leader of the Liberal Party in Canada) Michael Ignatieff, who provided an overview of self-determination issues in the immediate post–Cold War period in *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (1995). Ignatieff distinguished between conflicts based on ethnic nationalism, where membership in the political community is ascribed at birth, and civic nationalism, in which membership is extended to anyone who subscribes to basic constitutional principles. Many of the post–Cold War struggles in Eastern Europe involved ethnic rivalries that were long suppressed by authoritarian regimes under Soviet domination, and it is these conflicts that have presented the West with political and moral dilemmas. Ethnic groups that achieve political self-determination may simply substitute their own form of authoritarian rule over minorities. Of course, countries with traditions of civic nationalism are facing their own self-determination issues, such as Quebec separatism in Canada. In any case, Ignatieff observed that the principle of political self-determination is not necessarily consistent with values of democracy and freedom.

Seminar students are presented with contrasting approaches to the question of how the global community should deal with cases where self-determination conflicts are associated with extreme deprivations of human rights, such as in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda. Ignatieff (and Power) called for forceful outside intervention, while writer David Rieff, formerly a liberal interventionist like Ignatieff, argued in *At the Point of a Gun* (2005) that military involvement

to promote human rights should occur only in rare circumstances. The two viewpoints provide the framework for a class debate on what the international community should do about cases of potential or actual genocide, such as the present situation in Sudan.[6]

The conversation between Ignatieff/Power and Rieff, who approach reality not as social scientists or philosophers but as journalists, serves to frame the debate over the meaning of self-determination in the post-9/11 world. How has the need for international cooperation in combating terrorism altered how self-determination conflicts are viewed? As one example, to the extent that the U.S. sees Russia as an ally in the "war on terror," how has this changed the American approach to Russia's dealing with separatists in Chechnya? Another timely question is whether the war in Iraq promoted political self-determination, and if so, how and for whom—Sunnis, Shiites, and/or Kurds? What connections exist or fail to exist among national self-determination, democracy, and human rights, and what are the appropriate means to achieving a greater synthesis?

Conceptually armed and exposed to different modes of understanding—both multidisciplinary and methodological—students are ready to explore the politics and morality of political self-determination more intensively through researching a current conflict.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON POLITICAL SELF-DETERMINATION

In addition to unit exams and response papers to class assignments, FYS students are required to conduct a Research Project on Political Self-Determination. Each student examines a recent conflict involving an ethnic, religious, or cultural group seeking political self-determination. The project topics come from an extensive list provided by the instructor, and are allocated on the basis of student interest and adequate representation of different geographical areas and kinds of conflicts. A typical year's projects, for instance, included clashes of ethnic nationalism (Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Chechnya), struggles within civic nationalist states (Quebec,

Scotland, Puerto Rico), and claims of indigenous groups (Australian Aborigines, the Chiapas movement in Mexico, the province of Nunavut in Canada). Also represented were China's disputes with Taiwan and Hong Kong and separatist conflicts in Africa (Nigeria and Sudan).

The project is divided into three sections. The first part of the project focuses on the origins and nature of the conflict. Students provide a brief history of the conflict; a description of the ethnic, cultural, or religious group or groups seeking greater self-determination and their demands; the positions and actions the state and/or other groups have taken in regard to the challenging group's demands; and the role that external states, organizations, and groups have played. Midway through the semester, a first draft of the first part of the final project is required, and is reviewed by peers and the instructor.

The second part of the project describes recent developments in the conflict. Strategies of the parties involved are discussed, as are recent events. If a resolution of the conflict has taken place, students should analyze how resolution occurred and who won and lost. If the conflict is continuing, an analysis of the factors that prevented resolution is needed. A first draft of the second part is turned in at the three-quarters mark of the course, and is once again peer- and instructor-reviewed.

The third part calls for a moral analysis of the conflict, in terms of the concepts introduced earlier in the course by Buchanan in *Secession*. Here is where students evaluate the moral weight of the stances and actions taken by the parties in the conflict, and take a stand. They also provide a reasoned view of how the conflict could have been managed differently, and if the conflict involved violence, what could have been done to prevent or minimize suffering. Discussion of Power's views of how human rights abuses can and should be handled by the international community is welcomed here, as are suggestions of alternative means of achieving political self-determination, which were discussed by Buchanan and Kymlicka. Finally, the third section asks students to discern the lessons of their case study for understanding and dealing with self-determination conflicts generally.

The draft of the third part is completed near the end of the course and is not peer- or instructor-assessed. However, the findings and conclusions of the project are discussed during the Undergraduate Conference on Political Self-Determination during the last week of class. The conference organizes the research projects into panels according to geographical area or type of conflict, and is intended to facilitate comparative analysis. Students perform practice presentations in class a week before the conference, and are given feedback by the instructor. The objective is for each student to deliver a 12–15 minute professional presentation, complete with PowerPoint or other visual aids.

The conference is open to the campus community. Faculty members serve as moderators of the panels, offering questions and commentary that students can include in the final draft of the paper. The aims of the conference are to explore the various patterns and outcomes that recent national self-determination conflicts have produced, and to suggest ways by which such conflicts can be resolved peacefully.

Since Elizabethtown College has an affiliation with the Church of the Brethren, one of the historic peace churches along with the Quakers and the Mennonites, the conference's concern with peace and conflict resolution is relevant to the mission of the College and important to many of its members. The next section proceeds with an analysis of the Internet research component of the course.

THE INTERNET RESEARCH COMPONENT OF THE COURSE: BEYOND RANDOM GLEANING FOR BITS OF "INFORMATION"

When students in the First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination begin working on their research projects, they take part in two research instruction sessions. A general workshop is conducted by reference librarians at the College, focusing on the College's subscription databases. A second workshop on Internet use is led by a professor who uses the WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources as a key point of reference. The latter session provides

students with important information and advice on how to use Internet resources more efficiently and effectively, not just for their FYS research projects, but throughout their college careers.

Surveys show that most undergraduates use the Internet heavily and sometimes preferentially or exclusively for academic assignments, but know little about effective Internet search methodologies, overestimate their own academic searching skills, and are quite unaware of how incomplete and superficial their knowledge is (Barberio, 2004; Educational Testing Service, 2006; Jenson, 2004; Selwyn, 2008). Their personal use of the Internet is tilted quite heavily toward commerce, youth popular culture, entertainment, and social networking—such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, music, video games, and Weblogs—rather than intellectual or academic matters. From these activities and "growing up with the Net" as "digital natives," they have come to expect convenience, instant responses, sophisticated graphics, interactivity, entertainment, novelty, and catering to their wishes online. As Derek Law (2008), UK specialist in networked resources in higher education, puts it in an insightful article, "They want instant results and instant gratification because a fundamental tenet is that convenience trumps quality. They want just enough to complete the task in hand—not complete or perfect."

For academics in international studies, however, particularly those based in small colleges without major research libraries, the Internet provides cost-free access to valuable foreign and domestic resources in many languages and far beyond anything available before 1995 or so (Selcher, 2005). The Internet is too important a medium of acquisition and exchange of information and analysis, including in scholarly papers, for an undergraduate instructor in international studies to dismiss or to downplay (Harmon, 2007). Its value as a means of exchange and professional networking in international studies will only continue to grow. But really effective and efficient research on the Internet is definitely much more difficult and complicated, and takes far more patience and efforts to stay current, than the traditional and relatively static paper-based library research.

The size of the Internet can only be roughly determined because it is not yet possible to index all of its contents. In June 2009, a Bing staffer, in Bing's community blogs, estimated that the Internet had over one trillion pages of content. In February 2010, the now defunct search engine Cuil (http://www.cuil.com) claimed to have indexed 127 billion Web pages. Internet site indexing and searching has therefore become a large and highly specialized industry in rapid change, presently trending toward natural language, meaning-based (phrasal), visualized, clustered, higher relevancy, contextual, deep Web, personalized, user-assisted, and virtual shelving search capabilities. Search engine optimization (SEO), or coding Web pages to rank higher on search results, is an established and widely used technical and marketing skill that very much affects the rankings given in search engine results (Search Engine Guide [http://www.searchengineguide.com]; Search Engine Journal [http://www.searchenginejournal.com]; Search Engine Watch [http://searchenginewatch.com]). There are now thousands of local, regional, national (country-specific), global, and limited topic or file-type search engines, many of which can be accessed from Search Engines 2 at http://www.search-engines-2.com. Regular and detailed surveys are conducted on the usage patterns of the most popular engines and on searcher attitudes and behaviors, and affect what is posted online and how. Most users are totally unaware of these technical and commercial processes that condition their online search results.

The currently dominant Google search engine is constantly being refined and augmented. It is so complicated in its features, possibilities, and changes that there are numerous Web sites, Weblogs, and printed users' manuals that one can consult to increase its research functionality for a given purpose.[7] Google's international page provides access to scores of its country- or language-specific versions and to a free translation service. Google's specialized (limited field) sites include two fine ones for academic use. Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com) is limited in its searching to scholarly sources, with versions for documents in languages other than English. Google News (http://news.google.com) continually searches through thousands of

quality online news sources around the world in many languages and offers an e-mail news alert service, custom sections, RSS feeds, and an archive.

Students seldom think in terms of a coherent and sustained research strategy while online, prefer "bursts" or "infoclips" of information, and scan Web pages too rapidly, which constantly frustrates their effectiveness. Haphazard and hasty approaches are common, but produce mediocre and disconnected results at best, especially when procrastination and short attention spans weigh in. Students are insufficiently aware of the limitations and quirks of the Internet search engines, and the fact that search engines do not reason as the human mind does, but rather derive their generation and ranking of results ranking via mathematical algorithms.

Once results are displayed, drifting off-point through interesting but unrelated hyperlinks is a constant temptation. Misinformation, partisanship, out-of-date information, and deception are all too easy to come by. The scholar or student who wishes to go beyond random or haphazard gleaning of chance bits of information or analysis must learn the basics of serious Internet research just as thoroughly as one must learn library research for printed materials. Only an informed, careful, disciplined, and patient strategy with discerning techniques can overcome the overwhelming information overload in Internet use and allow focused, thoughtful consideration, conceptual context, and analysis from the most valuable sources for the topic being researched.

The issue of quality online research must be more explicitly addressed in academe, because a lot of what is actually happening now is going on unevenly and often by chance across higher education. Many students are now deficient as well in traditional library skills and in regular interaction with librarians as information mediators. They do not benefit from the academic peer review vetting process or the conceptual layout of the paper indexes, card catalog, sections, and stacks as an organizing frame of reference for their computer screen–based work, where it all looks the same (Nunberg, 2005; Young, 2005).

Traditionally trained professors do not appear to be much more adept than their students at using the Internet well in their own subject matters, nor do they appear to wish to take the class time to teach their students proper online skills. The primary training responsibility definitely belongs to college and university librarians as "information specialists," because information literacy and good research skills apply to all academic fields, just as traditional "brick and mortar" library skills do. Some of the most useful studies about best practices in academic Internet research appear in librarians' journals and on the Web sites and Weblogs of the library profession. Most college and university libraries maintain subject matter online guides tuned to the needs of their campus, and some post very helpful usage guidelines on Internet research and judging the reliability of sources (Jackson & Pellack, 2004; http://www.writing. ku.edu). Yet even if librarians do teach proper Internet academic research skills to undergraduates, but professors and others involved do not properly reinforce those methods and coach students to apply and practice them within the context of a discipline-based assignment in an academic reading–thinking–writing process, students are likely to regard the skills as dispensable in a practical sense (Oblinger, 2007; Robinson & Schlegl, 2005; Wilder, 2005; Wills, 2004). A major study from the Information School at the University of Washington noted serious weaknesses in the Internet research skills and habits of college students, and found that many students rely on professors to be "research coaches," while "librarians were tremendously underutilized by students" (Head & Eisenberg, 2009).

Undergraduates tend to resist improving their Internet research techniques, largely because "satisficing" has worked so well for them in the widespread absence of professorial guidance on the topic and of practical demands for higher quality search results. Internet search is just not part of the general curriculum at most institutions, nor are there clearly serious academic consequences that are attributable by students to poor searching *per se*. Overall, improvement of student Internet research is best carried out in the context of sorely needed methodological training in how to conduct research generally, from start to finish, not just as a standalone

mechanical online exercise (Head & Eisenberg, 2010; Kolowich, 2010).

To help overcome the digital generation gap in academe, there are insightful studies available on the characteristics of high school and college student use of the Internet for personal and academic purposes, particularly applicable for undergraduate instructors at the first-year level (British Library & Joint Information Systems Committee, 2008; Calkins & Kelley, 2007; Graham & Metaxas, 2003; Griffiths & Brophy, 2005; Harris, 2005; Head, 2008; Head & Eisenberg, 2009; Joint Information Systems Committee, 2008; Lippincott, 2005; Van Scoyoc & Cason, 2006). Some of the best and most comprehensive ongoing U.S. research is done and posted online by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (http://www.pewinternet.org), the Online Computer Library Center (http://www.oclc.org/us/en/default.htm), and EDUCAUSE (http://www.educause.edu/) (EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research, 2010). The Educational Testing Service and the California State University developed a standardized test, copyrighted as the ''iCritical-Thinking'' certification examination, to measure the information and communication technology proficiencies skills of undergraduates in "real-time, scenario-based tasks that measure an individual's ability to navigate, critically evaluate and understand the wealth of information available through digital technology" (http://www.ets.org; Katz, 2007).

It is unrealistic for an instructor to follow a "hands off" approach on correct use and citation of the Internet sources all semester, then expect the students to have learned properly on their own without mentoring and feedback. A common student error is to assume that everything necessary to do their assignments well is easily available online somewhere, either free on the Internet or in an institutional subscription database. Instructors should show them otherwise and reinforce this mentoring with corrections and enforcement as necessary. Vesey (2005) urges teachers to stress and follow up on the principle that a wise academic research strategy is like a tripod and will always incorporate both print and electronic sources from (a) copyrighted books in paper copy, (b) copyrighted peer-reviewed journal articles in fiche and paper copy, and (c) copyrighted full-text online databases that the college library subscribes to and cost-free reputable Internet sources. Such mentoring may be augmented by prescribing a proportional ratio in the three types of sources. It is also advisable to encourage students to use longer and more in-depth analytical online sources instead of the usual shorter and merely descriptive ones, because shorter articles tend to be very focused on details or a certain point in time and are often superficial.

Ideally, all international studies courses should have occasional and deliberate Internet-based components that exemplify substantial sources and promote critical thinking and good online research practices. The real issue for most academic users of the Internet is not really a scarcity of quality Web sources, but rather learning how to find the best ones out there. For those needing a broader orientation on search techniques, excellent free online tutorials are available, both in academic subject matters and on the use of the Internet for quality online research and evaluation of sources. To find such tutorials and major directories in international affairs, consult Academic Info at http://www.academicinfo.net/reffind.html and the "Starter Tips" page of the WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources at http://www2.etown.edu/vl/starter.html. About's "Web Search" (http://websearch.about.com) explains search engines and techniques, and offers a weekly newsletter. Information specialist Phil Bradley (http://www.philb.com) has lots of tips to help select the proper search engine or technique for the task at hand. Marcus P. Zillman produces a huge series of cost-free online Internet guides in PDF that are of excellent use in international studies scholarship and teaching, both for specific subject matters and on topics including academic and scholarly search engines and sources, deep Web research, online research tools, current content awareness, and student research (Zillman, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). Calise and De Rosa have thoroughly catalogued and evaluated the main online sources for political science generally in the "electronic research environment" (Calise & De Rosa, 2008, p. 595).

Students need orientation to learn to consider carefully the credibility, trustworthiness, bias, or reputation of the source of the information or the perspective that they include and cite. As a general (but not absolute) rule, for higher degrees of credibility, it is advisable to prefer Web sites that are educational (.edu), governmental (.gov), military (.mil), organizational (.org), and international organizational (.int) in origin. One can limit Google (and many other) searches to include only any one of these types of sites. A growing number of key periodicals commonly used in academe now post their searchable archives online without cost. These presently include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Time* magazine, and *Christian Science Monitor*.

There are many printed and online sources that teachers can use for tips and guidance in creating and evaluating effective assignments that teach better use of the Internet, as well as concepts and more complex and critical thinking about academic subject matter (International Studies Association, 2010; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Vine, 2004). Principles of quality academic Internet use can easily be incorporated into a course, especially one with a term paper or shorter reaction papers (Greene & Zimmer, 2003; Selcher, 2005; Williams, Goodson, & Howard, 2006). Most leading international studies textbooks provide interactive online exercises to accompany the topics of the text, but are still available freely to all users. Writing-intensive courses, with feedback built into assignments, facilitate teaching of some key principles of serious Internet research through examples given in class (such as news items, public opinion polls, or key recent policy statements), suggestions and tips offered to the whole class, comments written on individual work, demonstrations in a computer lab or a wired classroom, and individual tutoring or assistance. Before a field trip, the instructor can assign and have the class synthesize and critique some of the characteristics, roles, and outcomes of that organization as seen on its Web site and as commented upon by other reliable online sources.

In consideration of the foregoing, for the First-Year Seminar research project on political

self-determination and other course needs, we have found that the key beginning principles and basic skills to stress to first-year students regarding effective academic Internet search and usage optimally include the items discussed in the next sections. The WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources (http://www2.etown.edu/vl) directory can be used as a vehicle to illustrate some of these issues.

Search Engine Mechanics

One of the most basic skills is more effective use of search engines, with which students are already somewhat familiar. It is important for students to be skeptically aware of the engines' algorithmic and mechanistic methods in their inclusion and ranking of results and therefore of their weaknesses relative to human reasoning. They should recognize the limitations of essentially advertisement-driven search engine companies in producing the most relevant academic results. The top results returned on a search are not automatically the best or most authoritative ones for a specific purpose. It is important to identify top-of-page sponsored results (paid inclusion, usually advertisements) in contrast to the generated ("organic") results that are the more relevant ones.

Choice of Search Engines

Students should master at least one search engine well, but always use several search engines for best results, plus "national" versions for results from specific countries or in specific languages. Results definitely vary by search engine. Be sure to use the advanced search option on each engine, not just the simple initial interface. To be preferred now are Google (http://www.google.com), Bing (http://www.bing.com), Yahoo! (http://www.yahoo.com), and Ask (http://www.ask.com) because they all have their own (and different) indexing systems. Alta Vista (http://www.altavista.com) and Startpage (http://startpage.com) also have useful features. Metasearch engines such as Dogpile (http://www.dogpile.com), Search3 (http://www.search3.com), and Mamma (http://www.mamma.com) compile responses from several major search engines

into one set of results. Glearch (http://www. glearch.com) allows you to search for language and country-specific content in "top results from Google, Yahoo and Bing as well as the most popular search engines for the selected country." Yippy (http://search.yippy.com), Quintura (http://www.quintura.com), Hulbee (http://hulbee.com), and Gigablast (http://www. gigablast.com) helpfully cluster results by topical category. See Complete Planet (http:// aip.completeplanet.com) for tens of thousands of searchable databases and specialty search engines.

Searching Techniques

Teach students to frame queries properly, to vary wording of queries, to try multiple search terms, and to use advanced features including Boolean and appropriate "operator" terms to refine results by varying the syntax and the wording of search terms. Prefixes such as *near:*, *inurl:*, *site:*, *intitle:*, *daterange:* and many others allow considerable search refinement in Google, for example. Use of quotation marks around a string of words in Google and some other engines will treat the string as a phrase instead of as separate words. (See (http:// www.google.com/support/websearch) for explanations.) Students should go well beyond the first two or three pages of results (many users do not go beyond the first page) and use the advanced features that are constantly being added to search engines. Searchers must distinguish between "vertical" and "horizontal" search methods and their best uses; that is, delving more deeply into a topic (i.e., specifics of Basque or Kurdish nationalisms) as contrasted with moving "sideways" into related topics (concepts or theory about nationalistic movements in general). Avoid the urge to wander away from the main topic "horizontally" through less relevant hyperlinks or distracting advertisements on a Web page, which is a constant temptation, especially for those with short attention spans.

The "Deep Web"

There is a huge "invisible," "deep," or uncatalogued portion of the Internet that search engine robots do not penetrate and integrate into their retrieved results, especially in the cases of databases and very large Web sites such as those of the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund. The deep Web is far larger than the indexed portion, so students should know how to try to find items there, including through directories (Zillman, 2010b).

Something of Value

Knowing how to find something of real value is more desirable than just finding something fast and easy. Sheer information or data (as disconnected bits of facts) is less useful than analysis, yet serious political and economic analysis of international affairs is much harder to find on the commercially driven Internet. Encourage persistence in locating and evaluating quality and in-depth sources to counter the common student one or two-screen, hit-and-run attention span. Students need to be shown how and encouraged to examine a large, quality IGO, governmental, academic, think tank, or NGO Web site thoroughly for relevant content, beyond just using the internal search feature.

Key Sites for Specific Topics

There are many kinds of reliable and content-rich Web sources of diverse sponsorship that students should get to know—intergovernmental organizations, governments, academic institutions, research foundations, nongovernmental advocacy groups, portals, gateways, academic databases, etc. We have made a lot of use of the International Conflict Research organization INCORE (http://www.incore.ulst. ac.uk) of the University of Ulster and the United Nations University, a research-based site with excellent data and analysis on ethno-nationalistic conflicts. The Minorities at Risk Project at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM; http://www.cidcm.umd. edu/mar), as well as other resources on the CIDCM site (such as the Peace and Conflict series), is an excellent searchable database for studies on contemporary ethno-religious and self-determination conflicts. The Eldis Conflict

and Security Resource Guide (http://www.eldis.org/conflict) and the International Crisis Group (http://www.crisisgroup.org) are other high-yield sites for us. Students should learn to identify and favor such academically sound sites, almost all of which have quality internal search facilities and linking systems.

Limited Area Search Engines

Limited area search engines search only high-quality sites in a specific subject rather than the whole Internet, but few persons have ever heard of the term. Several have proven very useful in our First-Year Seminar, including HuriSearch (http://www.hurisearch.org), which searches the content on over 5,000 human rights Web sites in many different languages, and the Meta Search Engine for Searching Multiple Human Rights Sites (http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/lawform.html) from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library. There is a very helpful limited area search engine at (http://zfacts.com/p/576.html) that searches (by keyword, phrase, or order code) only those sites that post Congressional Research Service Reports. The nonpartisan U. S. Congressional Research Service, based at the Library of Congress, prepares thousands of high quality unclassified reports a year on a vast range of topics at the request of members of Congress. Many of these reports are on foreign affairs topics or U.S. foreign policy issues related to national self-determination.

Directories, Databases, and Gateways

Subject matter directories, databases, or gateways such as the WWW Virtual Library system (http://vlib.org) and Intute: Social Sciences (http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences) are mediated by subject matter experts, virtual information specialists, or "cybrarians." These sites index, annotate, and link key sites in a subject matter or provide a search facility that accomplishes that purpose from a database of the current content of high quality sites. Searchers thus have mediated access to optimum, refereed locations where they can seek more precisely, say, professional papers or reports that a major search engine would miss or

would rank very low on the most likely search terms. Very few first-year students are aware of such directories and gateways in their fields of study.

PDF Files for Academic Purposes

Portable Document Format (PDF) files are very common as especially valuable "containers" for academic and research institution information, such as scholarly papers and U.S. Congressional Research Service studies. Few students recognize this role of PDF files and tend instead to prefer shorter HTML-based information pages. Search engines index both the titles and the contents of PDF files. Some attention should therefore be given to finding PDF files and to proper use of the Adobe Acrobat reader for PDF files.

The Danger of Plagiarism

The Internet makes cut-and-paste plagiarism a strong temptation, so proper usage and citation style for online sources must be specifically learned by students and clearly reinforced by professors through a strategic approach (Scanlon, 2003; Sterngold, 2004). Both Google (http://www.google.com) and Yahoo! contextual search (http://yq.search.yahoo.com) work well to check phrases for possible plagiarism from online sources, from both HTML pages and PDF documents. But these engines do not discover password-protected text from fee-based proprietary databases (including term paper mills) that are part of the as yet unindexed or fee-based sections of the Web.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

In keeping with the emphasis in the political science discipline on assessment of learning outcomes (Deardorff, Hamann, and Ishiyama, 2009), several direct and indirect measures of student learning were devised. To assess how effectively students have followed the format specified in the research project guide and used the strategies recommended in the two research

instruction sessions, we have constructed a rubric.[8] Since it is most possibly the first experience students would have with a college-level writing assignment, it is important to set clear guidelines for conducting research and reporting findings. The rubric serves that goal and specifies performance expectations for organization, content, quality of analysis, and research strategy (see the Appendix: A Rubric for Assessing the First-Year Seminar Research Project). The latter dimension assesses the extent to which students pursued a systematic search strategy along the lines of the tripod mentioned above.

Applying the rubric retroactively to research projects submitted in the fall 2009 FYS, the three authors found considerable variation among students in the depth and quality of analysis, use of a variety of sources of information, and level of attention to documentation and citation format. When the course is offered in future years, student research performance should improve by including the rubric in the course syllabus and applying it to earlier drafts of the project.

Another area of direct assessment was observation of the students' research presentations at the 2009 undergraduate conference. The faculty moderators of student panels, several of whom were members of the Communications Department, reported that they were impressed with the content of the talks, but that the effectiveness of the presentations could be improved. The moderators suggested that a rubric be developed for assessing oral presentations, and that time be set aside in the course for instruction in the proper use of PowerPoint and other presentation materials.

Student evaluation of the progress made in achieving course outcomes was the primary means of indirect assessment. Using the nationally normed IDEA evaluation system, students in the 2009 FYS indicated that the course helped them, at a level at or higher than the average ratings in the IDEA database, learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories related the course content; improve their ability to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view; and develop skill in oral and/or written expression. In reflection papers collected at the end

of the semester, students credited the workshop on online research through the WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources as a valuable instruction session.

Since the learning goals of first-year seminars focus mainly on introducing students to the academic expectations of college and developing intellectual skills that are essential to college success, no formal assessment of the impact of the First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination on global learning was conducted. Nevertheless, tools for assessing global awareness and understanding are readily available, including a pre- and post-instrument developed by AAC&U (Musil, 2006) and the Global Perspective Inventory (Braskamp, Braskamp, Merrill, & Engberg, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The First-Year Seminar on Political Self-Determination, accompanied by a research project, Internet research instruction, and a student conference, incorporates some of the education reforms of the past two decades. It recognizes the academic challenges of the first-year experience, promotes critical and analytical thinking, employs process writing techniques advanced by the writing-across-the-curriculum movement, and concludes with a capstone project that provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of intellectual skills.

Furthermore, we have provided instructional and pedagogical strategies that address several leading areas of undergraduate education reform in the 21st century, as identified in the AACU report. By focusing on the theme of political self-determination and exposing students to international sources of research information, the FYS raises global awareness. The course equips students to become more discerning consumers of electronic information, an essential skill in the digital age. By requiring both empirical and moral analysis of self-determination conflicts, the seminar helps students identify value conflicts and clarify their own moral positions on issues of global concern.

Finally, the model that is provided here is generalizable beyond the FYS class and beyond

the topic of self-determination. This model can be used by educators of other subfields of political science beyond the international relations and comparative politics subfields. In fact, the model provided for conducting Internet-based research can be used by disciplines other than the political science discipline, in any course that assigns undergraduate research paper projects.

NOTES

1. Replication Data Footnote: This study does not have a primary data set to share in the Dataverse, as it did not employ any quantitative datasets. An alternative data set that could have been provided for replication would be the student papers. But we do not think that they would be appropriate to share with the broader audience, as this would violate the intellectual property rights of the students.

2. For an overview, see Hutchinson and Smith (1994).

3. Other readings in this section of the course include Garry Wills' *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (1992) and Jay Winik's *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* (2001), which explicitly compares the American Civil War to secessionist conflicts in the Balkans.

4. Buchanan believes secession is justified under strict conditions. In the class, his view is compared to that of other secession theorists, using readings from Moore (1998).

5. Also see Schneckener (2004).

6. From a philosophical viewpoint, Buchanan's latest work explores the moral conditions under which international intervention to combat human rights should take place (Buchanan, 2010).

7. See http://www.google.com/support, http://www.googletutor.com, http://www.google.com/help/cheatsheet.html, and Google Guide (http://www.googleguide.com) for elaboration on how to use Google more thoroughly.

8. For a discussion of the use of rubrics in political science, see Omelicheva (2009).

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APPENDIX Rubric for Assessing the First-Year Seminar Research Project Assignments

	High mastery	Average mastery	Low mastery	Inadequate mastery
Organization of the paper	The paper has an inviting introduction and a clear essay-style organization, with appropriate headings and sub-headings.	The paper has recognizable introduction and conclusion, with headings and sub-headings; but the introduction may not give the reader a clear sense of direction, or the conclusion may not wrap up the findings in a coherent way.	There is a sloppy introduction, and no clear conclusion, no headings or sub-headings.	There is no clear introduction or conclusion, no headings or sub-headings.
Content of the paper: Does the paper effectively and directly address the questions asked, using sufficient amount of detail, using theories and concepts taught in the course?	The paper shows evidence of mastery of the material with insight and perhaps originality. It makes a smooth flowing argument, demonstrates insights into the subject matter, synthesizes ideas, concepts, and theories, shows interrelationships, and clearly and accurately explains causes and effects.	The paper shows a competent comprehension of the material and assignment. It effectively addresses the main questions, using the theories and concepts taught in the course. The paper may be a bit incomplete or unpolished.	The paper shows a cursory understanding that is adequate in covering the broad outlines of the topic in a sketchy manner, but fails to be complete in the identification, taking into account, and exploration of important details and nuances. It may not address a number of questions. It may not apply the theories and concepts taught in the course.	The paper shows a limited mastery of the subject matter, with barely acceptable standards and is seriously flawed by coverage suffering from large gaps and vague notions, and few and/or weak references to concepts, theories, and assigned material. There are substantial numbers of questions that are either barely answered or not answered at all.
Thesis statement	There is a clear thesis statement.	The thesis statement exists, but it is not as clearly stated and focused as in a high mastery level.	There is a thesis statement, but it is unfocused and ambiguous.	There is no thesis statement at all. Connections between ideas are missing.
What is the central goal of this paper? Is the topic clearly stated in the paper?	The paper focuses sharply on the questions to be addressed in different parts of the paper.	The paper selectively focuses on the questions to be addressed.	The paper rarely focuses on the questions to be addressed.	The paper wanders around the questions to be addressed, or does not address the questions at all.
What are the questions that will be addressed under the different sections of the paper?	Facts and details are presented as part of a larger explanatory scheme, not as isolated bits of information.	Transitions between different parts work well, but some leave connections fuzzy.	Transitions are missing to a great extent, no big picture.	Connections between different ideas and sections are missing.

APPENDIX (Continued)

	High mastery	Average mastery	Low mastery	Inadequate mastery
What type of information is gathered to write the paper?	Key concepts are clearly defined. The paper leaves no important aspect of the topic unaddressed.	The paper is generally complete, but more than one important aspect of the topic is not addressed.	The paper does not include a number of important aspects of the topic, or does not incorporate the key topics and theories.	The paper is clearly incomplete, with many of the concepts, theories, or key aspects of the topic not addressed.
Does the paper develop a clear line of reasoning, explaining how the conclusions were reached?	There is sound and logical analysis.	Analysis is sound but there are lapses in logic.	Analysis is superficial or illogical.	There is no analysis. There is disconnected information, cited randomly. The paper leaves the reader unconvinced.
Which theory is used throughout the paper? Is there an alternative perspective that should have been considered?	The paper takes many alternative points of view and theories into account, with sufficient level of detail.	The paper states one or two alternative theories, with some level of detail.	The paper frequently uses theories inappropriately, or looks at the topic in a one-sided way.	Theories are misused, or not incorporated at all. The paper is written with a clearly identifiable bias.
Does the paper employ a variety of sources?	The paper uses a good quantity of high quality electronic and print sources, following the tripod of copyrighted (a) books; (b) peer-reviewed journal articles; and (c) online databases and reputable Internet sources.	The paper uses some sources to support the main points, but would need to increase the quantity and the quality of sources. Only one or two legs of the research tripod are used.	Citations are infrequently used or often seem to fail to support the author's main points. In most cases, the citations are from one leg of the research tripod and/or non-academic sources.	Citations are either rarely used or not used at all. If used, the citations are from non-academic sources.
Does the paper use the proper format for citations?	The paper uses the proper format for citations.	The paper uses the proper format with some minor errors.	The paper uses an incorrect format for citations, with major errors.	The paper does not use citations at all.
Spelling and punctuation	Uses correct spelling and punctuation.	Spelling is generally correct, with proper punctuations; may have minor mistakes.	There are many spelling and punctuation mistakes.	There are frequent spelling and punctuation mistakes.