Research Narrative Assignment: Integrating Reflection on Catholic Social Teaching

# Due Dates

1. Research question proposal: N date
2. Research narrative: 5 weeks after N date

# Suggestions for Scaffolding

In addition to a research question proposal, the research narrative could be preceded by an annotated bibliography assignment that asks students to evaluate their selected sources in the annotations according to specified criteria. A research narrative could also be accompanied by an annotated bibliography as a single assignment.

The research narrative assignment can also help students think out and receive feedback on their research process and use of sources before building up to an assigned research paper.

# Research Question Proposal

As preparation for the research narrative, have students submit a research question proposal and provide feedback. The proposal could include a preliminary bibliography of 3 sources, cited accurately in a specified citation style, and 1-2 pages that describe:

* The proposed topic (in about 3 sentences or less)
* A clearly stated research question (1 sentence)
* The significance of the issue
  + Why is this important to you? Why should it be important to others?
* Some of the costs, benefits, or consequences at stake
  + How might researching this problem add to the scholarly discourse or improve the situation of those affected?
  + How might researching this problem help promote the common good?
* Which themes or core issues of Catholic Social Teaching do you think are most directly related to this research question? How so?
  + Consider the 7 themes of Catholic Social Teaching outlined by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>.

# Research Narrative

Once students have received feedback on their research question proposals, they can begin work on the research narrative.

## Length and Formatting Guidelines

Length: 5-6 pages

Spacing: double-spaced with 1-inch margins

Font: 12-point font (Times New Roman, Calibri, or one similar to them)

## Style

Include introduction and conclusion statements, topic sentences for paragraphs, and transitions between topics as you would for any cohesive essay. Use the first person (“I searched for…”) when recounting your own thoughts and actions and reflecting on them.

## Body of the Essay

The research narrative should begin with:

1. Statement of the topic (1-2 paragraphs), including:
   * Brief explanation of information needed to understand the research question
   * The research question
   * Significance of the question
   * If the research question differs from the one in the proposal, why?

Then, describe your research journey and introduce each of the sources in your bibliography. These elements can be organized in whatever way fits best, but should include:

1. Research strategies
   * Describe the specific research strategies you used for finding relevant information.
   * Summarize the research tools (e.g., library catalog, reference book, Google Scholar, specialized research database) and search techniques (e.g., what keywords or phrases you used, whether you used subject terms or any limiters or filters, etc.) you used. Include both successful and unsuccessful attempts.
   * Explain why you made the choices you did, including adjustments you made along the way.
   * Identify which strategies were the most effective, and reflect on what this implies about the organization, labeling, or production of information on your topic.
2. Selecting and using sources
   * Introduce each source and briefly give its context and main purpose or major ideas.
   * Identify your primary sources.
   * Explain why you selected the sources you did. Include why you believe they are credible and relevant, and how they relate to one another in terms of the perspectives and ideas they present.
   * Outline your preliminary response to your research question, and explain how each of your sources fits into your argument.
3. Catholic social teaching
   * Reflect on how your research question and preliminary conclusions relate to social justice and the traditions of Catholic social teaching.
   * Respond again to these questions from your topic proposal, noting whether your answers have changed and if so, why.
     + How might researching this problem help promote the common good?
     + Which themes or core issues of Catholic Social Teaching do you think are most directly related to this research question? How so?
   * What insight or obstacles do you think the tradition of Catholic social teaching has to offer (implicitly or explicitly) in relation to your preliminary conclusions?

## Bibliography

Use 5 sources at minimum in your project, including at least 1 primary source and at least 2 scholarly secondary sources. Cite them in the body of the essay using footnotes according to the Chicago Manual of Style (Notes-Bibliography style), and include a bibliography at the end of the paper.