Marine Policy Project: Overview

This research project will be completed in four (4) parts throughout the semester and requires you to identify, research, and build an argument (pro or con) regarding a specific issue related to the ocean. At the end of the semester, you will have produced a concisely written letter of appeal that may be sent to an individual at three different local, regional, national, international political organizations, corporations, or research institutions.

This project is worth 20% of the Final Grade (100 points)

Part 1: Identify the Issue (10 points)

I will start out by saying that this is the most important part of any research project. It is also the hardest. If you take the time now to consider your issue carefully (that is, determine if it is too narrow or too broad), and find 4-5 good references (sources of information), you will have a much easier time writing your research paper in Part 2 and writing your letter of appeal in Part 4. Conversely, if you decide to pick the first topic that pops into your mind, you may be ‘sweating it’ during the writing phase.

The only restriction on the choice of an issue is that it must be related to the ocean. Read Chapter 15 in the textbook and look online for ideas. Two good places to start are the NOAA Ocean Explorer website, and the weekly Ocean News on the Real-time Ocean Portal website.

Things to consider when choosing a topic:

1. Is it specific enough to write a concise 3-4 page paper?

2. Do you have at least three (3) reputable sources of information?

   a. For example, Wikipedia and most internet websites do NOT constitute as primary scientific references (your information MUST come from peer-reviewed publications).

   b. You are required to use the library. Here are some useful links to get you started:  
   http://www.jstor.org.lscsproxy.lonestar.edu  
   http://www.jstor.org/sustainability/  
   http://www.sciencemag.org.lscsproxy.lonestar.edu/  
   http://tos.org/oceanography/

3. Is it controversial? Are you able to find scientific facts to support your argument?
Ideas to Ponder:

- **Mining Ocean Resources** (choose a specific resource or geographic region): oil, manganese, diamonds, or deep ocean mining

- **Tidal and Wave Energy** (choose a specific method and/or geographic region)

- **International Fishing Practices and Legislation**: Overfishing, illegal fishing, methods, or fishing regulations (best to focus on a single species and/or geographic region) – Ex: Shrimp Trawling in the Gulf of Mexico; Shark Fining in China

- **The Human Impact on Coastal Zones** (choose a specific topic and/or region) – Ex: Galveston’s Ike Dyke Project; Louisiana’s preservation of wetlands projects; Bioaccumulation in Galveston Bay; Harmful Algal Blooms in the Gulf of Mexico; Impact of rising sea-level on Florida coastlines

- **Waste Disposal in Oceans**: choose one type of waste. Ex: plastics, nuclear, sewage, illegal dumping, microbeads, or coastal dumping. It would be best to also narrow this geographically (for example: Gulf of Mexico, Galapagos Islands, or North Atlantic, etc.)

- **Endangered Species** (best to focus on specific species and geographic region): Hawksbill Sea Turtle in the Gulf of Mexico; for more visit - [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/listed.htm#fish](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/listed.htm#fish)

- **Climate change and the oceans**: Focus on a single topic related to this issue. Ex: ocean acidification impact on a specific marine ecosystem like coral reefs, the melting of polar ice impact on the Arctic or Antarctic, the impact of global sea level change on a specific city or region. Climate change is too broad an issue to be adequately covered in a 3-4 page research paper.

- **Deep Ocean Exploration**: approaches, technologies, limitations (best to focus on a specific technology or geographic region)

**Grading of Part 1:**
Submit your proposed issue, explain why you chose it, and why it is important. Max: 1 page, double-spaced, and include at least three (3) preliminary research sources/references (full citations following APA style format -- See Part 2 on how to format your bibliographies correctly). A rubric is provided below. As soon as your proposal is approved you may continue with your research.

**Tips of obtaining an ‘A’:**

1. Topic must be narrowed down. For example, “Overfishing” is too broad. A narrowed
down topic would be, “Overfishing of the Bluefin Tuna in the Gulf of Mexico.” Another good example is, “The impact of ocean acidification on the Great Barrier Reef System.” Note how the topic is zoomed into a specific geographic location and specific species or process.

2. Preliminary sources must be listed as FULL APA-style citations. I’m expecting to see at least one scholarly article (I’m looking to see if you are using the library). I do not want hyperlinks. Refer to the Library Research Guide on D2L for details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric for MPP PART 1</th>
<th>4 points</th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 point</th>
<th>0 points</th>
<th>Total Achievable Pts (10 pts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Good topic. Ocean related. Specific to a geographical region and species/process</td>
<td>Good topic, narrowed down but not enough</td>
<td>Topic too broad to adequately cover in a 3-4 page research paper</td>
<td>Not ocean related or unclear. Does not demonstrate understanding of topic and/or project as a whole. But was submitted on time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Three good references and formatted using APA style</td>
<td>Less than 3 good reference; Correct format</td>
<td>Less than 3 good references and incorrect format</td>
<td>No references were given</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Clearly stated</td>
<td>Needs Work (understanding not demonstrated)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why It Was Chosen</td>
<td>Stated</td>
<td></td>
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**Part 2: Research – List of Facts (40 points)**

Research and produce a list of at least 10 facts on your chosen topic. It is critical you select facts that are pertinent to your argument so you can cite them in your letter of appeal later in Part 4.

Requirements for Part 2 include:

- Facts should include data, statistics, and/or results from a scientific study.
- Facts need to be presented in YOUR OWN WORDS!
- Facts should be numbered.
- Each fact must also have an in-text citation attached to them (see example below).
- You are required to have at least five references, one of which must be a scholarly article from our online library.
- Cite your references using the scientific citing format (APA-style), for both the text and bibliography.

Example list with proper in-text citations:

1. Harvest of natural oysters are 1% or less than historic values in the Chesapeake Bay (NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, 2018).
2. Studies have shown the diminishing populations are a result of disease, overharvesting in the 19th and 20th centuries, and changes in water quality (Volstad et al., 2008).
3. Maryland built 10 reefs where fishing isn’t allowed and stocked them with more than 1 billion oysters over the past 20 years (Fears, 2015).
Example of Bibliography:

References:


APA-style formatting and LSC-online library are most likely *new* to you. So here are some useful resources:

- Oceanography Research Guide  [http://upresearch.lonestar.edu/apa](http://upresearch.lonestar.edu/apa)
- LSC Library [http://www.lonestar.edu/library/](http://www.lonestar.edu/library/)
- APA-style Formatting [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/)
- In-text citation format: (author(s), year) or (organization, year) - No embedded links!

For Grading Part 2:
The research facts list should be typed and contain all the specific detail outlined above. Proper citing of references and APA-style formatting is critical. *TurnItIn will be utilized so be careful not to plagiarize – aka, put EVERYTHING in your own words!*

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<tr>
<th>Rubric for MPP PART 2</th>
<th>10 points</th>
<th>5 points</th>
<th>0 points</th>
<th>Total Achievable Pts (40 pts)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>10 facts were presented; each fact contained data, statistic, and/or results from a scientific study. Facts were presented in own words.</td>
<td>Incomplete list of facts and/or facts were missing data, statistic, or scientific results. Some facts were not presented in own words.</td>
<td>Less than 5 facts presented. Facts presented are not in own words.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>At least five references are presented and all are reputable sources.</td>
<td>Reference list is incomplete (less than 5) and/or not all references are reputable. Library was not used.</td>
<td>No references were given</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>In-text citations are formatted correctly</td>
<td>No references given</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Bibliography of references is formatted correctly</td>
<td>No APA-formatting present</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
Tips of obtaining an ‘A’:

- Acceptable sources of scientific information are books, papers, and articles that have been through the rigorous process of review by experts in the field. A "peer reviewed" scientific article has been vetted by experts to make sure the data collection and analysis follow the principles of the scientific method.

- **READ the journal article you select from the library!** While much of it will be technical, you can gain a lot of background information of the issue and results of the study by reading (and understanding) the abstract, introduction, and conclusion.

- Examples of journals that you can be assured have been through this process are as follows: Nature, Science, Scientific American, and National Geographic (also conference transactions and books); websites include NOAA, NASA, EPA, USGS as well as universities, and state, national or international research organizations. The New York Times and LA Times are often used as primary sources because it is well established that the articles have been through a rigorous editing and fact checking process. National Inquirer or blogs are never used as primary sources.

- Wikipedia: Although this is a great place to look for links to primary sources, Wikipedia should never be cited as a primary source because not all the information has been vetted and it is hard to tell the difference between the two when they have been integrated into a Wikipedia page. Even in an article that cites another article, if you are thinking of using the idea that was in the cited article, make sure you have read the original article to assure the original authors ‘comments are not being used out of context.

- **Blogs are particularly dangerous.** Although blog authors often start off supporting their comments with references to vet information, sometimes blogs can take bazaar twists. I recently had a blog link sent to me by a very well-educated friend which started off referring to Jared Diamond’s book "Collapse" and then veered off on a tyrant that I am pretty sure would have never been the intent of Diamond. The manner in which the blog entry was written suggested that the author was presenting Diamond’s ideas. This is very scary! Do not use blogs!

**Part 3: Identify “Targets” for Letters of Appeal (20 points)**

The ultimate goal here is to get your argument into the hands of someone that can and will do something about your issue. Although the President of the United States can do something about many ocean issues, it is highly unlikely he or she will. Therefore, Presidents, Prime Ministers, or the Secretary General of the United Nations should be off-limits because they are all busy with other issues!
It is best to target elected officials at the local or regional levels; they are much more likely to be familiar with your issue and its effect on the communities they represent. Students have had little success in the past with congress and senate members. I am suggesting you target locally. Your targets may also be individuals within corporations and/or research institutes. College professors, in particular, love to talk about their research topic! I also suggest writing to person in opposition of your point of view – you may be able to persuade them to change!

When researching your targets, find out what their background is, and how long they have been in office or at their job. Find out what their position is on your issue; many should have a website with stated policy positions.

For Grading Part 3:
You are required to submit a list of at least 3 “targets” with a brief explanation of why you chose each individual, including their relevance to your issue, policy position, and any personal connection you might have. For full credit on this assignment, it is expected that you include specific names of an individual within each target organization, and a full address (mailing address that is, not email) for each target.

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<tr>
<th>Rubric for MPP PART 3</th>
<th>10 points</th>
<th>5 points</th>
<th>0 points</th>
<th>Total Achievable Pts (20 pts)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate Target(s)</td>
<td>Three appropriate targets given; specific names and full addresses</td>
<td>At least one appropriate target is given and/or full address(es) not provided for all targets</td>
<td>One unappropriate target is given; no full addresses given</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on Target(s)</td>
<td>Good explanation of why each target was chosen, including their relevance to your issue and policy position. Physical mailing addresses given.</td>
<td>Either full mailing address is incomplete or relevance was not given</td>
<td>No information on targets were given</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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Part 4: The Letters of Appeal (30 points)

Compose ONE letter, no longer than 1.5 page single spaced, single sided, with one inch margins that is each a concise summary of your research paper. The trick here is to condense all the information included in your research paper to a length and clarity that the recipient can easily follow and digest. Clarity is most important! You no longer have to include your scientific notation, but should include references if they support your main point.

Your letter is an argument and must be written in a persuasive style. Your tone is key. You will need to consider the recipient, what their position is, and what appropriate level of persuasion is required. For more insight on how to write a persuasive argument, here is a link to the University of North Carolina page:
I am also expecting to see a **specific request for action**. For example, “I am asking you to support bill xxxx.” Or “I request $xxx of funding for the XXX organization to YYY”. The action must be tangible. For example, asking for “help” or “we need to save the whales” is not specific enough. It is up to you to tell your recipient what EXACTLY you want them to do.

Remember, your goal is to get the reader at the other end of your paper to understand your argument and to do something about it. You are trying to get your letter past the summer intern doing a first pass of all web submissions and letters, and into the hands of your target, or a member of the target’s staff, who deals specifically with your issue (*I offer my apologies to those of you who have worked as summer interns in political offices!*).

For help writing a formal letter: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/)

**For Grading Part 4:**
Submit your final letter. This should be a formal letter including your target’s full name and address. You are not required to send your letter, but it would be a good idea to do so if you feel strongly about your issue.

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<tr>
<th>Rubric for MPP PART 4</th>
<th>20 points</th>
<th>10 points</th>
<th>0 points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Letter</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Correct elements and format of a formal letter</td>
<td>Formal letter format not used</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Content</strong></td>
<td>Very clear and concise; Good use of supporting data; Persuasive; Clear on action to be taken</td>
<td>Limited supporting data; argument not well-presented; not clear on action to be taken</td>
<td>Poorly written; not clear; not persuasive</td>
<td>20</td>
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