The Pathfinder

**Step 1: The Pathfinder**

A Pathfinder is a document that takes the reader through the process of finding the best information on a topic. It guides an interested researcher to where to search and which terms to use to identify information on a particular subject.

Your final project is to construct a Pathfinder on a political, economic, cultural, ethical, or social issue with global implications. Your research will reflect all of the work we do in this class and will draw from the results of your weekly assignments. In other words, the assignments you complete for each unit of instruction should form the basis of each part of your Pathfinder; the Pathfinder will represent a sampling of the best materials that you find on your research topic.

The Pathfinder will also reflect your learning from the experience of identifying and finding material from a wide variety of types of resources. Use your journal entries (and instructor's comments) to help you reflect on the importance of each resource and the tools and strategies that were required to find them.

NOTE: Although you will write an essay as part of your Pathfinder, **you will not write a formal research paper.** The goal is for you to do all the research you would do in preparation for writing a research paper.

**The Pathfinder Outline**

Be sure to include the required information under each section below.

**Title**

State your research statement or question. Include your name and course name, quarter and year.

**Introduction**

Discuss your research topic in 1000+ words. How did you answer your research question or discover about your research statement? What are the issues involved? Include a description of the scope of your research: What geographic region or historical (or current) time frames are involved? What other factors or considerations should your reader know about? This is the area of your Pathfinder where you have the opportunity to get into the substance of your topic. Use IN-TEXT CITATIONS for two or more quotations that support the claims that you make in the essay. At the end of your Introduction, list the MLA citations for the sources you cited.

**Topic Analysis**

This section should include your description of the topic from the point of view of how the information on this topic has been retrieved. You must cover the following areas:

* Identify the academic disciplines which might include the study of your topic (e.g. medicine, history, psychology, sociology, literature, religion, etc.)
* List the Library of Congress Subject Headings that were most effective in identifying material in Library Catalogs. (You do not need to include the classification numbers.)
* List the key word terms which helped you use different databases.
* List the most important databases and other periodical indexes.
* Identify at least one organization associated with your topic and provide pertinent contact information for each. Write a 2-3 sentence explanation as to how it relates to your topic.
* Identify at least one source of statistical information associated with your topic. Write a 2-3 sentence explanation as to how it relates to your topic. Please give a SOURCE for statistics not a statistic.
* Write a description of your experience identifying subject headings and key words.

**SOURCES (See the list below for the types of sources.)**

Here you will cite articles, entries or whole works where you have accomplished the following tasks:

* For each source, write a MLA citation.
* In addition, each source must have a descriptive and critical annotation that includes the following elements:
* Pertinent information about the author's credentials.
* Overview of the author’s central idea or main argument
* Note about the intended audience (i.e. who is most likely going to read such a document?)
* Point of view/ bias/ slant of the author
* Comments on the usefulness of the source to your research and its relationship to other sources you may have seen (how would you compare it to the other sources on this topic? What makes it special; how does it differ?) THIS IS THE “CRITICAL” OR EVALUATIVE PART OF YOUR ANNOTATION.
* Summary of the author’s findings, results, and conclusions
* Notes on special features (e.g. illustrations, charts, glossary, maps, special indexes, etc.)

**Best Reference Sources**

Identify two articles from encyclopedias or other specialized reference sources. For each source, write a MLA citation and a descriptive and critical annotation. One article must be from a general encyclopedia. (Encyclopaedia Britannica is a general encyclopedia.) One article must be from a subject (e.g. endangered species, the environment etc.) encyclopedia. You may need to visit a library to locate a subject encyclopedia. Articles from websites like Wikipedia.org, encyclopedia.com, ask.com, about.com etc. are NOT acceptable and will not receive credit.

**Best Books**

For each source, write a MLA citation and a descriptive and critical annotation. This section should contain the citations for the two (2) best books you found on your research topic.

**Best Periodical Articles**

This section includes MLA citations for the three best periodical articles you have located from periodical databases on your topic. **At least one article must be from an academic/scholarly journal.** For each source, write a MLA citation and a descriptive and critical annotation. Be sure to note which periodical index you used to identify each article. For articles from library databases you do NOT give the URL as your reader might not have access to that database. You will put the name of the database e.g. ProQuest in the citation. Please review the MLA guidelines.

**Best Internet Sources NO .COM SITES!**

Identify the two best websites related to your topic. For each source, write a MLA citation and a descriptive and critical annotation. Make sure you include the URL (web address) at the end of your citation!

**Best Non-print Source**

Find at least one non-print source (such as a video or interview) that is relevant to your topic. Write a MLA citation and a descriptive and critical annotation. In your annotation, explain the producer's intention. Critically evaluate how successful the work is in doing what it is intended to do. Be sure to evaluate its visual qualities, e.g., design, cinematography, color, etc. Explain how the material you found will support your topic. **You could include an alternative source here.**

**Research Process**

Write an essay of at least 350 words on your research experience. Describe your strategy for finding information, reflect on the kind of information you have found, and draw conclusions about the nature of your topic based on what you selected. In addition, please compare the Internet as an information resource to other information sources you find on your topic.