**MORE TRANSPARENT**

The Pathfinder – Final Assignment

**Due date: 3/23**

A Pathfinder documents your research and leads readers through your process of finding the best information on your topic. It guides others interested in your research topic to relevant sources and describes effective search terms and strategies they can use to identify more information on the same topic. Your final project is to construct a Pathfinder on a topic of your choice or one related to your linked course. **If you are taking the SSC101/ENVS&101 link your research topic should be the same for both courses.**

**NOTE:**  **This is not a written, formal research paper.**

**Purpose:** The Pathfinder Final Assignment is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned over the course of the quarter. It is an accumulation of many of the skills and knowledge covered in this course and will allow you to bring them all together. The goal is for you to do all the research you would do in preparation for writing a research paper (without writing the paper). You will also document the strategies you used to find information on your research question and reflect on your research process.

*Your research will reflect all of the work we do in this class and will draw from the results of your weekly assignments. The assignments you complete for each module should form the basis of each part of your Pathfinder; the Pathfinder will be a sampling of the best materials that you find on your research topic.*

The skills and knowledge you implement to complete this assignment will be useful in future classes that include research and will also help you effectively navigate information in your daily lives.

**Skills:** The following skills are necessary to complete this assignment:

* Crafting research questions
* Searching article databases, library catalogs, and search engines strategically
* Selecting relevant and appropriate information
* Evaluating information
* Critical Thinking and Reflection
* Citing and annotating sources
* Summarizing what you learned from your sources

**Knowledge:** For this assignment, you may also want to refer back to these concepts covered earlier in the quarter:

* The Research Process **[Week 1]**
* Advanced Search Techniques (i.e. Boolean Operators) **[Week 4]**
* Subject Headings **[Week 3 & 4]**
* Source Types **[Week 4 & 7]**
  + Scholarly vs Popular
  + Primary vs Secondary
* CRAAP Evaluation Test **[Week 5]**
* Ethical use of information **[Week 8]**

**Tasks:**You will need to complete these tasks in order to complete all of the components of the assignment.

1. Formulate a viable research question
2. Develop search strategies to find relevant information
3. Search a variety of research tools (Ex: library catalog, article databases, Google, etc.)
4. Create a Research Process Journal that regularly documents your research process over the duration of the quarter
5. Select 8 sources that help you answer your research question
6. Create citations for your 8 sources in APA or MLA format
7. Write an evaluative annotation for each of your 8 sources
8. Summarize what you learned about your topic (no more than 1 page)
9. List the most helpful search strategies and research tools you used
10. Compile your research question, your topic summary (abstract), your list of helpful search strategies/research tools, your annotated bibliography (8 sources + 8 evaluative annotations), and your Research Process Journal into one document

# **How to Organize Your Pathfinder:**

Your Pathfinder must include the required information under each section below.

**I.  Research Statement or Question**  
State your final research statement or question.

**II. Abstract**A summary about your topic, what you learned, and any major findings you made during your research. Your summary should be no more than one page.

How did you answer your research question or what did you discover about your research statement? What are the issues involved? Include a description of the scope of your research: What are the main arguments or evidence that support your conclusions? 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. In short, your abstract should clarify what your research question was, and what the answer to that question was.

Tips for Success: An effective abstract will include a few specific details from the sources you found. If you quote or paraphrase sources in your abstract, you must include the appropriate in-text citation in APA or MLA format. Your abstract should not go over a page. Ideally, it will be somewhere between 1/2 a page and a full page.]

**III. Search Strategies**This section includes a description of the topic from the point of view of how the information on this topic has been retrieved. In other words, where would you tell someone interested in your topic to begin looking for information and what strategies would you recommend they use and why? You can think of this part of the assignment as a road map for someone who is also thinking about researching your topic. You must cover the following areas:

1. Identify the academic disciplines that might study of your topic (e.g., medicine, history, psychology, sociology, literature, religion, etc.)
2. List the most important research tools for your topic (ie. Specific article databases, library catalog, etc.).
3. List the most effective keyword/search term combinations you used
4. List the Subject Headings that were most effective in identifying more material on your topic in either/both the Library Catalog or Article databases.
5. List important sites or databases where you can find primary sources on your topic.
6. Other search tips (if applicable)

Tips for Success: This section can simply be a bulleted list of the resources and strategies you found most useful. If you format this section as a list, don't forget to also include WHY these resources/strategies were useful. You can also approach this section as paragraph if you'd like.

**IV. Annotated Bibliography**Here you will list the most relevant sources you found for your topic. For each source:

* Write a correctly formatted bibliographic citation in APA or MLA style. **If you are taking the ENVS&101/SSC101 link your citations should be in APA format**.
* Include an evaluative annotation with the following elements:
  + A brief summary of the main points (1-2 sentences only)
  + An evaluation of the source - how do you know it is reliable?
  + Strengths and weaknesses of the source
  + 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?) **THIS IS AN IMPORTANT EVALUATIVE PIECE.**
* Identify the type of source in parenthesis after your annotation. For example: (book) or (reference source)

Your annotated bibliography should be alphabetically organized and must include, at minimum, the following:

\*\*\* Below “best” means the most relevant and useful source you found for that type of information. You can use sources you found in your weekly ‘Find Sources’ assignments or include new sources you have found after doing additional research. For example: You could use a source you found in the ‘Week 2 Find Sources: Encyclopedia Articles’ assignment for your ‘Best Reference Source’ OR if your topic changed later in the quarter you may decide to do additional background research and choose a new source as your best reference source. \*\*\*

**A. Best Reference Source**   
Identify one (1) article from an encyclopedia or other specialized reference source. You may need to visit a library website to locate a subject encyclopedia.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You will not receive credit for citations from websites like Wikipedia.org, encyclopedia.com, ask.com, about.com etc. If in doubt about what to include here, ask me!

**B. Best Book**   
You should include the best book (1) you found on your research topic. Remember that an e-book is still a book.

**C. Best Periodical Articles**

Include the three (3) best periodical articles you have located from periodical databases on your topic. **At least one article must be from an academic/scholarly journal.**

**D. Best Primary Source**  
List at least (1) primary source that is relevant to your topic. **For this assignment, your primary source should NOT be a scholarly research article.**  In your annotation, explain the producer's intention. Critically evaluate how successful the work is in doing what it is intended to do. Explain how the material you found will support your topic. For example, what information can you glean from your primary source that you cannot get from your other sources?

**E. Two Additional “Best” Sources**List two (2) more sources that you find relevant and useful to answering your research question. These can be any type of source.

Tips for Success: You will be graded, in part, on the quality and depth of your sources. As well as the variety of sources you find. Make sure the sources you choose are directly relevant to your topic and help you understand your research topic better. Your annotations don't need to be long - a paragraph should suffice. However, make sure to include all three elements of an annotation: 1) brief summary 2) critical evaluation 3) how you can use the source/how it compares to other sources. Strong annotations will focus on the evaluation and usefulness of the source, NOT on summarizing the source.

**V.  Research Process Journal**

The research journal should document your research experience. Where did you search? What strategies worked or didn’t work? Did you get stuck at any point? What did you do to get unstuck? Did you have any breakthrough moments? Etc.   
  
It is most effective, easiest and best if you begin working on the journal at the beginning of the quarter to track your efforts. Your entries can be short and regular and thus record your progress through the quarter.

Tips for Success: This section should look like a diary or journal. You can include entries by specific date OR include weekly summaries. Start on this section early in the quarter!

| Final Assignment Grading Rubric | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Ratings** | **Pts** |
| Directions and Completeness | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 10.0 pts  You follow all directions; all parts of the assignment are included. | 5.0 pts  Assignment includes most of the components outlined in the directions | 0.0 pts  Assignment misses several components outlined in the directions | | 10.0 pts |
| Content, Analysis and Critical Thinking | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 15.0 pts  Content is very detailed, specific, and relevant to the assignment. Comments consistently include specific examples or observations to illustrate your learning. You evaluate ideas and concepts and develop your own theories, observations, or conclusions about what you found. | 10.0 pts  Content is somewhat detailed and specific. Some comments include general examples or observations. You apply ideas and concepts from the readings and tutorials to your research. | 5.0 pts  Content is brief and includes only minimal analysis or detail. Most comments are general. Minimal identification, definition, or description of resources and information. | | 15.0 pts |
| Source Selection | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 10.0 pts  Sources selected are of high quality and relevance. | 5.0 pts  Sources selected are of reasonable relevance and fairly appropriate for college research. | 0.0 pts  Sources selected represent minimal effort and are of nominal relevance or value. | | 10.0 pts |
| Citations | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 10.0 pts  Most sources are cited correctly in APA or MLA format. All sources are cited in the same citation style. Sources are listed alphabetically. | 5.0 pts  Some sources are cited correctly in APA or MLA format. The majority of sources are cited in the same citation style. Sources are listed alphabetically. | 0.0 pts  Few or no sources are cited correctly in APA or MLA format. Citations are not alphabetized and are not consistent in using the same citation style. | | 10.0 pts |
| Grammar/Writing | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 5.0 pts  Assignment demonstrates error-free and grammatically correct college level writing. | 3.0 pts  Assignment is largely free of grammar, spelling or other writing problems. | 0.0 pts  Assignment contains significant grammar, spelling or writing errors. | | 5.0 pts |
| Total Points: 50.0 | | | |

**LESS TRANSPARENT**

**Final Assignment: The Pathfinder**

**SSC101 Winter 2020**

A Pathfinder documents your research and leads readers through your process of finding the best information on your topic. It guides an interested researcher to sources and describes terms to use to identify information on a particular subject.

Your final project is to construct a Pathfinder on a topic of your choice or one related to your linked course. **If you are taking the SSC101/ENVS&101 link your research topic should be the same for both courses.** Your research will reflect all of the work we do in this class and will draw from the results of your weekly assignments. The assignments you complete for each module should form the basis of each part of your Pathfinder; the Pathfinder will be a sampling of the best materials that you find on your research topic.

The Pathfinder will also reflect what you have learned from your experience identifying and finding material from a wide variety of resources. Use your research journal entries to help you reflect on the importance of each resource and the tools and strategies that were required to find them.

**NOTE:**  **This is not a written, 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**

Your Pathfinder must include the required information under each section below.

**I.  Research Statement or Question**  
State your final research statement or question.

**II. Abstract**

A summary about your topic, what you learned, and any major findings you made during your research. Your summary should be no more than one page.

How did you answer your research question or what did you discover about your research statement? What are the issues involved? Include a description of the scope of your research: What are the main arguments or evidence that support your conclusions? 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. In short, your abstract should clarify what your research question was, and what the answer to that question was.

If you use quotations or paraphrase sources in your abstract you must include the appropriate in-text citation in APA or MLA format.

**III. Search Strategies**

This section includes a description of the topic from the point of view of how the information on this topic has been retrieved.  In other words, where would you tell someone interested in your topic to begin looking for information and what strategies would you recommend they use? You must cover the following areas:

1. Identify the academic disciplines which might study of your topic (e.g., medicine, history, psychology, sociology, literature, religion, etc.)
2. List the most important article databases for your topic.
3. List the keyword/search terms which helped you use different article databases.
4. List the Subject Headings that were most effective in identifying material in Library Catalogs.
5. List important sites or databases where you can find primary sources on your topic.

**IV. Annotated Bibliography**

Here you will list the best sources you found for your topic. For each source:

* Write a correctly formatted bibliographic citation in APA or MLA style. **If you are taking the ENVS&101/SSC101 link your citations should be in APA format**.
* Include a descriptive and critical annotation with the following elements:
  + Overview of the author’s central idea or main argument
  + Bias or point of view of the author, if any
  + Brief summary of the author’s findings, results, and conclusions
  + Strengths and weaknesses of the source
  + 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?) **THIS IS AN IMPORTANT EVALUATIVE PIECE.**
* Identify the type of source in parenthesis after your annotation. For example: (book) or (reference source)

Your annotated bibliography should be alphabetically organized and must include, at minimum, the following:

**A. Best Reference Source**   
Identify two (2) articles from encyclopedias or other specialized reference sources. At least one entry must be from a subject encyclopedia (e.g. Encyclopedia of Gender in Media, The Gale Encyclopedia of Science, etc.). You may need to visit a library website to locate a subject encyclopedia.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You will not receive credit for citations from websites like Wikipedia.org, encyclopedia.com, ask.com, about.com etc. If in doubt about what to include here, ask me!

**B. Best Books**   
You should include the best book (1) you found on your research topic. Remember that an e-book is still a book.

**C. Best Periodical Articles**

Include the three (3) best periodical articles you have located from periodical databases on your topic. **At least one article must be from an academic/scholarly journal.**

**D. Best Primary Source**  
List at least (1) primary source that is relevant to your topic. **For this assignment, your primary source should NOT be a scholarly research article.**  In your annotation, explain the producer's intention. Critically evaluate how successful the work is in doing what it is intended to do. Explain how the material you found will support your topic. For example, what information can you glean from your primary source that you cannot get from your other sources?

**E. Source you would NOT use**

Include one (1) source that you found during your research process, but decided to **NOT** include as one of your best sources. In your annotation make sure to explain why you would not use this source. Be specific.

**NOTE:** Each source listed above in sections A. - E. will include an APA or MLA citation followed by a descriptive and critical annotation. Each source on the list! That's 8 sources, 8 citations, and 8 annotations! Note that your annotated bibliography should be in alphabetical order and should include all of the required sources listed above. You **MAY** have more than eight sources if you want. You will be graded, in part, on the quality and depth of your sources.

**V.  Research Process Journal**

The research journal should document your research experience. Where did you search? What strategies worked or didn’t work? Did you get stuck at any point? What did you do to get unstuck? Did you have any breakthrough moments? Etc. **It is most effective, easiest and best if you begin working on the journal at the beginning of the quarter to track your efforts. Your entries can be short and regular and thus record your progress through the quarter.**

Top of Form

Points:

50

Bottom of Form

# Key takeaways from TILTing this assignment:

* The process of TILTing my final assignment proved to be very interesting and productive. It gave me an opportunity to reflect on what exactly I was asking students to do and to be more intentional about how I asked them to do it.
* Initially I worried that I was making my already long assignment too wordy because I needed to add a purpose statement and list skills/knowledge. These sections were lacking in my original assignment prompt. However, I realized these additions provided necessary context for my students. Ultimately, I think being more direct about why I’m asking students to do this assignment and what they will need to know to accomplish it can only benefit learning.
* I was also surprised how difficult it was for me to write a purpose statement. This made me pause. I think I struggled to articulate a purpose because I initially thought it was pretty obvious but as I began putting it into words I realized that it wasn’t as straightforward as I’d thought. For me this struggle and process solidified the need to include a purpose statement at the beginning of my assignment even more.
* As I looked over my assignment during the TILTing process I noticed that I was giving additional tips and directions for how to complete the assignment via pages and announcements in Canvas. I tried to incorporate some of these into the TILTed assignment prompt as “Tips for Success”. I think having information about what I was expecting from students on this assignment in multiple unconnected places was probably confusing to students and hard to piece together. I’m hoping that by being more up front in the assignment document about what I’m hoping to see from students will alleviate some of the issues and confusion I’ve seen in past quarters.