Master of Public Administration
Thesis and Independent Study Guidebook
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# Timeline for Independent Study
(Assumes Graduation in Fall or Spring Semester – for Summer Graduation, see UND’s Academic Calendar)

## During Semester Prior to Graduation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select Independent Study Advisor</td>
<td>Prior to Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Signature Proposal and Presentation</td>
<td>Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If necessary, IRB (Institutional Review Board) Approval for use of Human Subjects</td>
<td>Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit Topic Proposal form to Graduate School</td>
<td>Day before semester of graduation classes begin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## During Semester of Graduation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Drafts of Independent Study to Advisor</td>
<td>As determined by Student/Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft of Independent Study to Advisor and Program Assessment Committee</td>
<td>At least one week prior to Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Report on Candidate to Graduate School</td>
<td>Day prior to Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Independent Study to Program Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Before the end of finals week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Timeline for Thesis
(Assumes Graduation in Fall or Spring Semester – for Summer Graduation, see UND’s Academic Calendar)

**During Semester Prior to Graduation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select Thesis Committee</td>
<td>Prior to Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB (Institutional Review Board) Approval for use of Human Subjects</td>
<td>Prior to Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Signature Proposal form to CoBPA Graduate Program Director</td>
<td>Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit Topic Proposal form to Graduate School</td>
<td>Day before semester of graduation classes begin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**During Semester of Graduation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Drafts of Thesis</td>
<td>As determined by Student/Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Approval of Thesis Form to Graduate School</td>
<td>Mid-semester (see Academic Calendar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice of Master’s Thesis Defense to Graduate School</td>
<td>Same as Preliminary Approval form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Defense of Thesis</td>
<td>As determined by Student/Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft of Thesis to Committee</td>
<td>As determined by Student/Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Thesis to Program Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Prior to Final Copy due date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Copy of Thesis to Graduate School</td>
<td>8-9 Days prior to Reading and Review Day</td>
</tr>
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Planning Your Study
Independent Study or Thesis?

- Students pursuing the MPA degree rarely choose the thesis option over the independent study. The independent study is more likely to take a practical, or applied, approach to a problem under investigation, in an attempt to find possible solutions. Although both use existing theories grounded in the academic literature, the thesis is expected to have a much stronger foundation in theory and use a more sophisticated methodology. Both are expected to add to the body of knowledge that exists. But, a thesis is often thought of as adding an “independent contribution,” meaning that it is potentially publishable and, therefore, the expectations of a thesis are much higher. A thesis is overseen by three committee members, whereas an independent study is overseen by one. A thesis also receives more scrutiny from the Graduate School, particularly related to formatting and deadlines. A thesis requires that the student find a chair and form a committee, have a formal meeting to propose and defend a topic / plan, communicate regularly with committee members, and have an oral defense of the thesis when ready. Although there are higher expectations for a thesis option, students considering continuing their education after the completion of the MPA program to pursue a Ph.D. may be better suited for the thesis option. If you feel that the thesis option may better fit with your academic future, meet with the Graduate Director.

What follows is an attempt to provide some clarity about where to start in the planning phase(s) as well as a section on executing and formatting your study.

Planning Your Study
Getting Started

Starting your study by asking general questions:
- What is your main research question?
- What do you wish to pursue?
- Why do you wish to pursue this issue?
- Why is it important to study this topic?

Fine-tuning Your Research Question:
- What do you wish to understand about the topic? Why? Where will the information come from?
- Can the topic be studied successfully?
- What should be done to better understand the problem?
- What has been done by others who examined the topic of interest to you? Is there a vast literature or is it limited?
- What are the contributing or mitigating factors?
- How do you propose tackling this problem?
- What are the minor questions which flow out of the major question that you wish to explore? Are there sub-questions that flow from your primary question? Should you address those also?
- Is your focus too broad? Too narrow?
- What is the context and background?
- Who else, beside yourself, believes that there is a problem that warrants investigating?
- Why does this—the subject or topic—matter? In other words, why should this study be conducted?
Planning your Methodology

- Do not corner yourself into choosing a method before you choose a research question. You will be drawn to a methodology based on your question. All studies, even a comprehensive literature review, such as a meta-analysis or a meta-synthesis, use a methodology. In these cases, the literature is your sample and the review is your method. Although all studies will have some aspect of literature review, a paper that is a comprehensive review of the literature is held to much higher standards regarding the content of that review, is typically much longer overall, and provides theoretical insights that go beyond the existing literature.
- What are the potential methodologies available to address your research question? How will it be conducted?
- How do you plan to address your research question and why?
- Will you gather primary data? Survey, experiment, field research, qualitative interviewing, etc.?
- Will you need IRB approval for the use of human subjects?
- Will you use secondary data? Existing data?
- Will you evaluate an existing program, organization, etc?
- How sound is your methodology—what is the design for your study? Longitudinal, cross-sectional, pre-post, etc.?
- Is the best methodology a comprehensive review of the literature or a meta-analysis / meta-synthesis?
- How is what you are planning to do linked to the questions you developed for the study and the conceptual framework or guiding principles for the topic and your study?
- What statistical methods will be most appropriate for analyzing the data gathered?

Planning your Study

Logistics

A thesis and independent study are each an opportunity for students to conduct research on a topic of their own interest on a partially independent basis. It is fundamentally the student’s responsibility to organize their research study to ensure its timely and successful completion. Your advisor and/or committee are there to provide guidance and evaluate your research, but are not ultimately responsible for your success. The study is your contribution, so you need to take the lead.

Prior to beginning your study you should establish an outline/timeline of when and what your advisor/committee can expect from you in terms of deliverables. This may include descriptions of the literature, data collection, results, as well as presentations, and draft copies. You should arrange regular meeting times to discuss your progress. This provides you the opportunity to share your ideas. Missing meetings or coming unprepared (nothing to report) is a sure indication of a lack of focus, which will likely result in an unsuccessful research outcome. Refer to the Timeline for Independent Study or Thesis for helpful hints.

Both the thesis and independent study are iterative products (you submit a draft, it is reviewed by your advisor or committee members, you make changes, etc.). All students need revisions and often it takes several. Before you begin, there is no way of knowing how many revisions you will require, so allow yourself and the faculty members you work with enough time. A common mistake is to not allow enough time for revisions and to wait until deadlines approach. Important deadlines are noted on the Timeline for Independent Study or Thesis. You need to have at least one draft well in advance of each key date. For each draft you should allow faculty 1-2 weeks to review it and get it back to you. You should also allow yourself plenty of time to make changes, since some may be significant. Time management is very important. Get out a calendar and, including the 1-2 weeks for each revision (two seems to be about average), figure out a timeline. Remember to include time cushions for any externalities (e.g., IRB approval, survey responses, etc.) which could slow down the process. From your perspective, each draft,
even the first, should be in a finalized format. That is, it is not your advisor’s or committee members’ responsibility to edit your document, so it should be grammatically sound, free of typos, etc.

Organization is a key to research projects. As you begin work, take the time to organize your thoughts in one place. Taking careful notes as you go along can help to explain your thought process and reduce duplication. Another key is collaboration. It is important to discuss your research ideas with other graduate students and faculty. Sharing ideas allows you to view things from an alternative perspective.

A number of resources are on campus to help you. One of the most important is the UND Writing Center. Writing Center consultants are trained to offer positive, constructive responses to writing in various disciplines and in various stages of the project. The Writing Center can help with everything from brainstorming and deciding on a topic to editing and polishing your final draft. Use this resource thoughtfully, by clearly identifying your concerns.

**Executing your Study**

**Formatting Issues**

**General Overview**

- The basic format of the study is the format used for virtually all scientific writing:
  - Abstract (not part of the actual paper but a brief overview / summary)
  - Introduction, including literature, and any hypotheses (if relevant)
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Discussion and Conclusions

Beyond the basic format, you should use a style manual (e.g., APA preferred, or MLA, Chicago, etc., if instructed by your advisor or Thesis chair) appropriate to your discipline and use it consistently throughout your study.

- All studies – even qualitative – can conform to the above format.
- Since both the thesis and independent study are capstones of an advanced graduate degree, all papers will utilize peer reviewed academic literature. It is acceptable to also use other kinds of literature (e.g., popular press, trade magazines, and internet) as well, but the majority of your literature should be academic (if you do not know the difference you need to discuss this with your chair / advisor before starting your project).
- The biggest downfall of graduate student writing is the tendency to want to report what everyone else has done, one study after another, with no synthesis, critical analysis, or application of literature to what YOU are doing (your research question). Your paper is not just an annotated bibliography. Synthesize literature to support and frame your study.
- Organize your paper in a way that makes it clear at all times why you are discussing or referring to something, how it fits into your larger paper, where you have been, where you are going next, what your objective/purpose is, etc. Writing and organization problems can severely undermine excellent content, analysis, and data.
More Specific Detail by Section / Chapter

Below are more in-depth descriptions of the Sections / Chapters. It is important to note that the topic, approach, and method one uses will determine the exact structure of the paper. Advisors and committees have ultimate authority over the structure and presentation of the research. Be sure to clarify the writing approach with them early in the process.

Abstract

- The summary should generally be two hundred and fifty words or less. An abstract is a concise single paragraph summary of completed work or work in progress. In a minute or less a reader can learn the rationale behind the study, general approach to the problem, pertinent results, and important conclusions or new questions.

Writing an abstract

- Write your summary after the rest of the paper is completed. After all, how can you summarize something that is not yet written? Economy of words is important throughout any paper, but especially in an abstract. However, use complete sentences and do not sacrifice readability for brevity.
- Summarize the study, including the following elements in any abstract, and try to keep the first two items to no more than one sentence each.
  - Purpose of the study - hypothesis, overall question, objective
  - Brief description of the methodology
  - Results - if the results are quantitative in nature, it is acceptable to report important quantitative findings; brief results of the important statistical analysis should be reported
  - Important conclusions or questions that follow from analysis

Style

- Single paragraph, and concise
- As a summary of work done, it is always written in past tense
- An abstract should stand on its own, and not refer to any other part of the paper such as a figure or table
- Focus on summarizing results - limit background information to a sentence or two, if absolutely necessary
- What you report in an abstract must be consistent with what you reported in the paper

Section / Chapter I—Introduction and Literature

- An introduction to the topic that provides the reader with some insight into what you wish to address and why.
- What is your research question? Major question and minor questions.
- Market your topic and tell the reader why it is interesting and necessary. Justify to your reader that what you wish to examine is indeed a problem. What is the need for the study?
- Brief background information about the topic to set the stage for what it is, who might be involved, what the issues are, what some of the big and small picture items related to the topic are or might be.
- What is the problem that is, or might be, associated with the topic?
- Purpose of your study—what and why you wish to pursue this topic.
- Limitations and/or delimitations.
- Definition of terms.
**Review of the Literature:**
- An examination of the literature to determine what is known and not known about the topic.
- A discussion about the literature, NOT a summary of what you found, but some substantive discussion about the body of knowledge that exists about the topic—requires some dissection and re-assembling or re-constructing of the information that you found. This step is important and requires analysis, synthesis, evaluation, etc.
- Identify the major theories, ideas, constructs that are related to the topic. This is often referred to as establishing a theoretical framework. It is the basis upon which you are going to build or situate your work.
- Based on your review, what problems appear settled (much evidence for) in the literature and which do not (holes in the literature)?
- Summarize what you found in a conclusion section / chapter
- This section / chapter MAY culminate in the presentation of hypotheses or propositions. If so, they should flow logically from the literature and theory presented. You need to bring the reader to the predictions for your study, instead of presenting them abruptly.

**Section / Chapter II —Methods**
- Start off by reminding the reader about the purpose of the study and the questions for the study.
- Tell the reader what you are going to do and why.
- State any assumptions you make and their rationale.
- Be clear and precise as you lay out the approach that you will take in conducting the study.
- Provide a step-by-step or detailed information piece that others can follow if they wish to replicate your study.
- If you are doing an empirical analysis, include specific detail related to instruments, data sources, variables, etc.

**Section / Chapter III—Results**
- Report your findings.
- No discussions, just the facts or the results of your analysis and also the tool you used to conduct the analysis of the data.
- Refer to any tables or charts in the text.

**Section / Chapter IV—Discussion (Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations)**
- Repeat some of the same information found in Section / Chapter I—a general overview of the topic (very, very brief) purpose of the study; major question and minor questions as they relate to the topic under examination.
- Discussion about what you found. Be careful not to repeat information recorded in the results section / chapter. Only include what is relevant to your discussion and analysis, particularly any hypotheses you may have had. Focus on your main results or primary findings.
- Address the questions posed—use the data from your analysis to answer the questions for your study.
- Draw some conclusions about what you found. It is acceptable to do some speculation in this section / chapter related to your findings, but it should be objective and should flow from the literature and your results.
- Shortcomings.
- Provide a brief concluding or summarizing section / chapter.
- Provide some recommendations for further study.
Appendix and References (or Bibliography)

- Be sure to include all necessary approval letters, surveys, instruments, and other relevant information in the appendix.
- Review your reference list to ensure that it is complete (do not include works not cited in the text) and that it is consistent with the latest style manual.
3-Signature Proposal – Instructions

A 3-Signature Proposal for the College of Business and Public Administration is a plan for your thesis or independent study. The objective of this proposal is to outline to the Program’s Graduate Assessment Committee the purpose and goals behind your research. The proposal you submit should be detailed enough to convey a clear picture of the research question(s) you seek to address, the importance to the field of study, a brief discussion of the relevant literature, the methods you intend to use, and a description of the proposed solutions. There is no page limit. An example of a proposal is attached for reference.

The proposal of a topic for an independent study or thesis must be approved before a student may become a candidate for a degree. Students must submit a Topic Proposal form to the Graduate School prior to the beginning of the semester they intend to graduate. The 3-Signature Proposal must be completed prior to the student submitting their Topic Proposal form to the Graduate School.

If your research uses human subjects, e.g. you are conducting a survey of UND students, you may need IRB approval. This can be a time consuming process, therefore you should speak with the IRB committee to determine the appropriate steps to take to receive their approval.

Thesis Option
To complete the 3-Signature Proposal, students pursuing the thesis option must first identify an Advisor on the Department’s faculty who is willing to supervise the student’s research. The student, with consultation from their Advisor, selects two additional UND graduate faculty members, at least one of whom must be from the Department, to serve on their thesis committee.

The student will prepare the proposal under the guidance of their thesis committee. When the student’s thesis committee informs the Program Director that the proposal is acceptable, the Program’s Graduate Assessment Committee will then review the proposal. The review is done in order to assess whether the student’s goals are in line with Program expectations.

At this point, the 3-Signature requirement is complete and the student may submit the Graduate School’s Topic Proposal form with an abbreviated (one page in length) proposal. Students are required to submit this form to the Graduate School prior to the semester they intend to graduate.

Independent Study Option
To complete the 3-Signature Proposal, students pursuing the independent study option must first identify an Advisor on the Department’s faculty who is willing to supervise the student’s research.

The student will prepare the proposal under the guidance of their Advisor. When the student’s Advisor informs the Program Director that the proposal is acceptable, the student will present the proposal to their Graduate Assessment Committee. The Graduate Assessment committee will consist of the student’s independent study advisor and two other individuals chosen by the department to assess whether the student’s goals are in line with Program expectations. Once the presentation is complete and the Assessment Committee approves the project, the student can acquire their advisor’s and the two other Assessment Committee Member’s signatures on the three signature proposal form and submit this form to the Graduate Director. This form is kept in the student’s folder within the Department to indicate their completion of this step.

At this point, the 3-Signature requirement is complete and the student may submit the Graduate School’s Topic Proposal form with an abbreviated (one page in length) proposal. Students are required to submit this form to the Graduate School prior to the semester they intend to graduate.
Project Proposal submitted by Cullen F. Goenner for a College of Business and Public Administration summer research grant

Project Title: Strategic Trade Flows, Industry Concentration, and Interstate Conflict.

Overview
Policymakers often suggest that increasing trade between the United States and China reduces the likelihood of these two countries engaging each other in an inter-state conflict. The “classical liberal” theory suggests that trade creates economic and social ties that bind nation’s interests, such that the wellbeing of each nation depends on the other. Nations benefit through trade by lowering their opportunity costs, therefore conflict threatens these benefits. Theory though also suggests that the benefits of trade can be asymmetric and create hostility. Marx argued control over access to limited markets would lead to conflict among trading pairs. Today in the US there is increasing concern over the growing trade deficit with China and government calls for China to either devalue their currency or face retaliation. An alternative theory put forth is that trade is irrelevant to international relations as nations simply trade with countries in an attempt to balance power.

Depending on your persuasion, theory suggests trade may have a positive, negative, or insignificant effect on conflict between countries. Empirical findings have also been mixed. The majority of the literature, represented by Oneal and Russett (1999, 2001), finds that trade reduces conflict. An important contribution by Barbieri (2002) though challenges these results as she finds using an alternative measure of dependence that trade increases conflict. My own research (Goenner, 2004) examined these contradictory findings and found that when one controlled for uncertainty in the model’s specification, existing measures of trade dependence have no relationship to conflict.

My own prior belief is that trade reduces conflict and existing measures of trade dependence are unable to capture the relationship. Existing measures rely on bilateral aggregate trade flows (trade of all commodities between two countries). Dependence though should be higher when trade involves commodities that are difficult to substitute or are strategic in nature. The fact that the US trades weapons or nuclear materials to Britain is more relevant to future relations than the trade of linens between the US and China. Examining disaggregated trade flows may reveal a more robust relationship between trade of strategic commodities and conflict.

Another aspect of the project examines whether the concentration of a country’s industries influence conflict. My idea is that countries that are highly concentrated, such as oil producing or mineral extracting countries, are more likely to be prone to conflict given their increased ties to trade. Previous research has not considered this effect as they have relied on aggregate trade flows. I have calculated this measure for each country over 1962-2000.

The most challenging part of this project is collecting and organizing the disaggregated bilateral trade flows for 115-130 countries over the period 1962 – 2000. The data was collected by the UN-NBER and is disaggregated at the SITC 4 digit level therefore it is very detailed. This data needs to be manipulated year by year and sorted into strategic categories; energy, electronics, metals, weapons/aircraft, and nuclear material. This trade data is then merged with other controls.

I am currently working to complete the data collection for this project, after which I will further analyze the data. Preliminary results show the concentration of industry has significant effects on trade. I hope also to find effects of bilateral strategic trade flows. I have two publications in this area of research (Goenner, 2004; Goenner, Forthcoming) so I have every confidence that this work will contribute to strengthening our understanding of the empirical relationship between trade and conflict. I expect a draft
of the manuscript to be completed by the end of this summer (August 15) and submitted to a journal such as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Peace Research,* or *International Studies Quarterly.*

References


### THREE-SIGNATURE PROPOSAL

**Name**  
__________________________________________  

**Student ID #**  
__________________________________________  

**Address**  
__________________________________________  

**Phone**  
__________________________________________  

**E-Mail**  
__________________________________________  

**Expected Graduation Date**  
__________________________________________  

**Independent Study** □  
**Thesis** □  

**Proposed Title:**  
__________________________________________  

The research involves Human Subjects: □Yes □No  
If yes, IRB *(Institutional Review Board)* approval date:  
Project #:  

If you have questions on the above requirements, please contact the appropriate committee:  
**IRB - human subject research - Office of Research & Program Development at (701) 777-4279 or www.und.edu/dept/rdc**  

**Signatures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS</th>
<th>ADVISOR/COMMITTEE MEMBERS*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Thesis                      |                           |
| Assessment Committee Member | Date                      |
| Thesis Committee Member     | Date                      |

| Assessment Committee Member | Date                      |
| Assessment Committee Member | Date                      |

*Note: For the independent study, the advisor and two assessment committee members need to sign. For those choosing a thesis, the advisor and thesis committee members need to sign.*
Assessment Presentation

Students completing a Thesis or Independent Study will make a presentation to their Program’s Assessment Committee before graduating. Your Program Director will not assign a grade for your Independent Study until this requirement is met.

The purpose of the presentation is to allow the Program Assessment Committee to gather information to assess whether the Graduate Program is meeting its goals and objectives. The assessment will focus on the student’s ability to communicate effectively in written and oral fashions. Students will not receive a grade on this presentation. Instead, there will be documentation that the student successfully completed the presentation. However, in order to receive the grade for your written Independent Study, you must complete this presentation.

Students can schedule their presentation once their advisor has indicated that the project is ready to move onto that step. Many students schedule their presentations during finals week, as this is usually the most convenient time for all of those involved (Advisor and Assessment Committee members). Keep in mind that the presentation must be complete before the end of finals week.
# Independent Study Assessment Presentation

**Name**

**Student ID**

**Independent Study**

**Title:**

The Assessment Presentation has been completed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
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<td>Assessment Committee Member</td>
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<td>Assessment Committee Member</td>
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# Program Assessment: Expressing Ideas Clearly in Writing

## Levels of Achievement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction &amp; Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Writer easily gains the attention of the reader, the purpose of the work is clear, and the paper’s thesis is well developed and main questions or ideas, around which the paper is built are clearly articulated.</td>
<td>The reader’s interest is aroused but only after reading the introductory information. The purpose of the paper is stated and it has a workable thesis with fairly well developed ideas to generally support the paper.</td>
<td>The purpose of the paper was not immediately evident. The introductory information is sufficient but could be further developed. The thesis statement is not readily identifiable.</td>
<td>The writer offers some hints as to the purpose of the paper but this needs to be further developed.</td>
<td>There is no identifiable thesis statement and very little about the paper captures the reader’s interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization Expression of ideas</strong></td>
<td>The paper flows smoothly from one main point to another in an attempt to answer the major and minor questions and the ideas presented are linked to each other. The reader can clearly follow the line of reasoning. Ideas are logically presented and arranged to support the thesis.</td>
<td>The paper is generally well written and ideas presented are somewhat logically arranged to support the main ideas of the thesis. For the most part, the reader can follow the line of reasoning presented.</td>
<td>The writing is not arranged in any systematic manner. Ideas frequently are disconnected but the reader is able to figure out what the writer is attempting to communicate.</td>
<td>There is some attempt to organize the paper’s content but what exists is not logically in order. The reader cannot identify a line of reasoning and loses interest.</td>
<td>The logic of the arguments are flawed and in general do not make sense. Ideas are not open ended and not substantiated by facts or evidence supporting them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content, Knowledge, analysis, synthesis, scholarship, pros/cons</strong></td>
<td>The writer lays the groundwork or framework upon which to build his/her argument. The content moves beyond the basics and encourages higher levels of thinking—analysis &amp; synthesis. There is ample and clear discussion about the significance of the work undertaken and the topic is treated in a fair and balanced manner, with supporting and opposing viewpoints, that clearly and effectively supports the central purpose or thesis. The reader is challenged and gains insights.</td>
<td>A framework for the paper is evident and helps to form a basis upon which to build a discussion for the paper. Information provided firmly supports the thesis of the paper and there is some discussion about the significance of the work. The topic is treated fairly and is generally balanced. Information is provided to support opposing viewpoints. Reader gains some insights.</td>
<td>There is some evidence to suggest that the writer has made a good attempt to establish a foundation upon which to frame discussions for the paper. The paper is generally well developed and there is some discussion about the pros and cons, though not to the extent that would indicate a lack of bias. Opposing viewpoints are not well developed. The reader is able to learn something about the topic/issue.</td>
<td>The paper lacks a coherent theoretical framework and does not demonstrate that the writer has any idea about how to engage the reader. There is some evidence to indicate that the writer understands what it means to critically examine a topic or issue; however, the level of critique and analysis is below what is required for this assignment. There is some discussion about the pros and cons of the issue(s) examined but this is not adequately developed. In the final analysis, what is presented in the paper appears to be biased.</td>
<td>The paper uses inappropriate techniques and demonstrates an utter lack of understanding for key theories behind the issue examined. In general the conclusions drawn do not make sense and are not based on evidence supported by the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics: Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and Styles (italics, capitalization, underlining, etc.)</td>
<td>There are no grammatical or punctuation errors. The style of writing captures the reader's interest, while not being overly verbose.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are some spelling, grammar, punctuation, and/or style errors, but they do not represent a source of distraction to the reader nor do they obscure the intended meaning.</td>
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<td>There are spelling, grammar, punctuation, and/or style errors which make it difficult to follow the author's line of reasoning without a substantial amount of effort on the reader's part.</td>
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<td>It is difficult to follow the central theme or ideas presented in this paper because of number and serious spelling, grammar, punctuation, and/or style errors.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The paper is impossible to understand due to grammatical issues which make the paper painful to read. May also rely on unexplained jargon.</td>
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<td>References</td>
<td>References are appropriate to the main ideas developed and to the central theme of the paper. There is evidence to suggest that the writer support claims made with diverse attributions whenever necessary.</td>
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<td>References to support claims in the student’s work are generally present. There may be some omission of attribution but they are not as diverse.</td>
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<td>Although occasional references are provided, the writer frequently makes unsubstantiated statements thus leaving the reader unsure about the source of the ideas in the paper.</td>
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<td>Some attempt has been made to reference the works of others but a number of instances exists where some works are either not cited or no attempt is made to support claims made which leave the reader unsure about the source of ideas in the paper.</td>
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<td>Paper does not make use of scholarly references.</td>
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## Oral Communication Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Evaluation</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Information provided was extremely accurate and complete with reference to reliable sources. Discussed concepts and theories, had depth, and was insightful.</td>
<td>Information provided was accurate and relatively complete with the proper references. Student demonstrated a good understanding of concepts and theories.</td>
<td>Information provided was accurate, but somewhat incomplete; some information was questionable. Student had a general understanding of the concepts and theories.</td>
<td>Information provided was somewhat inaccurate and incomplete. Student had a vague understanding of the concepts and theories that were being presented. The presentation lacked depth and thoroughness.</td>
<td>Information presented was very inaccurate and incomplete. Student had no understanding of the information. The listener could not depend on the presentation as a source of accurate information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Aids</strong></td>
<td>Communication aids enhanced the presentation and displayed original ideas. All aids outlined important concepts. Many additional aids were used creatively. All aids were free from grammatical errors; format was consistent.</td>
<td>Communication aids enhanced the presentation. Many aids outlined important concepts. Some additional aids were used beyond PowerPoint. Aids were free of grammatical errors; format was consistent throughout the presentation.</td>
<td>Communication aids were used, but did not enhance the presentation. Some aids outlined important concepts. No additional aids were used beyond PowerPoint. Aids were free of grammatical errors; some areas were not formatted consistently.</td>
<td>Communication aids were rarely used and did not enhance the presentation. Aids had too much or too little information. No additional aids were used beyond PowerPoint. Aids had some grammatical errors; many areas were not formatted consistently.</td>
<td>No communication aids used or they were so poorly prepared that they detracted from the presentation. Aids had far too much or far too little information. Numerous grammatical errors; formatting was extremely inconsistent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Presentation was extremely clear, logical, and well-organized. The listener could easily follow a clear line of reasoning.</td>
<td>Presentation was clear, logical, and organized. The listener could follow a line of reasoning.</td>
<td>Presentation was generally clear and organized. A few minor points seem to be confusing.</td>
<td>Presentation lacked organization and clarity. Information and arguments were not presented clearly. Presentation was rather confusing to follow.</td>
<td>Presentation was choppy and disjointed. The information presented was confusing. Listeners had to put great effort into understanding the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Management</strong></td>
<td>Student effectively used the time allotted for the presentation. Content was exceptionally well conveyed in the time allotted.</td>
<td>Student appropriately used the time allotted for the presentation. Content was well conveyed in the time allotted.</td>
<td>Student was slightly over/under the time allotted for the presentation. Content was fairly well conveyed in the time allotted.</td>
<td>Presentation was too long or short given the time allotted. Content was poorly conveyed in the time allotted.</td>
<td>Presentation was far too long or far too short given the time allotted. Student did an extremely poor job of conveying the content in the time allotted.</td>
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<td><strong>Speaking Skills</strong></td>
<td>Presenter was confident and poised. Sentences were always complete, grammatical, and flowed together easily. Clear enunciations and proper volume. Very few disfluencies (i.e. “ahs” or “uhms”) used. Clearly evident that the presenter practiced prior to the presentation.</td>
<td>Presenter was relatively comfortable and confident. Sentences were frequently complete, grammatical, and flowed together easily. Relatively clear enunciations and proper volume. Few disfluencies (i.e. “ahs” or “uhms”) used. Evident that the presenter practiced prior to the presentation.</td>
<td>Presenter was somewhat uncomfortable and not as polished. Some sentences were somewhat incomplete and did not flow together well. Somewhat clear enunciations and volume level was okay. Some disfluencies (i.e. “ahs” or “uhms”) used. Evident that the presenter practiced some prior to the presentation.</td>
<td>Presenter was uncomfortable and tense. Many sentences were difficult to understand and follow. Difficult to hear at times due to lack of enunciation. Very dependent on note cards. Many disfluencies (i.e. “ahs” or “uhms”) used. Evident that the presenter practiced very little prior to the presentation.</td>
<td>Presenter was visibly extremely uncomfortable and tense. Sentences were incomplete, halted, and vocabulary was limited and inappropriate. Information was read off note cards. Too many disfluencies (i.e. “ahs” or “uhms”) distracted from the presentation. Clearly evident that the presenter did not practice prior to the presentation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td>Body language was extremely collected and comfortable. Demonstrated exceptional posture and facial expressions. Effective use of hand gestures. Directed the presentation to the audience, not the communication aids.</td>
<td>Body language was fairly collected and comfortable. Demonstrated good posture and facial expressions. Good use of hand gestures. Directed the presentation to the audience, not the communication aids.</td>
<td>Body language was somewhat collected and comfortable, although nervous. Demonstrated acceptable posture and facial expressions. Acceptable use of hand gestures. Directed the presentation to the audience, yet turned back to the audience on occasion.</td>
<td>Body language was uncomfortable and anxious. Demonstrated improper posture and limited facial expressions. Limited or overuse of hand gestures due to extreme nervousness. Frequently turned back to the audience.</td>
<td>Body language was extremely tense and awkward. Demonstrated inappropriate posture and facial expressions. No use of hand gestures or nervous overuse of hand gestures was distracting to the audience. Did not direct the presentation to the audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Responsiveness to the Audience</strong></td>
<td>Student held the complete attention and interest of the audience throughout the presentation. Highly responsive to the audience’s questions and comments. Great eye contact was used with the entire audience.</td>
<td>Student held the attention and interest of the audience during most of the presentation. Responsive to the audience’s questions and comments. Good eye contact was used with the entire audience.</td>
<td>Student somewhat held the attention and interest of the audience during the presentation. Somewhat responsive to the audience’s questions and comments. Some eye contact was used with the entire audience.</td>
<td>Student hardly held the attention and interest of the audience. Student had inadequate answers to the audience’s questions and comments. Rarely made eye contact with the entire audience.</td>
<td>Student did not hold the attention or interest of the audience at all. Student did not appropriately respond to the questions and comments of the audience. No eye contact was made with the audience.</td>
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*Adapted from Sources:*