Faculty Information Literacy Stipend
Final Report

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Course: PLSC 4346
Semester: Fall 2019

Introduction (This section to include why you decided to create the assignment, and how the information literacy learning goals support the course.)

Earlier iterations of this course required students to write a term paper explaining mass protests in a country of their choice. The assignment asked students apply a theory learned in the course and to gain in-depth knowledge of a case study through independent research. Its intended goal was for students to develop the ability to do keyword searches, to extract and synthesize information, to generate their own scholarly ideas, and to understand the value of information and diverse perspectives. Although this goal was embedded in the assignment and students received some library instruction, the learning outcomes were not explicitly articulated.

Rethinking the assignment for the IL grant, I determined that a multi-week project segmenting the research process would better communicate the goal of the course. It would also guide students to seek and assess information in a more thoughtful way. The redesigned assignment aims to cultivate the information literate political science student (as defined by the ACRL's Political Science Research Competency Guidelines) – someone who approaches research with knowledge and planning, awareness of the variety of sources and the means to retrieve content by using effective keyword searching, and ability to evaluate information. Four information literacy student learning outcomes – searching as strategic exploration, research as inquiry, information has value and scholarship as conversation – align with the goal of the course.

Description of the information literacy assignment or activities

The assignment tasks students to conduct independent research on a case study. They then make an oral presentation and write a term paper using the research material. The assignment is divided into segments, each aimed at specific information literacy learning outcomes.

Assignment Title: "Theory and Evidence: Explaining Success/Failure of Mass Mobilization in _____."

Students start the assignment in Week 5, having already encountered in the curriculum theoretical frameworks that propose differing explanations for the causes and mechanics of mass mobilization. The assignment requires them to complete the following over the course of several weeks:

(a) Identify and choose a case study among countries that formed part of the protest waves in 1989 (China and Eastern Europe), 2011 (Arab Spring) and Hong Kong (2014 and 2019), determine a theoretical framework to be "tested,"and create a list of relevant keywords to locate two potentially helpful primary sources about the case study. Each student submits a short proposal (200-word limit) with all of the above elements.

(b) Locate and select (up to two) more primary and/or secondary sources about their case study that offer information useful for "testing" one of the theoretical frameworks in a manner consistent with social science methodology. Through a 15-minute in-class oral presentation accompanied by PowerPoint slides, each student will explain and discuss the extent to which the data he or she obtains from primary sources and secondary sources support or undermine a particular existing theory about mass mobilization, and how the student may modify the theory and subject it to further testing.

(c) Write a summary thesis (1000-1250 words) making an argument about the causes and processes that form the basis of success or failure of mass protests in their case study. A formal bibliography is to be attached.

Method of assessment (Did the students do well? Demonstrated learning? Grades? What metrics did you use? Were students satisfied with their learning? What artifacts did the students produce?)

More students enrolled in the course than expected. I decided to let students work in pairs for the initial parts of the assignment, including the in-class oral presentation. The research paper, however, would be completed individually.

a) Case study proposal – each pair of students submitted a proposal (200-word limit) stating their choice of case study, the theoretical framework to be tested, and two potential primary sources. The initial choice of primary sources allowed me to assess what the student knew about research and how they planned to conduct the information search. This baseline helped me determine what additional guidance is needed to promote the desired information literacy student learning outcomes (SLOs).

I met for 20 to 30 minutes with each pair of students the week after the information literacy workshops conducted by SMU librarians. We discussed their proposals. About 85% of the proposals met the requirements of the proposal and the students were able to outline their intended next steps in their research plan. The remaining proposals fell short in finding primary sources that were specifically pertinent for the theoretical framework they had chosen to apply. The meeting allowed me to redirect their research.

b) In-class oral presentation – each pair of students discussed the information they gathered from primary and secondary sources and explained the extent to which the data they encountered supported or undermined an existing theory about mass mobilization. I assessed the student's dexterity in selecting relevant sources (including those that challenged received knowledge) in meeting the "Searching as Strategic Exploration" SLO

and the student's attention to interpretation, analysis, and organization of information in the "Research as Inquiry" SLO.

I provided each pair with a template for the PowerPoint slides they were required to use as visual aids for their presentation. I also required each pair to share a scholarly article or chapter that would supplement their presentation; this article or chapter was assigned to other students before each presentation. The supplementary readings they submitted were mostly relevant and insightful; only one or two pairs needed my intervention. Each pair made an oral presentation lasting about 30 minutes. A 10 to 15-minute question-and-answer session followed each presentation. Presentations were assessed on the basis of the SLOs mentioned above as well as on the quality of the reading each pair chose and their oral communication skills. All presentations except one received A and B grades. Students earned more A grades than B grades. The B grades went to presentations that mostly fell short in two aspects: i) focusing on confirming the chosen theory without discussing evidence that might refute it, and ii) presenting primary sources that did not adequately address the chosen theory.

c) Essay – each student wrote a summary thesis (1000-1250 words) on whether the tested theory held up to evidence. I assessed the student's evaluation of information encountered, dialogue with scholarship, and awareness of the potential and limitations of his own contribution in accordance with the "Scholarship as Conversation" SLO. In relation to the "Information has Value" SLO, I assessed the student's proficiency in referencing sources within the body of the essay so that he assigned credit appropriately and within the attached bibliography so that he abided by the rules of professional academic style manuals.

Students mostly met the requirement in proper references and citations. They proved less adept at discussing of his/her own contribution in the context of broader scholarship. The discussion of primary sources was also more superficial than hoped. In retrospect, the shortfalls may be due to the wording of the prompt that I provided. Despite oral instructions calling attention to these two aspects of the essay, the written prompt did not articulate them specifically. Papers earned a gamut of A to D grades, with most grades in the A and B range.

Results and impact on student learning (This can include student self-evaluations or feedback, pre- and post-test results, rubric results, and/or impact on other student assignments.)

I was largely pleased (and even pleasantly surprised) at the high quality of oral presentations and supplementary readings chosen by the students. The standard significantly exceeded those demonstrated in oral presentations in other courses I have taught. In my view, these activities indicated students achieved the "Searching as Strategic Exploration" and "Research as Inquiry" SLOs. The essay assignment showed many students attained the "Information has Value" and

"Scholarship as Conversation" SLOs, but these SLOs were less impressive. Nonetheless, the overall quality of the essays was noticeably higher than in other courses I have taught.

To get a sense of whether students were applying some of the skills they learned, I conducted two open discussions about ongoing protests reported in the news, one about two-thirds of the way into the student presentations and one after the last student presentation. In the first session, I assigned the news stories to read and discuss. In the second session, students chose the news stories to share with others in the class. Students participated actively in both sessions and demonstrated sophisticated skills in extracting, interpreting, and analyzing information. They selected excellent news reports in the second session that lent themselves to analysis and debate. As a class, students exhibited skills associated with the four information literacy SLOs.

Summary and next steps (This can include your reflections on working with the students on information literacy goals, how you might improve on the assignment or activities, and/or how you might address information literacy goals using other methods or in other courses, would you do this assignment sequence again and why or why not.)

Making information literacy a central goal in the course gave me the incentive to redesign the course and the core assignment so that the goal of the course was clearly communicated to students. Segmenting the project proved productive and rewarding. The approach allowed students to build up skills associated with each SLO in a progressive fashion. It also opened up new learning opportunities for students to present their research not only in essay form but also orally accompanied by visual aids.

I would teach the course again mostly with the same information literacy emphasis, the same assignment structure, and the same pedagogical approach. I would clarify the written prompt so that students are made better aware of the "Information has Value" and "Scholarship as Conversation" SLOs. I would clarify the difference between using source materials for illustrative purposes and using source materials as evidence. I would clarify the role of primary sources compared to the role of secondary sources. To ensure students understand the abovementioned distinctions, I would require students to articulate their choice of sources in an annotated bibliography as part of the research proposal.

The course-specific research guide developed by SMU librarians proved exceptionally helpful in directing students to relevant and insightful materials. Ideally, students would be able to find equally useful sources on their own, but it would require higher-order skills. If students had taken a preceding course with a similar information literacy focus, such a task would be more achievable. Until such an assumption is reasonable, the research guide is necessary.

Appendix (This includes the assignment sheet, rubric if used, and example(s) of student work.)

Please see attachments.

PLSC 4346
INFORMATION LITERACY PROJECT

Assignment Title: "Theory and Evidence: Explaining Success/Failure of Mass Mobilization in _____."

Part 1

You and a partner have been assigned a case study. Apply the Political Process model* to assess the extent to which it explains the success/failure of mass mobilization in your case study. Create a list of relevant keywords to locate potentially helpful <u>representative primary sources</u> about the case study. You and your partner will submit a joint proposal with the list of keywords as well as citations for the two best sources^ you have located. (The proposal must not exceed 200 words.)

*There are three major variables in the Political Process model (Political Opportunity Structure, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing). For the purpose of Part 1 of the project, you need only focus on one variable. (Choose only ONE, but be prepared to choose another if sources prove scarce – you can report this in your proposal.)

^If one or both of the sources are exactly spot-on but do not otherwise take you very far, you may need to identify additional sources.

[Part 1 of the project is due on Oct 11.]

Part 2

Locate and select (up to two) more <u>primary and/or secondary sources</u> about your case study that offer information useful for offering evidence that supports or refutes the Political Process model. (Where relevant, the della Porta book may be a good place to start; it may not however count as a source. Choose the best sources you can locate as they will be assigned to your classmates to read/view in advance of your presentation.)

Through a 30-minute in-class oral presentation accompanied by PowerPoint slides, you and your partner will apply the Political Process model, explaining and discussing the extent to which the data you obtain from primary sources (*e.g.*, memoirs, contemporaneous news reports, government policy briefs, and congressional testimonies) and secondary sources (academic publications) account for the success/failure of mass mobilization in your case study.

*You should provide an overview of how all three variables of the Political Process model apply to your case study before you elaborate on the one on which you have focused your research.

[Part 2 of the project is worth 25% of your final grade. We will have conferences in Week 8 to discuss your sources and your approach to the presentation.]

Part 3

Write a scholarly paper (1750-2000 words) making an argument about the causes and processes that form the basis of success or failure of mass mobilization in your case study. A formal bibliography is to be attached. The paper should be your individual effort.

You will articulate the degree to which the tested theory holds up to the evidence you have retrieved, with specific references to the content, perspectives, and even agendas of your sources, and also engaging with existing scholarship on mass movements and revolutions. Where appropriate, you may suggest an amended theoretical framework and propose how to test it.

[Part 3 of the project is worth 25% of your final grade. It is due on Dec 6.]

	INFORMATION LITERACY (70%)	ORAL COMMUNICATION (30%)
A (EXCELLENT)	Demonstrates ability to select and use the most appropriate research methods required for the task. Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) evaluates resources and the quality of the information based on a specific information need.	Subject knowledge: Shows deep understanding of topic, with main points supported by relevant information, and provides precise information of key concepts. Organization: effectively structures content in a manner suited to the purpose, with main points distinct from supporting details, and transitions creating coherent progress toward conclusion. Connection to audience: addresses audience needs and interests. Delivery: engages in minimal use of notes, maintains eye contact with audience, making a confident delivery.

PLSC 4346 Information Literacy Project: Research Paper Rubric

	Theory	**Application**	**Use of Primary Sources**	**Writing**
A (exemplary)	Shows thorough comprehension of the concepts within the political process framework.	Demonstrates how the concepts of the political process model apply to the chosen case study. Cites appropriate evidence to support analysis. Evaluates evidence to determine which concept (variable) applies best. Assesses the extent to which the model and analysis can explain the outcome.	Cites at least two primary sources that support the main argument. Evaluates the content, perspectives, and perhaps agendas of your sources.	Clear, precise, and well-organized.
Total points: 100	10	55	15	20

Thesis demonstrates significant controlling idea or assertion. Thesis clearly answers assignment's demands. Supporting evidence is concrete, relevant and accompanied by substantive analysis. Topic sentences provide structure with strong and meaningful assertions.

Organization reveals strong attention to symmetry and emphasis. Paragraphs are focused, coherent, and led by a controlling argument. Logical transitions reinforce the progress of the analysis. Introduction strongly engages initial interest; conclusion closes essay in compelling fashion.

Sentences are varied, purposeful, and emphatic; diction fresh, precise, and economical.

Few, if any, mistakes in grammar, syntax, punctuation and/or spelling. Close attention to detail and a mastery of mechanics and presentation. Overall adherence to conventions highlights content and credibility.

Failure of Mass Mobilization in Morocco 2011

Morocco 2011 stands as an interesting case for analysis in studying the protests and movements that collectively came to be known as the Arab Spring. The country's short lived and mostly peaceful encounter with largescale protests demanding change within the system of governance has often been termed the "Moroccan Exception," a sentiment that conveys the extraordinary manner in which protestors were seemingly able to peacefully demand and produce meaningful change in a peaceful evolution of sorts, as opposed to a violent revolution (Bartolucci). However, further analysis of the causes and processes of the mass mobilization that occurred in Morocco actually motivates a stronger argument for a failure of mass mobilization in terms of its ability to sustain continued growth through eventful democratization and therefore its inability to produce positive change for the Moroccan people. Although mass mobilization in Morocco initially appeared successful based on a substantial mobilization of resources and the regime's rapid response of promising reform, the regime's political maneuvering and the strength of the country's institutions ultimately quelled any chance of producing meaningful change, thereby limiting the degree to which either the process or outcomes of mobilization can presently be deemed successful.

It was in the context of regional protest that Moroccans first began to mobilize in 2011. Less than two months after Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi protested against the Tunisian government's harassment and violence by setting himself on fire, a group of Moroccans posted videos on Facebook and YouTube asking their fellow Moroccans to go out and protest their own government for reform on February 20 (Mariamelmas9 2011) From this first date of mass protest the movement received its name, The February 20 Movement.

Before 2011, demonstrations against a repressive regime had occurred intermittently in Morocco from the 1970s through the 1990s, a time of severe repression and violence under King Hassan II known as the Years of Lead(Radi 2017, 32) However, because of the horrific violence perpetrated by the state during the Years of Lead, a barrier of fear became entrenched in the political culture and was only slowly broken as King Mohammed VI succeeded his father in 1999 and later to an unprecedented extent when the February 20 Movement took hold in 2011.

It is clear the movement's mobilization of resources did play a substantial role in igniting and propelling the democracy protests forward in its early stages. First, the king created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate abuses that had occurred under the rule of Hassan II. State media broadcasted testimonies of people who were impacted by the repressive policies during the Years of Lead (Vairel 2008). Although this effort appeared to be a positive step for the regime in terms of allowing free expression and a new commitment to human rights, many Moroccans were dissatisfied with the broadcast, as state media, Vairel notes, used both "subtle and not so subtle censoring mechanisms" (238). From this frustration, however, the truth commission led to civil society becoming increasingly open to speaking about the Years of Lead (Lavoie, 30). Here, the breaking down of the barrier of political fear for the February 20 Movement to eventually take hold is rooted in increased discussion of government grievances within civil society, or free spaces.

Additionally, the mobilization of the internet as a resource and the linkages that existed among activists further advanced the protest movement's reach and mobilization capabilities. Morocco's loose regulation of the internet prior to 2011 was a means by which a "radically democratic and unregulated space" took shape (Iddins 2018, 3581-3582). The utilization of the internet empowered the early days of the movement. For example, the first video showed 14

Moroccans calling on Moroccans to protest on February 20, went viral, and led to tens of thousands of protesters rallying in 53 different locations throughout Morocco (Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeghllaly 2012, 103). On the same day as the first protest, a website called Mamfakinch was launched by just 3 young activists as a blog site for circulating ideas, analyzing information, and dispelling rumors about the February 20 Movement (Iddins 2018, 3581). The exponential growth and power of this website is evidenced by the 1 million unique visitors it obtained in less than a year, its growth to 30 main bloggers, and the attacks it encountered by pro-regime groups (3581). Furthermore, the website listed local February 20 councils which further linked Moroccans interested in protest to one another. The website was endorsed by political parties, nongovernmental organizations, and trade unions, including an array of socialist, Islamist, and human rights groups (3584). This network of groups helped to legitimize Mamfakinch and expand its influence. However, the initial snowballing of the movement through the resource mobilization outlined above was not enough on its own to produce the substantive changes in government the protesters were demanding.

When cyber-attacks officially brought down Mamfakinch and the state censored social media, the movement's overdependency upon online mobilization left it without a serious alternative to mobilize Moroccans in the face of government repression. From its first call to protest to its continued distribution of protest information, the vast majority of the movement's communication was conveyed through social media and Mamfakinch (Iddins 3581). There is little evidence of extensive use of physical resources by the movement outside of the internet, although demonstrations themselves did generate smaller, physical free spaces including debate circles and poetry recitations (Bouchmouch 2012). On one hand, the movement placed an important logistical burden on the Islamic Justice and Charity Association (JCA), and relied on moderate support from a number of left-wing parties and human rights organizations (Radi 2017, 38). However, it was Mamfakinch and social media that acted as the main mechanisms of connection between these linkages, allowing for their mobilization. Evidencing the movement's resource mobilization failures in the face of online repression, no website arose to restore or replace Mamfakinch, the size of the protests stagnated, and the Facebook following plateaued at about 65,000 followers (Movement20). Although the internet was certainly a powerful tool, a certain degree of failure to mobilize resources explains one cause for the failure of mass mobilization in Morocco.

Next, understanding the framing of the protest movement further helps to explain the causes and processes that formed the basis of failure of mass mobilization. First, the protesters framed their movement in terms of "demanding democracy, dignity, freedom, and social justice" (Radi 2017, 32). This was a master frame that broadened the movement's inclusivity and could therefore grow the movement. In the documentary *My Makhzen and Me*, one of the young February 20 leaders outlines the movement's mission as he states, "We're not trying to gain political power, we're not trying to instill a specific political ideology, we're just here to call for demands that we believe are universal and applicable to any citizen" (Bouchmouch 2012, 10:41-10:55). Similarly, the protests were largely centered around Moroccan identity and not a single party, ideology, or religion which further presented an inclusive frame of protest. Evidencing this claim, the first call to protest began each reason for protest with the phrase, "I am Moroccan" (Mariamelmas9 2011). The focus on a national identity broadened the intended audience and thus increased the number of potential protestors. Lastly, the framing of the movement focused on calling for reform, not revolution, and centered its demands on the Makhzen, not the king. The Makhzen refers to an "extensive system of royal privilege and clientelism," a deep state of

sorts (Iddins 2018, 3584). From understanding these methods of framing used, it can further be analyzed how the regime strategically co-opted the democracy-focused language of the movement and skillfully stymied the level of success of mass mobilization.

Quickly after the rise of the February 20 Movement, the king began strategically counter framing the protests so as to present himself as the true champion of democracy and to quell the protests. On March 9, just 2 weeks after the initial protests, the king went on state TV to declare promises of sweeping reform and a package of comprehensive constitutional amendments (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 90). The king appointed a council to draft a new constitution, and just a day after the first protest, stated, "We have constantly sought to ensure that the founding of an effective democracy goes hand in hand with sustainable human development" (Mohhamed VI in Karam 2011). He added, "If we launch this council today, it is because we have constantly refused to cede to demagoguery and improvisation in our action aimed to consolidate our singular model of democracy and development (Mohammed VI in Karam 2011). In his statement, the king is referring to protests as demagoguery and essentially a hindrance to democratization, whereas he has been an action-oriented leader with the goal of democracy though incrementalism and more rationality. He challenges the obvious assertion that the protesters are for positive reform and change, instead portraying himself as the one who is delivering true democratic change. Thus, while the process of mass mobilization in Morocco utilized important mechanisms of framing, the political maneuvering of the king ultimately co-opted the language of reform, presented itself as reform-minded, and quelled the protests without holding to his promises of real reform. Protests still occurred after the March 9 announcement, but there is little evidence of the use of new framing tactics after the king politically took reformist ideas for the use of his own propaganda.

Lastly, although certain shifts in the political opportunity structure can be argued to have advanced mass mobilization in Morocco, there is greater evidence that obstacles within the political opportunity structure and even a lack of political opportunity contributed to the failure rather than success of mass mobilization. First, the king's savvy ability to present himself as reform-minded was not a sudden political move. It had been years in the making, as Morocco's king Mohammed VI had been instituting, albeit very limited, democratic reforms since he succeeded his father in 1999 (Bartolucci 2011, 2). King Mohammed VI was able to provide some semblance of liberalization while maintaining essentially complete control over the government, and by providing some slow incremental reforms, he was able to build a royal persona marked by a willingness and desire to democratize. This proved to be a serious obstacle within the political opportunity structure, as Moroccan politics largely viewed the king in favorable terms and thus limited the protest movement's political influence and willingness to call for outright revolution.

Furthermore, the king's favorability was even more solidified by the presence and relative strength of Morocco's political institutions. Morocco's Alaouite dynasty has been in power since the 17th century and bolstered its legitimacy through the belief the king is a descendant of the prophet Mohammed (Maddy-Weitzman 2012). Additionally, the king's "Makhzenian" strategy of clientelism allowed him to control parliament and much of the economy without necessarily being seen as the one at fault for issues. The result was that the protest movement largely focused on parliament and the Makhzen, not the king. The king was protected from calls of revolution and regime change that were occurring in other countries at the same time, and this was because of the institutionalized respect for the king and the king's

strategies of legitimizing his rule. Therefore, political barriers rather than many political opportunities were presented before the February 20 Movement.

Finally, the political opportunity that did present itself was the regional context of protest. While conditions were poor in Morocco, the theory of relative deprivation alone was not enough to catalyze the protests, as conditions had been poor for years. The clearest change in political opportunity structure, the neighboring protests, was a horizontal wave of protest but not necessarily democratization, and specifically eventful democratization, as mobilization ultimately failed to maintain significant growth and bring about substantive change. Overall, the Moroccan democracy protests of 2011 demanded reform instead of revolution, allowing the monarchy greater ease in quelling the continued snowballing of the movement. The failure of resource mobilization strategies coupled with a lack of clear change in the political opportunity structure due to strong institutions caused the failure of mass mobilization in Morocco in 2011.

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