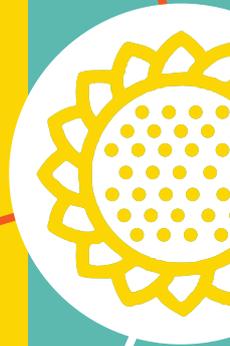


STUDENT HANDBOOK

# DEMOCRACY: from Theory to Practice



Author:  
DR. GREER BURROUGHS





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# STUDENT ACTION PROJECT PACING GUIDE

- Week 1 – Step 1** – Brainstorming societal problems, preliminary research
- Week 2 – Step 1** – Brainstorming societal problems, preliminary research
- Week 3 – Step 2** – Selection of a problem and begin research of problem
- Week 4** – Continued research of problem
- Week 5 – Step 3** – Analysis of problem: Issues of human rights violation and remedies
- Week 6** – Continued research of problem
- Week 7 – Step 4** – Analysis of problem: The government’s responsibility and possible actions the government can take
- Week 8** – Continued research of problem
- Week 9 – Step 5** – Analysis problem: The role civil society is playing or could play to address the issue
- Week 10** – Continued research of problem
- Week 11 – Step 6** – Explore the Problem from the Perspective of Individual Civic Participation
- Week 12 – Step 7** – Form a plan of action
- Week 13 – Step 7** – Form a plan of action
- Week 14 – Steps, 8, 9 and 10** – Prepare student action project papers, deliver presentations, complete reflections
- Week 15 – Steps, 8, 9 and 10** – Prepare student action project papers, deliver presentations, complete reflections

“ Democracy works when people  
claim it as their own ”.

**Bill Moyers,**

*Jan. 22, 2007, American journalist and former  
White House Press Secretary*

# INTRODUCTION

Why is it necessary for citizens in a democracy to “claim it as their own,” and how can they do this? The course you are studying, *Democracy: from Theory to Practice*, will help answer the first part of that question. Through course readings and assignments, you will learn the conditions that must exist for a democracy to flourish, as well as the role of citizens in maintaining a healthy democracy. Democratic systems offer great promise for citizens to participate and raise their voice in hopes of influencing the process. This is not just an advantage of democracy, but rather an imperative. When citizens fail to monitor their governments, leaders may choose to represent only their own interests and may even become abusive of human rights. Clearly, it is in the interest of the individual and society that there be an active citizenry.

What actions are necessary for citizens to protect and advance their rights and interests and the democratic system as a whole? Many scholars on this subject agree citizens must possess knowledge of the system and their rights. The course textbook and class activities will help you to understand this. However, knowledge alone is not enough, effective democratic participation requires certain skills. Some of these skills are presented in the introduction of your textbook. They are also reprinted here for you to review.

**SKILLS ASSOCIATED WITH DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP**

1. Ability to think critically
2. Make informed, responsible decisions
3. Analyze information
4. Evaluate information
5. Discuss issues and consider multiple perspectives
6. Recognize the role of bias, point of view and context, as well as assess the credibility of a source
7. Examine current issues and events
8. Formulate questions based on information
9. Use effective strategies to locate information
10. Summarize information in written, graphic and oral formats
11. Work cooperatively with others to achieve a goal
12. Provide leadership
13. Problem solve
14. Build an effective and rational argument

How do citizens develop these skills? As with all skills, they must be learned and practiced. This process of learning and developing skills is the primary goal of the student action project. The goal of this handbook is to assist you in this process. Some of the activities in this book are designed to help you improve skills you need to conduct research, problem solve and build an effective argument. Other skills you will have opportunities to develop include interacting with community members and leaders; taking leadership roles and organizing; and executing tasks to advance your cause. These experiences will provide you with a deeper understanding of the role you can play as a citizen in your society and help you to develop useful skills.

# THE STUDENT ACTION PROJECT

Through the student action project, you will become engaged in a critical examination of a problem you identify in your community or society. It will be important to research the problem thoroughly to understand the causes, related issues and different perspectives on the issue before drawing conclusions and developing a plan of action to address the problem. There will be many steps in this process. You will be required to consider each of the four themes of the course in relation to your issue: 1) whether there are issues of human rights and what remedies are needed; 2) the government's responsibility and possible actions the government can take; 3) the role civil society is playing or could play; and 4) actions individual citizens could take.

Here are the steps you will take during the project:

- Step 1** Identify a societal problem to research and conduct research on the problem
- Step 2** Define the problem or problems
- Step 3** Explore the problem from the perspective of human rights
- Step 4** Explore the problem from the perspective of governmental remedies
- Step 5** Explore the problem from the perspective of civil society
- Step 6** Explore the problem from the perspective of individual civic participation
- Step 7** Form a plan of action that encompasses one or more of the course themes as a means to address the issue
- Step 8** Prepare a group paper and presentation defining the problem and outlining/defending the selected plan of action
- Step 9** Deliver the presentation to the class and respond to questions
- Step 10** Write an individual reflection of one's learning based on the project

Each of these steps will be explained throughout this book. You will also be provided with information and resource materials to guide you as you complete each phase of this project. Before you begin your own project, it might be helpful to read about projects other university students in Ukraine have undertaken.

## EXAMPLES OF STUDENT ACTION PROJECTS

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Since the course Democracy and Citizenship was introduced in 2011, thousands of university students in Georgia have taken the class and completed student action projects. The topics students have chosen to work on have addressed issues that reflect local concerns, as well as problems that exist throughout Georgia. Some examples of project topics have been: the sale of alcohol to underage teens; the need for citizens to pay for use of public transportation; better labeling of food products to ensure consumer safety; environmental conservation; protections for sexual minorities, victims of human trafficking and prostitution; and improved assistance and conditions for victims of domestic violence, children with illnesses and isolated elderly citizens.

The student action project is broken down into steps so you will have the opportunity to consider each of the four themes of the course in relationship to your issue before you decide on a final course of action. Although the final action plans for most projects incorporate more than one course theme, the examples below are categorized by a single course theme to help you to understand how themes can be applied to societal problems and action plans.

### ***Theme I – Systems of Public Administration: The Government’s Responsibility and Possible Actions the Government Can Take***

#### **STREETLIGHTS**

A group of students identified a lack of streetlights at important locations as a problem in their community. Through their research, students documented that this lack of streetlights was the cause of many accidents, delays and threats to the safety of pedestrians. The students recognized this was an issue that should be addressed through local government.

To convince local government representatives the lights were a necessity for the community, students presented government officials with statistics and examples of the problems caused by the lack of lights. Students also included a detailed plan, complete with a map and illustrations for where streetlights should be installed. Additionally, students wanted to demonstrate public support for the government to take action, so they collected signatures and presented a petition to officials. Based on the students’ work, the officials recognized the need for streetlights and took action. At present, lights have been installed at all desired locations.

## ***Theme II – Human Rights: Issues of Human Rights Violation and Remedies***

### **EQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Many students have identified problems associated with unequal educational opportunities for individuals in Georgia. Two examples of such projects deal with improving educational opportunities for orphans and for blind persons. In the first example, a group of students researched problems with educational opportunities for children living in an orphanage in the Adjara region. Students recognized access to education as a human right, however, for many of these children, this right was not being fulfilled. The students worked with the Ministry of Education, child psychologists and orphanage officials and determined that establishing a library at one of the orphanages would aid the children in their education. To fund the library, students organized a benefit concert at their university. The fundraising event was very successful and the students were able to purchase books and establish the library. In addition to the library, many students volunteered their time as tutors, adding yet another educational opportunity for the children.

At another university, many students were concerned with securing education for persons with disabilities. One group recognized that blind persons were often denied educational opportunities due to a lack of audio books. The students chose to produce a recording of the entire textbook *Democracy and Citizenship* so blind individuals could participate and have the same educational opportunity. The students recognized that to make more book recordings available to blind individuals, there was a need for many resources. The students worked with university officials and applied for and received a grant from the Soros Foundation to purchase recording equipment. They then volunteered their time to make recordings of many different educational materials that will enable more blind individuals to obtain their right to an education.

## ***Theme III – Civil Society: The Role Civil Society is Playing or Could Play to Address the Issue***

### **BLOOD DONATION**

A group of students chose to research problems associated with blood donations in Georgia. These students learned that a very small percentage of Georgians participated in blood donations (only 3%) and the amount received did not meet medical demands. The students discovered a major obstacle to blood donation was a lack of awareness and/or public misinformation. The students identified a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that was already working on the issue and worked with them

to provide information to university students and coordinate blood drives. Due to the students work, blood donation levels among university students increased.

The students recognized the need for blood donations would remain in Georgia, so some of them formed their own NGO so they could continue to educate the public about the issues and encourage others to become volunteer donors. The student NGO is also exerting influence on the legislature to change laws related to blood donation to better serve the public.

#### ***Theme IV – Democracy and Citizen Participation: Actions Individual Citizens Can Take to Bring Change***

##### **INFORMATION SHARING**

The last example illustrates how citizens can inspire positive changes in their communities by taking actions on their own. A few students were concerned there was not a reliable, widespread method for young people to receive important educational and professional information about things opportunities as exchange programs. These students elected to create a Facebook group titled “Be Active” to better publicize such information. The students administered the Facebook group by regularly reviewing and updating the information. They also began conducting regular surveys of users to identify needs and areas for improvement. Through these efforts, they filled an informational gap that existed and provided a valuable service, as evidenced by the praise they have received from peers.

As you can see, Georgian university students have been active and creative in identifying and addressing problems in their communities and throughout society. By analyzing problems from the perspective of each of the four course themes, students have been able to determine which course of action might be best to pursue. Through careful research and an application of knowledge learned in the course, Georgian students are making substantial contributions and positive changes in their universities, towns, cities and Georgia as a whole.



# STEPS 1 AND 2: IDENTIFYING A PROBLEM, RESEARCHING AND DEFINING THE PROBLEM

## IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS

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The first step is to brainstorm a list of issues you and your peers view as problems in your local community, region or Ukrainian society. The issues should be important, ones that present problems for a significant number of individuals and will most likely require the action of more than a single individual to remedy. Before you select your issue, there are some important steps to take. This section will guide you through this process. *Worksheet- Brainstorming Topics for the Student Action Project* may be useful as you brainstorm and select a problem.

## GUIDELINES TO SELECTING AN ISSUE

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You do not want to select problems that are personal or affect only a few individuals. You also do not want to choose an issue that can easily be remedied through the cooperation of a few individuals. An example of this might be an argument two individuals in an apartment building have over parking of visitor's cars. An issue like this can usually be resolved through an agreement between these individuals.

However, suppose the issue is much larger and there are arguments breaking out among many tenants, and perhaps cars are being vandalized because there are not enough safe parking places available. This might be a problem that a few individuals or a community group could take up and petition the local government for more parking areas, or for police patrols to monitor the area. Another possible action could be for members of the community to form patrols to watch over the cars. To achieve their goal, these individuals or the community group might need to raise awareness of the problem and build support from other members of the community. This is an example of how individuals and groups of people can take action when they see a problem in their community or the larger Ukrainian

society. Democracy creates opportunities for people to exercise their rights to improve their lives and the lives of others. This means citizenship in a democracy should be active, not passive.

During the brainstorming stage, it is important to not evaluate the problems as you list them. All you want to do at this point is generate a list of possible problems you and your peers might consider for your action project topic. By concerning yourself only with generating a list, you might be more open to listing issues you might have not considered if you had previously made a decision on your topic. You might find it difficult at first to identify problems. If this is the case, it is a good idea to speak with your friends and family, as well as other members of Ukrainian society and ask them what issues they consider problematic in the community or for Ukraine. Another possibility is to listen to the news or read news articles. Many different issues of concern should be presented through the news. Your textbook for this course might also help you to identify problems. By scanning topics in future sections, you might find an issue of interest.

As you consider more issues, it is important that you educate yourself about the issues. Ask questions and listen for details about the issue of concern. Specifically, try to determine what the associated problems for members of society are. You will want to have this information to help you and your peers select a problem for your project.

After you have created a list of potential topics, it will be time to choose one issue. Before choosing, carefully review what you know and listen to what others know about each issue. Once topics are selected, you should form groups to work with others who have selected the same topic.

## LEARNING ABOUT THE SELECTED PROBLEM

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Now it is time to really learn about the issue you have selected to understand what the problem or problems are. This can only be accomplished by researching the issue. For this phase of the project you will want to learn as much as you can about the issue. This will include accessing information from different sources and researching the problem from different perspectives. It will also be very important to keep an open mind about what the problem(s) is. Sometime we can be so sure we know what the problem is that we do not remain open to the possibility that the problem might actually be something else. The example below should help to illustrate this point.

### ***The Case of the Misdiagnosed Problem***

A group of students living in a city in the northeast of the United States identified delinquent behavior among teens as an issue to work on for their action project. The students all knew or had heard about individuals who had been in trouble with the law. As the students researched the issue, they learned that most crime among teens in the U.S. was committed between the hours of 3:00 p.m.-

6:00 p.m. Additionally, interviews with teen delinquents revealed that many young people claimed they got into trouble when they were bored and looking for fun. Based on this information, the group of students concluded the problem was that there were not enough supervised afterschool activities for teenagers. Based on their understanding of the problem, students proposed raising money for afterschool programs and asking schools and local government to contribute money and space.

Students sought to understand the issues related to juvenile delinquency and define a problem that they could address through their own actions. When the students met with government officials to propose their plan, they learned such afterschool programs already existed. So now what should the students do? Was their work and good intentions for nothing? Where had the students gone wrong? The problem is the students misdiagnosed the problem because they defined the problem too early in their research.

Fortunately, they were committed to working on this issue and learning more to understand the problem. The students decided to conduct a survey to identify how many teens knew about these afterschool programs. If someone was aware of the programs, questions were asked about why the individual did not attend. The survey data revealed that most teens surveyed did not know about the programs. Among those who did know about the programs, teens were most likely to explain they did not attend because they had no way to get to the facilities. Now the students recognized there were two problems to consider. The first was a lack of awareness of afterschool programs. The second problem was one of transportation to the facilities. With this new information, the students were able to work with school and government officials to better publicize the programs and recommend low cost bus routes to reach the facilities. The above example highlights how important it is to try to learn as much as you can about the issue you select before trying to define what the problem is you would like to address. It is also important to remain flexible and recognize that as you learn more about your topic, the problem may need to be redefined.

## TIPS FOR RESEARCHING THE ISSUE

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Part of researching an issue is to get as complete a picture as possible. This means gathering information from different perspectives and exploring a variety of sources. Some sources will be written and may be official, such as laws and other government documents. Others might be scholarly works written by experts; news items prepared by journalists; information from NGOs; or the published opinions of individuals. This list can expand as you work. Often you will get ideas of additional sources as you conduct your research. At the beginning, it will be useful to list as many possible resources you and your group could investigate to learn more about the problem and different perspectives. Once your list is made, you can divide the research among group members.

### ***Requesting Public Information***

According to the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Public Information,” every citizen of Ukraine has the right to request public information from public entities; the entities must respond no later than five working days after the date of receipt of the request (or 20 business days if the request relates to the provision of a large amount of information).

What is public information? Public information is information held by a public institution that, upon request, should be made available. This can include information such as the amount of money the government paid for a construction project or a public event/concert. Any citizen has the right to public information, unless considered a commercial secret, private information or a State secret. To request public information, you need to draft a letter with the name of the institution you are addressing at the top of the letter (the institution that possesses the information) followed by your name and contact information. Once that is done, write your question, sign and date the bottom of the letter. Requests do not cost any money.

If the public entity refuses to provide information, it must notify the citizen; the refusal must include steps that inform the citizen how to lodge a complaint concerning the refusal.

### ***Researching with Print Sources***

When conducting your research it is very important that you critically assess all of the resources you review to determine how useful they are to your research. In general, all materials should be analyzed in each of the following areas:

- Relevancy
- Author
- Accuracy
- Bias
- Timeliness

### ***Relevancy***

The relevance of a resource is the first thing you should determine. Never before has so much information been available to individuals. A simple Google search can return thousands of hits. How can an individual stay focused on what information is important to the research and not become distracted by irrelevant or inaccurate material? One way to address this issue, whether through a web search or through a library database, is to be specific in the key words used in a search. Narrow down potential items returned by adding words that are as targeted as possible.

For example, in the case presented, if the students had begun a search with “juvenile delinquency” they would have received a mountain of returns that could take weeks and even months to scour. More specific terms or phrases such as, “reasons for juvenile delinquency among youth living in cities in the United States,” is more likely to narrow the field and yield fewer returns.

Once the field has been narrowed, it is still likely you will encounter resources that are not very useful. Skim materials with a few key questions in mind. For instance, the questions might be: How is the issue defined? Is this definition consistent with my topic? Is there new information presented here that I do not already have? Does this source help me better understand the issue? If you answered yes to most of these questions, the source is likely to be relevant to your research.

### **Author**

The next step is to determine who the author or authors are of the source. For news or scholarly journal articles this should be very easy. Once you have the name of the author, it is important to determine this individual’s position of authority on the topic. If it is a scholarly article, determine where the author works and if they have a degree in a related field. This is especially important if you want to cite this person as an expert. If you are using print media to conduct your research, you will want to learn about the professional ethics of the source. An Internet search of the media source can help you learn how others view the organization. It is important to determine what other journalists and organizations representing journalists say about your source. All publications are not viewed equally in journalistic scrutiny. If you find interesting and relevant information from a news source that is not highly-regarded, search for related stories from more respected news sources so you can validate the accuracy of the information.

When relying on an Internet source, it can be a bit more complicated to get information about the author(s). For Internet sources, you must at least determine the name of the organization publishing the information/running the website. If the author’s name is available, it is useful to do a quick search of the individual to see what else he or she has written; what organizations he or she may belong to; and the impression the author has left on others. If there is only an organization listed on a website, it is important to learn more about the organization as you would with an author. This information may be useful in determining if this individual (or organization) is an expert; what the source of his or her knowledge is; and if he or she has a personal agenda. This idea will be discussed more under “Bias.” If you cannot find an author(s) or the name of a website publisher, this could be an indication the source is not worthwhile.

It is not necessary to cite only experts on a given subject. Laypeople can add insight to an issue, particularly if they have been personally involved. However, when conducting your research, it is important to distinguish between researched-based findings, which are generally presented in scholarly articles; government databases; databases of well-respected national and international organizations or well-regarded news sources; and anecdotal findings. In general, the experience of

one or two individuals is anecdotal, and may even represent extreme and uncommon cases. Therefore, if you choose to cite an individual in your research, try to find additional sources or individuals to validate that this is not an isolated case.

### **Accuracy**

Accuracy relates to the credibility of a source. You will want to confirm you can trust the information you use to understand your problem and eventually build an argument in favor of your action plan. This is why it is so important to trust the sources you are using. Quotes of individuals, particularly those who are not experts, may be distorted or inaccurate. Some individuals may simply be misinformed, while others may intentionally be trying to misinform. Always check your sources to determine credibility. If the information is researched-based, provided by an expert or published by a well-respected organization, you can generally trust it is true. Some examples of such organizations are: the United Nations, Amnesty International or major news outlets like CNN or the BBC. However, it is always a good idea to look for corroboration among sources. The more support you can find to validate information from additional sources, the more confident you can be of the accuracy.

### **Bias**

As mentioned, it is important to determine if the author or an organization has an agenda when sharing information. Information can be used, even statistical data, to tell a story from many different points of view. Take the case of a school district deciding how to budget funds. Recent test scores indicate many students in the district are performing below grade level in math and science. Now imagine how different groups might use this information to lobby school authorities to budget money in different ways to support each group's goals.

For instance, some may be interested in setting new standards for hiring, retaining and promoting teachers. For this group, the use of student test scores could support the idea that several teachers should not be rehired and money should instead be spent on recruiting and salaries for teachers with advanced degrees in math and the sciences. However, another group primarily made up of teachers might interpret test scores very differently and advocate for a different way to address the problem. This group might ask the school authorities to allocate money for afterschool enrichment programs in math and science, arguing that students simply need more help in these areas and new programs would lead to increases in test scores. It is possible a third group sees the issue as a problem of the school's curriculum. This group argues the test results reveal the curriculum is outdated and needs to be revised to reflect the content knowledge assessed on the standardized tests administered to students. This group suggests that money be spent on hiring experts to rewrite the school's math and science curriculums. A final group has an altogether different goal, rather than wanting to see the school find a means to improve students' test scores, this group is interested in using the data to discredit the school. This group is interested in attracting students to attend a private school and will

use the data to convince parents the public school is not able to successfully educate their children. Perhaps some parents will also support this idea and will use the test data to tell other families that they should not send their children to the public school.

Which of the above groups is right? All of the groups are relying on the same data to advocate for their goals. While the data is accurate, the different interests of each group create a bias, which affects how each group discusses the data. It is not enough to accept a group's conclusions because they offer data. The goals of the individual or group must also be considered. Here is another element to take into account: has the data been manipulated in some manner to support a group's goals? Suppose the test data was scrutinized more closely and it was determined the scores of one particular subgroup were well below the average scores of the majority of students. In fact, the majority of the students were passing the tests with satisfactory scores, but the subgroup's scores were so low that the overall average was lowered for the entire population. This subgroup might represent students with a variety of different needs and characteristics. Perhaps this is a group of students with learning disabilities, or perhaps the children of immigrants who perhaps speak a different language in their home. In any of these cases, this new information would be very important to know before any decisions about how to spend school funds or where to send a child to school were made.

However, this new information would not be useful to all of the groups described above. It might be more advantageous for these groups to share only the overall average scores when presenting their case. Are the overall scores false? No, but that does not mean they are useful in understanding the truth about students' test performance either.

What does this case reveal about the use of data? What does this case suggest to you about the kinds of questions you should ask when researching? It is important to develop a critical stance when conducting research. Questioning should become the norm. As you conduct research throughout the project you should use the Worksheet – Bias Detection as a guide to determine the potential for bias and consider how to deal with a biased source. A biased resource does not need to be discarded, but it does need to be understood. It is important to consider the usefulness of such sources and make plans to find additional options. In general, if you determine a source is biased, seek additional sources that will offer different perspectives or that will corroborate the information.

### ***Timeliness***

When the information was obtained and published is very important. Information that is compelling but based on research conducted 15 years ago might not be relevant anymore. For example, a statistic that 60 percent of children cannot read at an acceptable level might be very useful to support the expansion of educational programs. However, if the data was obtained years ago before a reading program was introduced, it might not be relevant in the present. In fact, more recent data might indicate that as a result of the program, 60 percent of children are currently reading at an acceptable

level. Therefore, the timeliness of the research must be considered when choosing to include a source. In general, always begin with the most recent information available and then work backwards in time. Scholarly information older than 10 years old is generally considered outdated, unless other sources confirm the issues and data are still relevant.

### ***Tips for responsible consumption of media<sup>1</sup>***

Next time you click on a link that your friend has posted or read an article about a current or historical event, consider asking yourself these questions:

- Who made this?
- How was this made?
- Why was this made?
- When was this made?
- What is this missing?
- Where do I go from here?

The IMVAIN method,<sup>2</sup> listed below, offers a helpful reminder of what type of sources we should be looking for to lessen the likelihood of us consuming or sharing disinformation:

- **Independent** sources are preferable to self-interested sources.
- **Multiple** sources are preferable to a report based on a single source.
- Sources who **Verify** or provide verifiable information are preferable to those who merely assert.
- **Authoritative** and/or **Informed** sources are preferable to sources who are uninformed or lack authoritative background.
- **Named** sources are better than anonymous ones.

### ***Documentation***

A final point about research with printed and Internet sources, is to be sure to accurately document the source. This is very important so you or others may go back to a source to verify a point or learn more, and also to give proper credit to the source. Documenting sources at the time you conduct research will help you remain organized. This is particularly important when using a source that might later be difficult to access, like a website. There are a few different styles used to cite sources. Below are basic, generally accepted guidelines.<sup>3</sup> However, it is a good idea to find out if your professor requires a specific style.

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**1 /** "Believe It or Not? Putting the Consumer's Questions to Work." NewseumED, <https://newseumed.org/activity/believe-it-or-not-putting-the-consumers-questions-to-work-mlbp/>

**2 /** Rory O'Connor "Practical Tools for Teaching News Literacy." The New York Times, 2014. <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/08/guest-post-practical-tools-for-teaching-news-literacy/>

**3 /** General guidelines for documentation of sources are based on the Modern Language Association (MLA) method.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES:<sup>4</sup>****Citing a Book**

Structure: Last, First M. *Book*. City: Publisher, Year Published. Print.

Example: James, Henry. *The Ambassadors*. Rockville: Serenity, 2009. Print.

**Citing a Newspaper***In Print*

Structure: Last, First M. "Article Title." *Newspaper Title* [City] Date Month Year Published: Page(s). Print.

Example: Bowman, Lee. "Bills Target Lake Erie Mussels." *The Pittsburgh Press* 7 Mar. 1990: A4. Print.

*Newspaper found on a website*

Structure: Last, First M. "Article Title." *Newspaper Title* [City] Date Month Year Published: Page(s). *Website Title*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed. <URL>.

Example: Bowman, Lee. "Bills Target Lake Erie Mussels." *The Pittsburgh Press* 7 Mar. 1990: A4. Google News. Web. 16 Mar. 2010.

**Citing a Magazine***In Print*

Structure: Last, First M. "Article Title." *Magazine Title* Date Month Year Published: Page(s). Print.

Example: Rothbart, Davy. "How I Caught up with Dad." *Men's Health* Oct. 2008: 108-13. Print.

*Magazine via Website*

Structure: Last, First M. "Article Title." *Magazine Title* Date Month Year Published. *Website Title*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed. <URL>.

Example: Rothbart, Davy. "How I Caught up with Dad." *Men's Health* Oct. 2008. Google Books. Web. 16 Mar. 2010.

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<sup>4</sup> / EasyBib, Write Smart, Imagine Easy Solutions, LLC, 2001-2012. May 27, 2013. <http://content.easybib.com/citation-guides/>

## Citing a Scholarly Journal

### *In Print*

Structure: Last, First M., and First M. Last. "Article Title." *Journal Title* Series Volume. Issue (Year Published): Page(s). Print.

Example: Jacoby, William G. "Public Attitudes Toward Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 38.2 (1994): 336-61. Print.

## Citing a Journal Published Online

Structure: Last, First M. "Article Title." *Journal Title* Series Volume.Issue (Year Published): Page(s). *Website Title*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed. <URL>.

Example: Ashok, Savitri. "Gender, Language, and Identity in Dogeaters: A Post Colonial Critique." *Postcolonial Text* 5.2 (2009). Postcolonial Text. Web. 23 Apr. 2010.

## Citing Information from a Website

### *Articles*

Structure: Last, First M. "Article Title." *Website Title*. Website Publisher, Date Month Year Published. Web. Date Month Year Accessed. <URL>.

Example: Satalkar, Bhakti. "Water Aerobics." *Buzzle.com*. Buzzle.com, 15 July 2010. Web. 16 July 2010. <www.buzzle.com>.

### *Data from website*

Structure: Organization name. Name of website. Website publisher, Date Month Year Published. Web. Date Month Year Accessed. <URL>.

Example: Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. *Travel.State.Gov*. Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 17 Feb. 2010. Web. 4 May 2010. <[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1139.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1139.html)>.

## SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS IN RESEARCH

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### ***PEOPLE AS A SOURCE FOR RESEARCH***

People can also provide you with information about the topic and should be interviewed or surveyed when possible. You can choose to speak with experts, individuals directly involved and others who are not directly involved but might have had similar experiences or opinions. Surveying or interviewing a variety of people will not only help you learn more about the issue, but you will understand different perspectives on the topic. When you can look at a situation from different perspectives, you are better prepared to consider an action plan that addresses the needs and concerns of the people involved.

Returning to the example of parking among tenants of an apartment building can help you understand why it is important to obtain different points of view. Consider how many different perspectives there might be on the parking issue. It is a good idea to make a list of all the people and groups who might be affected by the issue or have a related concern. In this example, the list might include: tenants in the building who have guests regularly; tenants who rarely or never have guests; tenants who live closer to the street; tenants from buildings nearby; children who play in the streets next to the apartment building and their parents; local police and mayor; and drivers of other emergency vehicles who use the street. Ask yourself what views these different individuals might have about this issue. It is possible that many would agree there is a problem and desire a solution, but might not all agree on what the solution should be? For example, some might be satisfied if there are spaces for parking on the street and guests may park there only when they are available. Which group might have this view? Another group might see this as an inadequate solution and demand more parking spaces be created at a location near the apartment building. What group or groups do you think would support this idea? By surveying or interviewing different groups you can learn about these different perspectives. Sometimes people think they understand a problem and have the right solution, only to learn the people most affected see things very differently.

### ***CONDUCTING SURVEYS***

Surveys are a great tool to gather a large amount of information from people relatively quickly. Surveys are generally a written set of questions that a large number of people are asked. Asking the same questions allows the researcher to draw conclusions about how people surveyed feel about an issue. However, just as with organizations, individuals will often have a bias depending on their relationship to the topic and their life experiences. Another potential problem with surveying is getting information that accurately reflects the views of the population studied. There are many techniques used by researchers to reduce the effect of bias and obtain a representative sample.

## **SAMPLE POPULATIONS**

It is not necessary to survey everyone in a population. For example, if you were researching a problem associated with the elderly in one of the regions in Ukraine. It would be nearly impossible to survey all of the elderly, but you would still want to get feedback from a portion of the elderly population you felt was representative of the larger group. Such a sample consists of a smaller model of the larger population that represents the interests and views of the whole. To have a representative sample, there are two issues that must be addressed. The first is that, to be representative, every member of the larger population must have an equal chance of being chosen to participate in the survey. The second issue relates to whether or not individuals who respond to the survey actually represent the larger population. To understand these concerns, consider the following example.

A group of students are researching problems associated with housing for the elderly in a region. To learn more about the issues, they decided to send surveys to a local facility that provides housing to elderly persons. Information from the survey should be useful to gain insights into issues from the perspective of those who are directly affected. However, consider if a few of the students went to the housing facility and handed out surveys to anyone they met that day. Even if the people they met were helpful in providing information, their experiences and views do not necessarily represent those of others living in the facility. For instance, what if many of the individuals who lived at the facility were unable to leave their beds most of the day, and therefore were not able to meet with the students. Or perhaps there are other residents who are very active and leave the facility during the day to take walks and meet with friends and family, and therefore they were not available. It is important to understand, in this case, the survey results only represent the views of individuals who are active enough to leave their rooms, but who do not regularly leave the facility or who happened to be present that day.

The example highlights two important concepts of random selection and sampling a cross-section of the population. The first, random selection, means all individuals in the population being studied, (in this case, elderly persons living in a particular facility) should have an equal chance of being surveyed. For instance, everyone could be given the survey to complete so all had a chance to participate. Another method researchers use to narrow down the population is to randomly select individuals to give the survey to. Sometimes all individuals in the population are assigned a number and then the survey is given to every third person, for example.

However, even if a process of randomization had been used to give surveys to people living at the facility, there might be a problem obtaining a representative sample. In this example, the views obtained by the students were most likely representative of only a small group, those who were able to leave their rooms and were present to receive the survey. What if every third person who received the survey was also someone who was more likely to leave their room on a daily basis? The views represented would then only represent the experiences of mobile residents, which would most likely be different than the views of individual confined to their rooms.

A technique called “stratification” is used to address this. To stratify a population, it is necessary to identify sub-categories. For instance, in this example, the population might be divided into three categories: those primarily confined to their rooms, those who regularly leave their rooms but primarily stay within the facility and those who regularly leave the facility. How you identify subgroups is based on what you are trying to learn. So if you wanted to know if the age of a resident was important in understanding their needs, then you would identify categories based on age. Once subgroups are identified, you could select a random population within each subgroup to survey. However, keep in mind that you would only want to use a random sample if the total population was too large to survey. If you were surveying residents at many facilities, a random sampling method might make it easier to administer and collect the surveys and interpret the results.

Social media has become a popular method to conduct quick polls and surveys. However, there are serious drawbacks to relying too heavily on such a method. A survey given on Facebook, for example, will most likely not be representative of a population, nor is it likely to be random. One instance where a Facebook poll might be useful is if a survey or poll is administered to a specific Facebook group, such as members of a university club. The population would then be defined as members of the university club. If all members had adequate notice and time to complete the survey, then the results could be representative of the group, but this still depends on who and how many people answer.

Keep in mind as you conduct surveys or polls that it might not always be possible to collect data using a random sampling method or by identifying a cross-section. The most important thing is that you are aware of the limitations of data gathered without the use of scientific methods. You may still find the data useful, but you must consider the shortcomings before drawing conclusions. It is also important to share the methods used to collect data, conclusions based on analysis of the data and the possible limitations of the analysis when presenting your data to build an argument or persuade others.

### ***DEVELOPING SURVEY QUESTIONS***

Developing a good survey is not as simple as it might seem. Poorly-designed questions can lead to misinformation or useless data. However, well-designed questions can help you access the needed information. There are several tips to consider when creating your survey:

- Be clear on what information you want to obtain. Identify your reasons for giving the survey before designing questions. Then confirm that each question will help you obtain the desired information.
- Keep questions simple. Each question should be clearly stated so there is no misunderstanding about what is being asked.
- Avoid questions that ask two questions in one. An example of this is, “How have parents and students responded to the new requirements?” Although you might be interested to know how both parents and students have responded, the answer for each group might be different, and should therefore be asked in two separate questions.

- Shorter questionnaires are better, so ask only what you need to. Try to keep it to six to 10 questions so people do not become frustrated or bored and stop providing serious responses.
- Avoid leading or biased questions. Questions should be worded in a neutral manner that does not reflect your views. For example, a survey question that asks, “Do you think the new cafeteria lunch menu offers a better variety of healthy foods than the old one?” suggests to the reader that the new menu is better and may therefore influence the response. A better question would be, “How do you feel about the new cafeteria lunch menu compared to the old one?”
- Present the questions in a clear, organized layout. A clear layout will make it easier for people to respond.
- If you offer a choice of responses, be sure there are enough items to reflect a full range of views. For example, if you are asking a question about how frequently people do something, sufficient range of options would include “always,” “usually,” “sometimes,” “rarely” and “never.” Otherwise, people might feel compelled to choose a selection that does not accurately reflect their views or habits.

### **SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Here are sample questions a government agency might use to get information about how they are performing. There are several different types of question types used: multiple choice questions, rating questions and open-ended questions. As you review these samples, notice how the tips for developing survey questions are incorporated.

#### **MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

**Example 1:** Are you a citizen? Please circle the correct response

**Yes / No**

**Example 2:** How old are you? Please mark your choice on the line provided

\_\_\_\_\_ **A) 18-25**    \_\_\_\_\_ **B) 26-35**    \_\_\_\_\_ **C) 36-45**    \_\_\_\_\_ **D) 45-60**    \_\_\_\_\_ **E) 60 and older**

**Example 3:** How many times have you called our agency about this issue in the past month? Please mark your choice on the line provided:

- Once \_\_\_\_\_
- Twice \_\_\_\_\_
- Three times \_\_\_\_\_
- More than three times \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/not sure \_\_\_\_\_

### RANK ORDER SCALE QUESTIONS

**Example 4:** Please rank the following factors from most to least important to you when interacting with our agency by checking the appropriate box for each statement. 1 = Most important, 5 = Least important.

Service feature	1	2	3	4	5
Call wait time					
Call hold time					
Representative's customer service skills					
Representative's knowledge					
Resolution of issue					

**Example 5:** The customer service representative was knowledgeable. Please mark your choice on the line provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Strongly Agree** \_\_\_\_\_ **Agree** \_\_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_\_ **Strongly Disagree** \_\_\_\_\_ **No Opinion**

### OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

**Example 6:** How could we have improved your experience with our agency today? Please list one or two suggestions that can help us improve our customer service.

## **CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS**

Interviews are a useful way to obtain more in-depth information from individuals. Interviews are also an opportunity for individuals to explain their responses to the interviewer, allowing room for follow-up questions. It is also a chance for the interviewee to share information important to them that might not be addressed through a survey.

Before beginning interviews, it is important to determine the goal or reason for conducting the interviews. The answers will help you to determine who to interview and the interview format. For instance, if you are interested in getting factual information, it might be best to interview an expert. If you want to learn more about the perspectives of a particular group, say elderly people, you should consider several candidates from this group that have different circumstances (some living in a facility for elderly persons, some living with family members, some living on their own) to see if the answers are similar or different in important ways. Determining your goals will help you decide how many people you need to interview and how to structure questions.

There are two basic ways to design an interview – a structured interview approach and an unstructured approach. In the structured approach, you create questions in advance that you will ask all individuals you interview. One advantage to this approach is that you are able to focus the interview on information you are interested in. A second advantage is that you are able to compare the response of interviewees to see if there are common experiences or important differences. The disadvantage is that the individual interviewed may have additional information that could be important to you, but there is no opportunity to provide it because the questions are predetermined. Sometimes the interviewer will ask if there is anything the individual being interviewed would like to add at the end of a structured interview. This gives the individual a chance to share information important to them and potentially important to the researcher.

Another way to approach the interview is to conduct an unstructured interview. In this approach, the interviewer engages in more of a conversation with the interviewee and generally asks questions based on the interviewees responses. This format may be useful to get more in-depth information from an individual, but does not allow for the same comparisons between interviews that a structured format does. Unstructured interviews are also more difficult to control and a novice researcher may come away from an interview realizing they did not get answers to important questions. For these reasons, it is suggested that you plan to conduct at least part of your interview in a structured format while conducting research for your project.

## ANALYSIS OF SURVEY AND INTERVIEW DATA

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Survey and interview data can help researchers understand a lot about people's attitude, understanding and experience related to a topic. However, such insights come only with careful analysis of the data. There are two main goals in your data analysis. The first is to determine if there are significant similarities or differences in the participant's responses. Second, do these differences follow patterns based on subgroups? When analyzing data to answer these questions, it is not necessary to find 100 percent agreement or similarity in responses. What you want to look for is trends, or common patterns, across responses.

### **GETTING STARTED WITH DATA ANALYSIS**

Before you can look for common trends, it is first necessary to tally or "code" responses. Coding is a term that means to organize data based on categories. Depending on the type of questions you used, closed or open-ended, you will need to use different methods to analyze the data. Surveys with closed answer responses are easy to tally. A closed answer responses is one in which the choices are provided for the individual taking the survey. For example: "Which of the following choices reflects your actions when it comes to paying the fare to ride the public bus? Choices: A) I always pay, B) I usually pay, C) I sometimes pay, D) I rarely pay, E) I never pay." To tally the responses, you simply count how many there are for each of the choices. For instance, a tally could be, "of the 133 people surveyed, 64 answered A, 45 answered B, 16 answered C and eight answered D."

Surveys or interview questions that are open-ended are more difficult and will require you to make decisions about responses. It is best to predetermine a few categories that open-ended responses might fit into, such as: A) people who strongly support the issue, B) people who support the issue, C) people who have no opinion on the issue, D) people who are opposed to the issue and E) people who are strongly opposed to the issue. While you read over the data you can assign each response one of the predetermined letters. Once identification and labeling of responses is complete, you can tally how many of each letter there was, similar to how you tally the close-ended response items. A note of caution – sometimes a response does not fit into any predetermined categories. In this case, it is best to set the response aside. When you have finished coding the rest of the data, return to the responses that were set aside to determine if there are similarities or differences among them. It might be that you determine a new category you had not previously identified. When this occurs, researchers say the data is "telling the story." It is important to keep an open mind as you read responses so you do not miss a chance to hear the story data might have to tell. On the other hand, the response might be an anomaly, or what researchers call an "outlier," meaning a response that falls outside the normal range of responses and does not represent the commonly held view or experience. In this case, the response would not be seen as significant.

After all of the data is coded or tallied, it is time for data analysis. The analysis of data is the process of looking for meaning. The most common way to do this is to see if there is a majority view or trend among responses. Looking at the example of survey responses regarding paying the fare on a public bus, take a minute to review the survey results and see what they suggest.

It would be reasonable to assert that, based on the results, the majority of people surveyed stated they are likely to pay the fare to ride the public bus. However, beyond this observation, what other interesting information is conveyed? Closer analysis reveals slightly more than half of respondents do not pay the fare at least some of the time. This is a significant response rate if you are trying to understand if there is a problem in the paying of the public bus fare. To gain a deeper understanding of who is likely to pay the fare and who is not, a second type of analysis based on subgroups is needed. Assume survey respondents were asked to identify their age range and gender on the survey; you could now look at the responses by subgroups. Look at the following sample data, what patterns do see? Is there a subgroup that is most likely to pay the fare? Are there any subgroups that are less likely to pay the fare? To keep the sample simple, there are only three age groups. You are likely to have more, depending on your topic.

**Survey Question: "Which of the following choices reflects your actions when it comes to paying the fare to ride the public bus?"**



<b>MALES</b>	<b>AGE 16-25</b>	<b>26-40</b>	<b>41 AND OVER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b> (Gross Total)
A - I always pay	4	12	17	33
B - I usually pay	4	7	10	21
C - I sometimes pay	6	4	0	10
D - I rarely pay	7	0	0	7
E - I never pay	0	0	0	0



<b>FEMALES</b>	<b>AGE 16-25</b>	<b>26-40</b>	<b>41 AND OVER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b> (Gross Total)
A - I always pay	5	10	16	31 (64)
B - I usually pay	4	10	10	24 (45)
C - I sometimes pay	3	3	0	6 (16)
D - I rarely pay	1	0	0	1 (8)
E - I never pay	0	0	0	0 (0)

You should be able to identify a few trends based on the data from this example. Some of these are:

- Younger people are more likely to not pay the fare when using public buses
- Males 16-25 are the least likely to pay the fare on a regular basis
- Individuals over 40 are the most likely to regularly pay the fare

Now you have more information to help you understand the problem. Knowing it is younger people who are least likely to pay the fare can help you determine a course of action to remedy the situation. Remember the case of the misdiagnosed problem and how the students needed more information to understand the problem and take action. In general, more accurate information will help you throughout the process as you research and understand your problem. It will help you determine the course of action you believe will be the most useful in addressing the problem.

A warning about data analysis: you cannot claim direct causal relationships between an event and a variable. For example, although data suggests younger people are less likely to pay the bus fare, you cannot conclude that being young is the cause and as people age they will most likely start paying the fare. In order to learn more about the causes for the behavior among young people, more research would have to be done to examine why young people might not pay the fare. This leads to the last stage in data analysis, which is to look for trends across data. You might find that data collected on other survey or interview questions can help you understand reasons for behavior. Perhaps you asked what the reasons were on the survey. You would go through the same process of analyzing those answers to see if there were patterns. Then you would look to see if there was the indication of a relationship between results on different questions.

For instance, among the reasons for not paying the bus fare, the most common reason might be a lack of funds. If it were then determined this was the reason most often provided by individuals in the 16-25 age group, you could draw a conclusion it is a lack of money leading to so many young people not paying the fare. Now, you would be in a position to make a recommendation for addressing this problem, such as a reduced fare for students.

# STEPS 3 – 7: APPLYING THE COURSE THEMES TO YOUR TOPIC

## STEP 3 – Exploring the Problem from the Perspective of Human Rights

During this stage of the project, you will apply what you have learned about human rights to your research. The material covered in section 2 of the course textbook will apply to this step. You will also need to apply knowledge of domestic and international mechanisms to protect these rights.

You will need to analyze your problem to decide if there is a significant human rights issue. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that people have a broad range of rights, including aspects of life, such as the right to rest and leisure, cited in Article 24. Article 22 states that, “Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.” These statements of rights are so broad that it might be possible to assert that an individual is entitled to almost any personal desire as part of their “free development of personality,” so it is important to determine if an issue should really be categorized as a human right. Section 2 of the textbook will help you understand what rights should absolutely be viewed and protected.

There are many mechanisms and organizations that exist to ensure the protection of human rights. Some of these mechanisms are within Ukraine and others are global organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Court. When an individual or a group’s human rights are violated they may utilize these mechanisms. Sometimes, the individual or groups in question are not able to speak for themselves, perhaps due to a lack of resources, age or mental abilities. In these cases, others may advocate for the protection of rights for these persons.

Examine the issue you have selected from the perspective of human rights. In order to do this, complete *Worksheet – Human Rights and Your Research Topic*. You will need to apply what you have learned in your textbook to determine if a human rights violation exists and what can be done to remedy the situation. One way to determine if there is a human rights issue is to analyze the harm done to the individual or groups involved.

Remember the example of dealing with inadequate parking for tenants of an apartment building and their guests? What are the harms being suffered? For some, it might be no more than the inconvenience of walking several blocks from a parking spot to the apartment building. While it might be desirable to have closer parking facilities, no one can claim this would be a human rights case. However, that does not mean the individual affected still should not try to achieve their goal of more convenient parking. Democratic processes provide opportunities for citizens to have a range of needs and desires met. It is important to identify which of these might be human rights issues to determine the urgency and manner in which to address the issue. Applying what you have learned to make this determination is the goal of this step.

## **STEP 4 – Exploring the Problem from the Perspective of Governmental Remedies**

There are many ways problems in democratic societies can be addressed. Sometimes, it is best if the government takes action. During this stage of the project, you will be asked to research and think about your identified problem from the government's perspective. You may find that sometimes there is no law in existence to effectively address a problem, and therefore it might be necessary to bring this to the attention of government officials. In other cases, you might find there are laws, but they are not being enforced. Therefore, it will be necessary to research existing laws and speak with government officials during this phase of the project.

You will begin this step of the project by reading the third section of your textbook. Through the textbook and class activities, you will become familiar with the obligations democratic governments have to their people in general, and obligations the Ukrainian government has to its people. Knowledge in these areas will be important when considering what the government's responsibility is relating to your research topic.

The goal of this stage of the project is for you to critically assess if government should be doing more to address the problem you have identified. To answer this question, you need to understand the government's responsibilities, the rights of Ukrainian citizens and laws already in existence. You will probably need to review aspects of the Ukrainian Constitution. You might also need to do some additional research on laws related to your selected problem. This could include researching government documents and interviewing government officials.

You will also need to answer each of the following questions in as much depth as possible. You might have addressed some of these points in class discussions or activities, but you will want to use these

questions to guide you as you continue to research your topic and think about the role government will play. The *Worksheet – The Role of Government and Your Research Topic* will guide you.

- Does the Ukrainian government have a responsibility to address the issue you have selected? Explain your response in full and cite specific aspects of the Ukrainian Constitution or principles of democracy to support your view.
- What actions has the Ukrainian government already taken in regard to the issue? To what extent have these actions been successful? Why do you believe more needs to be done?
- What would you propose at this stage in your project that the Ukrainian government does to address the issue?

## STEP 5 – Explore the Problem from the Perspective of Civil Society

Civil society is a vital feature of healthy democratic societies. When individuals come together to work on common causes they can share resources in pursuit of their goals. In this manner, civil society organizations can often achieve what individuals cannot on their own. Civil society plays many different roles. Some groups form to lobby lawmakers to make changes in the law, while others might form to lobby for protections and enforcement of existing laws. Still, other groups might see their role as one of building awareness of issues and educating the public, while some might be action-oriented in seeing their effectiveness in working directly to address an issue. Some larger civil society organizations may even incorporate two or more of these features in order to address societal needs. The goal of this step is for your group to consider what role civil society can or is playing in relation to the problem you are researching.

To complete this step, you will need to research existing organizations to determine what actions might already be occurring regarding your research topic. When conducting this research, apply the tips and guidelines presented in this handbook for analyzing sources and conducting interviews. It is important to remember that, by definition, civic society organizations are purpose-driven, and therefore may be biased. For these reasons, you will want to learn as much as you can about existing organizations and their record of success. For instance, you will want to know if a group is effective in helping the populations they are trying to serve. Some other issues to consider are: if the group has been effective in working with lawmakers; if they have raised and directed funds to the problem; if they have educated the public on issues; or if they have provided services to the public, particularly those most affected by the issue. Finding answers to these questions will help you determine if civil

society is already taking positive actions to remedy the problem. If the answer is yes, you may choose to support the work of existing organizations. On the other hand, if the answer is no, you might decide more action needs to be taken through civil society. *Worksheet – Civil Society and Your Research Problem* will help you during this process.

Once you have completed research on actions already being taken by civil society, you must consider how civil society might be used to address the problem you are researching. Your decision might be to volunteer to work with or get a job with an existing organization, or perhaps forming your own NGO.

## STARTING YOUR OWN NGO: POINTS TO CONSIDER

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If you determine there is not adequate work already being performed by civil society, you might think about starting your own civil society organization. While this is a great way for individuals to work with others to improve society, there are some serious issues to consider before beginning your own organization. Forming an NGO that will be successful in reaching the organization's goals may take a lot of time and resources. Here are some important issues to consider:

- What are the goals of the NGO? Are these short-term or long-term goals?
- What are the needs of the target community? How can the NGO identify them, or create a forum where the needs can be expressed by the community?
- What skills and resources will be needed to achieve the goals of the organization?
- What staff expertise is available? Will staff be full-time or part-time staff? Will staff be paid or volunteer?
- What will the strategy be for funding? What sources of funding can the NGO access? Which of these are local and international? How can funds for short-term and long-term activities be identified?<sup>4</sup>

Beginning your own NGO should be a thoughtful process. Answering each of the aforementioned questions before you begin will help you get started. However, once you begin, it is still very important to remember that many of society's problems have existed for a long time and have multiple and complex causes. Patience and persistence are necessary when forming an NGO.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: The Global Development Research Center, The NGO Café, GDRC, April 7, 2012, web, downloaded from <http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/index.html> on June 5, 2013.

## STEP 6 – Explore the Problem from the Perspective of Individual Civic Participation

In a democratic society, individuals are free to take actions on their own initiative to improve or contribute to their society. The exercise of this freedom is considered an integral part of the maintenance of a healthy democratic society. There is no single definition or act to represent what is meant by individual civic participation. Rather, this is a concept that encompasses a broad range of behaviors. The following list represents many of these behaviors. The acts are grouped into categories based on the nature of the act and the intended outcome.

### TYPES OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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#### ***PARTICIPATING IN A GROUP***

Individuals are free to join groups to address an issue or interest. Examples of this include joining a church group or religious organization; a school group; a sports or recreation association; civic associations; and community clubs. In some respects, participating in a group may seem similar to partnering with civil society. However, in this instance, the focus is on acts an individual can take to become civically-engaged and address an issue as opposed to acts that an NGO or civil society organization may take. Another distinction is that some of these groups may only exist to serve a specific community or interest.

There are many examples of organizations and clubs in the United States where individuals join with others who share common interests and who wish to serve their community. One such example is a local garden club. Members of garden clubs often meet to share information about gardening, but also to engage in projects such as planting and maintaining a garden for the community. This type of association may be very informal with no rigid hierarchy of leadership or requirements for membership. Other organizations can have a more formal structure and rules about who can join. For instance, there are some civic organizations that only admit members who have been invited to join and membership requires payment of dues and fulfilling other obligations. These organizations host many social functions for members, but also serve the community through fundraising and donating funds to important issues, or providing education and awareness programs to the public.

Choosing to participate with an existing group or to form a new group is a means to serve one's interests and the community's. Such groups can make important contributions to society.

### **CONNECTING TO INFORMATION AND CURRENT EVENTS**

In a democratic society, individuals have the responsibility to remain informed about current events. When individuals are informed, they are better positioned to participate in public decision making and monitor the actions of government, businesses, organizations or individuals to watch for behaviors that are threatening to the welfare of society.

There are many ways individuals can obtain information, such as watching TV news, reading newspapers, listening to the radio, reading magazines, finding information through online sources, attending lectures and discussing issues with others, which may include the use of technology or social media. Civic-minded individuals who are informed about current events typically engage in these behaviors several times a week and see it as their responsibility to remain informed.

Remember, it is important to critically assess the sources you are getting news from. Even news sources may be slanted toward a particular viewpoint and represent a bias. It is best to apply the same guidelines presented in the *Worksheet – Bias Detection* when obtaining information on current events. Another good rule to follow is to obtain news from multiple sources.

### **POLITICAL ACTION**

Voting is often cited as a clear indication of civic participation. However, voting is just one method of political civic engagement. There are many other important actions individuals can take. For instance, showing support for one party or candidate. Individuals can choose to show their support for a candidate by wearing buttons or displaying bumper stickers bearing the candidate's name or campaign slogan; attending or organizing fundraising events for a candidate or political party; contributing money to a campaign; making phone calls; or visiting people in their homes to persuade them to vote for a candidate. Outside of elections, citizens can play an important role in influencing public policy by obtaining signatures to petition Parliament or local government to make changes in laws; contacting local officials or attending public meetings to express views on an issue; or educating the public on important issues to motivate others to take action.

Other methods of communicating views to public officials are to attend or organize a march or protest. Elected public officials can be sensitive to the needs of the public they serve. For this reason, citizens can play a crucial role in policy-making if they are vocal in demonstrating their views on issues. The Euromaidan is a good example of the power people can exert when many individuals choose to participate to communicate and support a position.

### ***ECONOMIC ACTS***

Sometimes citizens can exert influence through economic actions. This can be accomplished by either buying or boycotting a product or service to show opposition or support for a producer's values or practices. For example, there have been instances where large numbers of individuals have stopped buying a particular brand of clothing after learning items were produced under conditions that violated the human rights of others. When companies are faced with large-scale loss of profits, they sometimes choose to change their practices to please the public and regain customers.

### ***SERVICE OR ACTS OF VOLUNTEERISM***

Volunteers can provide many services to others and their community. Volunteering can occur with regular frequency, perhaps weekly, or be one-time acts. The distinguishing feature is that an individual is giving their time freely to serve others or advance a cause. The potential to address societal issues through acts of volunteerism are almost unlimited. A few examples would be to serve meals to elderly or homeless individuals, read to children at an orphanage, clean a park or observe elections. Sometimes individuals can volunteer on their own – for example, by directly contacting an orphanage and offering to provide a needed service. Other times, individuals can volunteer through an organization that has identified needs and has established systems and relationships to address the need. Regardless of the frequency, type of action or the method (alone or through an organization), volunteering is a way almost all individuals can engage in to address issues in society.

In step six of the student action project, you are asked to consider how the problem you have been researching can be addressed through individual civic participation. You will probably find there are many different ways you could address the issue through individual civic participation. Therefore, it will be necessary to analyze each of the actions you identify to determine which could have the best outcome given your time, resources and goals. Worksheet – Individual Civic Engagement and Your Research Topic will help you make these decisions.

## STEP 7 – Forming an Action Plan

In this step, you are required to design a plan of action to address the problem you have been researching. By now you know there are many ways problems in society can be remedied. It is possible to work through government processes; seek protections from international organizations or the courts in Ukraine; work through civil society; or take actions as individual citizens. Different approaches may work better when addressing different types of problems. You will need to review the work you did up to this point and the actions you recommended related to course themes. You should analyze these actions to decide which you think is best to include in your action plan. It is also possible that, based on further research, you have new ideas different from those identified during steps three to six, and you might decide to choose one of your new ideas.

When designing your action plan, it is very important to consider the impact actions can have on bringing positive changes related to the problem. Although you might be tempted to create a plan that is easy to carry out, you must consider if actions are likely to make a real difference. Use *Worksheet – Thinking Through the Steps to Devise an Action Plan* during this phase.

## IDENTIFYING AND WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

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Although individual actions can be meaningful, sustained change or improvement of a problem generally takes the work of more than one person. For this reason, it is practical to consider who else might be interested in the problem you have identified and see if you can enlist other parties in helping you achieve your goals. When you considered your resources, you probably recognized you could use additional support. Individuals who are interested in the problem might be interested in helping you implement your action plan. Civil society might also have many resources useful in pursuing your goals. Look for organizations doing work to address the problem or a similar problem and see how the organization might help you. As an example, during their action project, a group of university students identified a lack of adequate training on how to use a defibrillator, which can be a lifesaving piece of equipment when used properly. The students partnered with an NGO that provided free training on the proper use of the equipment. In this way, the students achieved their goal by partnering with an organization that had resources they did not.

When dealing with government and policy-making, it is important to demonstrate public support for government action. Asking interested parties to sign a petition; calling or visiting government officials; or attending demonstrations are all ways the public can communicate their support for an issue to the

government. You might want to consider how you can identify interested parties and get them involved in expressing their views to government officials as part of your action plan.

Sometimes your goal is to change the behavior or views of individuals. An issue might involve discrimination against certain persons, such as persons with disabilities. Perhaps as part of your action plan, one of your goals is to educate the public on the contributions some of these individuals make to society and the talents they possess to better inform the public about the realities of disabilities.

## ADVOCATING FOR YOUR PROPOSED PLAN

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Making changes in society often calls for educating people about why change is needed. This is particularly true if the change requires new behaviors or attitudes among the public. For this reason, you might find part of your action plan will be to educate others about the problem. In doing this, you will need to be well prepared and persuasive. The following guidelines are helpful when preparing to share information with others:

- Find a way to capture your audience's attention. To accomplish this, your introductory message should appeal to the emotions and intellect of the target audience. There are many different ways to achieve this: eye-catching images, memorable slogans or a few compelling facts. Remember, this is only an introduction to the issue; the idea is to make the audience want to know more.
- Your message should be concise. If the message is in writing, keep it short and stick to the point. You want to be sure people will read the information and not lose interest. If you are presenting information orally, then practice what you plan to say and stick to your message.
- Use facts and examples to support your message. Evidence is essential in convincing others a problem is real, so be ready with specifics to share. However, showing the human side of an issue is also very powerful, so be ready to share specific examples of how individuals or communities have been affected by the problem.
- Share your goals with the audience. If you are asking the audience to take an action, be specific about what the action is and explain why it is important.
- Tailor your message for your audience. For example, you will probably choose a different approach to share your message with an audience of university students than you would with members of the local government. Perhaps humor would be successful with the students, whereas a serious, professional approach would be best with government officials. You might also discuss an aspect of the problem specific to the concerns of the audience.

Worksheet – Advocating for Our Plan will help you organize your ideas and prepare you to persuade others to support your plan. You will also need to determine the method of sharing information and making others aware of the issue. Here are some ways you could consider:

- **Posters, leaflets, newsletters:** printed material can be used to raise public awareness among large numbers of people. Create eye-catching headings and include a simple presentation of the facts relating to your issue, as well as a clear statement of what you want your audience to do.
- **Dramatic, artistic or musical presentations:** The arts offer a great opportunity to appeal to people's emotions while educating and entertaining them. You might choose to write and present a play, create and show pieces of artwork or present a concert as way to attract public attention and raise awareness of the issue. Such events can also be held as fundraising opportunities.
- **Lectures or public speaking events:** Bringing your message to an audience can be done through a formal lecture or sharing information verbally in a public forum.
- **Working with the media:** Articles in newspapers can be very effective in educating and persuading the public to take notice of a problem. Local radio and TV stations are another possible means of sharing information with a large audience.
- **Social media:** Creating a website or sharing information via social media such as Facebook or Twitter can be effective in sharing information, particularly among younger audiences.
- **Conducting a flash mob:** A flash mob can attract attention and increase awareness and interest in an issue.

You will probably find a combination of these methods is best. For example, at a flash mob event it would be useful to have individuals passing out pamphlets or flyers to the audience that stops to watch the event. You might also have ideas of your own. Almost any method that will allow you to share information with an audience is fine if it is carefully planned in advance (following the guidelines for advocating for your plan) and adheres to laws and regulations.

## STEPS 8 AND 9: PREPARING AND DELIVERING A GROUP PAPER AND PRESENTATION

In the final steps of your project, you will write a paper and develop a presentation to deliver to your class. Each of these should define the problem and describe the selected plan of action. When defining the problem, it is important to demonstrate the problem exists. The best way to do this is to incorporate facts, data and examples you found through your research. Also be sure to clearly explain what the problem is for those who might not be familiar with the issue. In the second part of the paper, you will present your plan of action and explain why your group has chosen to pursue this plan.

Educating your classmates is also an important part of your project. Presentations should include all of the following elements:

- Explain the problem.
- Demonstrate there is a problem by sharing facts, data and examples.
- Describe some of the research methods that you used to educate yourself about the problem; for example, if you conducted interviews explain who you interviewed.
- Describe your action plan.
- Explain why you have chosen this course of action.
- Answer questions from you classmates.

Your peers are an audience you are seeking to educate, so you will also want to think about how you present your information to capture their attention. PowerPoint is useful when making presentations, but it is most effective when you follow a few simple tips:

- Less is more: Limit the amount of text on each slide to a few key phrases or facts. If there is too much text, the audience may spend time reading the slides rather than listening to you.
- The slides are not the presentation. Information on the slide should represent what you are saying, but should not take the place of your oral presentation. PowerPoint slides should serve to interest the audience so they pay attention to your information.
- Slides should capture the attention of the audience, therefore color and animation can be useful, but only if they are not distracting. Too much color or animation can become difficult

for an audience to absorb, and may actually lead them to lose interest in the presentation. Use these tools sparingly and only to interest the audience to listen to what you have to say.

- Visuals can be a very powerful way of getting an audience's attention. However, complex, detailed images such as data tables may require too much inspection by the audience, taking their attention away from your presentation.

How you speak to your audience is also very important. Your speech must be loud, clear and directed at listeners. Make eye contact with individuals and speak to different sections of the room so all feel included. If you are using notes during your presentation, it is important to look up every so often and connect with the audience. You also want to let your audience know you believe the issue is important, so you should show how passionate you are. Avoid speaking in monotone or a manner that suggests a lack of interest on your part. If you do not show you care about the issue, you cannot expect the audience to. Above all, practice your presentation before you deliver it. Practice will give you confidence, and confidence will help you speak persuasively.

## STEPS 10: REFLECTING ON YOUR EXPERIENCE

Experience teaches us and changes us. Sometimes we do not know we have changed until we reflect on the experience. Through the student action project, you should have learned new information about your topic. You probably also practiced and developed new skills as you progressed. Finally, you should have learned a lot about how you can use the resources and opportunities of democratic systems to bring change to your society.

In this last step, you will have an opportunity to reflect on these ideas. *Worksheet – Reflecting on My Experience* will guide you through this process.

# WORKSHEET 1

## BRAINSTORMING TOPICS FOR THE STUDENT ACTION PROJECT

Use the Table 1 first to aid you as you brainstorm ideas and prepare to learn more about issues. Table 2 can be used to help you reflect on what you learn from preliminary research and then select your issue for the student action project.

Once Table 1 is completed, you might want to divide the work to conduct preliminary research on the topics identified. Preliminary research is important to educate yourself about topics before you select one for your Student Action Project.

**Table 1**

COLUMN 1 Brainstorm topics by listing ideas (don't judge yet)	COLUMN 2 What questions do we have about this issue?	COLUMN 3 What sources can we use to learn more about this issue?

After you have conducted preliminary research, complete Table 2 before selecting the topic for you Student Action Project.



## WORKSHEET 2

### BIAS DETECTION

	Questions	Answer	Does this suggest bias? Why?
1.	What is the goal(s) of the organization or individual sharing the information?		
2.	Is there information provided about how the data was obtained and analyzed?		
3.	Are there multiple points of view presented?		
4.	Who is the intended audience?		
<b>Based on the responses above, answer each of the following questions (this can be done alone or with your group members).</b>			
	What do I/we assess the potential for bias to be?		
	What is the potential bias?		
	How should I/we use this data?		
	What else do we need to know?		

## WORKSHEET 3

### PREPARING A SURVEY

Taking the time to prepare before you conduct a survey will help ensure that you get information that is useful to your research. Answering the questions below and following the guidelines will help you to create well-constructed surveys.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What is the goal of the survey? Think through what you would like to learn from the survey. Your goals will help guide other decisions concerning the survey.

2. Who should the survey be given to? Think about the goal(s) you identified, what people are in a good position to provide the information you are seeking?

A. Will we try to identify a random sample? If so, what are our plans to do this?

B. Will we try to sample a cross-section of the population? What sub-groups should we identify?

C. If we don't plan to randomize and/or sample a cross-section of the population what will the implications be for our survey results?

3. Determine if you will need to create multiple surveys to administer to different groups based on your research goals. For example, if you have determined it is important to survey students and teachers when trying to learn more about an educational issue, should the same survey be used for both groups or should you administer different surveys to each group?

4. Look carefully at the identified goals and the guidelines for creating survey questions, then begin to create your questions.

A. Do the questions adhere to the guidelines?

B. Do the questions help you access the information you desire and to meet your goals?

C. Are there any questions we can eliminate?

5. How will we administer the survey? Consider potential pros and cons of various methods such as the use of technology, verbal surveys or written surveys.

## WORKSHEET 4

### PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

Taking the time to prepare before you conduct interviews will help ensure that you get information that is useful to your research. Answering the questions below and following the guidelines for conducting interviews will assist you in this process.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What is the goal of the interview(s)? Think through what you would like to learn from the interviews. Your goals will help guide other decisions while preparing for and conducting interviews.

2. Who should you interview? Think about the goal(s) you identified, what people are in a good position to provide the information you are seeking? Will it be important to interview people from different categories, such as, experts on a topic, individuals who are directly affected by an issue, friends or family members of individuals affected, politicians, individuals working for NGO's who are concerned with the issue? All of these individuals could provide insight and different perspectives on the issue. List all that you would like to interview and consider how you can contact them and ask for their cooperation.

3. Review the list you completed in question 2 and consider if the type of information you will seek from these people differs.

4. Based on your answers to questions 1, 2 & 3 determine the format you will use for the interviews and the questions you will ask. Be sure to review the guidelines for preparing for interviews.

5. Review your plans and questions to determine if they will help you to access the information you seek and to reach your goals.

6. How will you record the information from the interview?

## WORKSHEET 5

### HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

1. Review the circumstances of the problem you have been researching. What harms are the affected individuals suffering?

2. Analyze the harms identified in question 1 in terms of what you have learned about human rights. List any human rights issues you identify along with the law, treaty or convention that defines the right(s) in question. (If you determine that none of the harms involve a human rights issue, then you don't need to answer questions 3 & 4)

3. Identify the mechanisms that exist to remedy the abuses you have identified. List each human rights issue and the mechanism.

4. At this stage of your project, what actions would you propose should be taken to address the human rights issues you identified?

## WORKSHEET 6

# THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

1. Identify obligations of the Ukrainian government that you think are relevant to the issue you are researching.

A. Identify aspects of the Constitution that relate to your topic and the government's obligations to the people. Cite specific articles.

B. Identify laws that you think relate to your topic and the role of government.

2. Based on the research you have conducted about your problem, do you feel there are already adequate government provisions, either in law or constitutional protections, to address the problem you have identified?

If you answer yes to this question, then:

A. Identify the law or aspect of the Constitution that is relevant.

B. Try to explain why the problem persists if there is already a government remedy.

3. Consider what more needs to be done. To answer this question, you might need to conduct more research.

Then consider:

A. Is this a problem of enforcing the law? How do you know?

B. Is there a need to make changes to the existing law? What might these changes be?

C. Should there be a new law adopted? What should the new law require?

4. What would you propose at this stage in your project that the Ukrainian government should do to address the issue?

## WORKSHEET 7

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

What civil society organizations have we identified that are doing work to address issues associated with the problem we are researching?

List the organizations in the chart below. Complete the other columns as you learn more about the organizations.

Name of Organization	Actions taken to address the problem?	Is this organization succeeding in reaching their goals?	Do we want to work with this organization to reach our goals?

Based on your research and your answers above, what actions does your group propose taking with civil society to address the research issue?

## WORKSHEET 8

### INDIVIDUAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

Review the different methods described for how individuals can be civically engaged and consider what actions you could take to address the issue you have been researching. After identifying possible actions, you will analyze the options to help you determine which are best to reach your goals.

Some important points to consider when completing this analysis are:

- Which actions will have the potential to make a permanent change and improve the problem we are researching?
- Given the resources we have (time, money and manpower), which actions are most feasible for us to take?

Types of Civic Engagement	How could we use this method to help us address the problem we have been researching?	What are the possible benefits of using the method?	Are there any possible drawbacks?
Participating in a Group			
Connecting to Information and Current Events			
Political Action			
Economic Acts			
Service or Acts of Volunteerism			

After you have considered how you could use each method and what the benefits and drawbacks could be, determine which option(s) would be most beneficial to address the problem you are researching.

## WORKSHEET 9

### THINKING THROUGH THE STEPS TO DEVISE AN ACTION PLAN

Before deciding on any course of action, it is important to define your goal(s) in relation to the problem you have been researching. The problem might be so big and complex that no single action plan will be effective in offering a complete remedy however the goal(s) you identify should be directly linked to an aspect(s) of the problem.

1. In order to determine what aspect(s) of the problem you want to address, first list the issues you have identified during your research.

2. Review the issues you identified and decide which you most want to focus on through your action plan and list them here.

3. Write goals that are specific to the issues you identified in number 2. The goals should clearly identify the changes you would like to see occur. When goals are specific, it is easier to make plans to achieve them.

4. Now review the work you did in steps 3-6. For each step, you were asked to consider actions that should be taken to address the problem.

- Which of these actions do you think are best suited to help you reach the goals you identified in number 3?

- Do you need to make changes or take different actions from those you identified? If so, what actions do you now think are best?

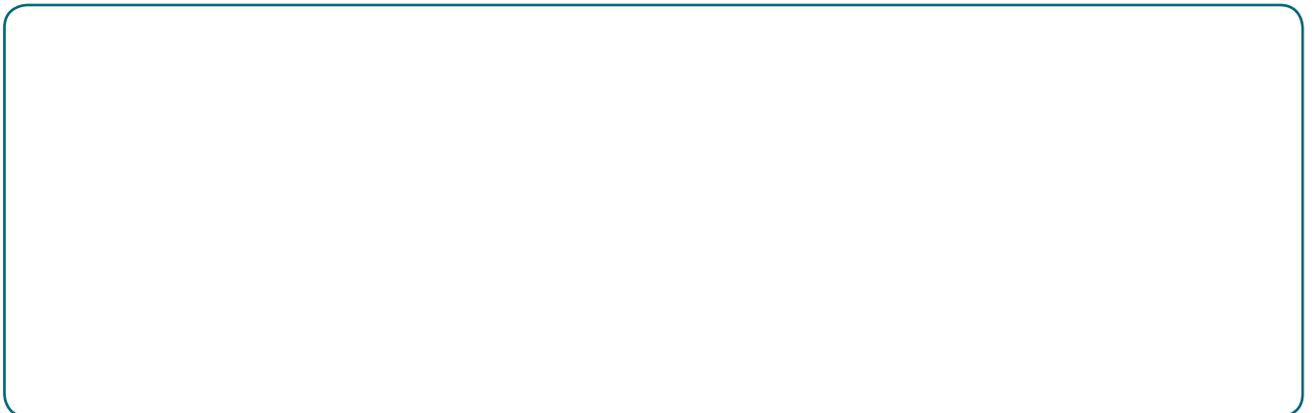
5. What resources will you need to implement the actions you identified in number 4? Be specific about financial needs, time and human resources that will be needed. It is important to be realistic about the resources you have available. Don't be worried if you don't have all the resources you anticipate needing, but consider options for how you can get more resources. For instance, you might find that you need to raise funds for a project. Or you may decide to work with an existing NGO and therefore benefit from their resources.



6. Develop a timeline of the steps you will need to take to implement your action plan. For example, you might plan to visit a government official(s), list when that should occur and what events should proceed and follow the visits. Sometimes opportunities present themselves on short notice and you might not be able to plan in advance for these, this is perfectly fine. This is only a plan to help you organize and think through what actions you will need to take. It is possible that your timeline will be modified more than once as you implement your plan.



7. You may find it best to divide responsibilities among the members of your group. Revisit the timeline and assign tasks to individuals in the group.



## WORKSHEET 10

### THINKING THROUGH THE STEPS TO DEVISE AN ACTION PLAN

1. The first step is to be clear about your intended audience and what you would like to achieve by sharing information with them. Answering the questions below will help you think this through.

Who is the audience we are sharing information with?

What is our goal in sharing information with this audience?

Is there a specific action we would like the audience to take?

Does this audience have interests or concerns that relate to our problem?

2. The next step is to prepare what information will be important to share with the audience. Answer the question below to prepare for this step.

What data and facts do we think are important to this audience?

What examples do we have that would interest this audience?

3. Lastly, you must determine the best method of capturing the attention of the audience and persuading them to support your plan. Review the methods to share information and answer these questions:

What method(s) do we think will be most effective in getting the attention of this audience?

What resources do we already have to implement this method? What resources will we need?

4. Plan for implementation by creating a timeline that identifies when, where and how information will be shared.

## WORKSHEET 11

### REFLECTING ON MY EXPERIENCE

Take some time to think back to when you first entered this course and began the project. Try to remember how you felt and what you believed about your own capacity to help make a change and about the democratic system you live in. Then consider if these ideas changed during the course and try to identify how and why. If you had no preconceived ideas at the beginning of the course, then reflect on your experiences and how they influenced you. After giving this some thought, answering the questions below may help you to clarify your ideas further.

1. Have my views on my role in society changed?

In what ways have my views changed?

What aspects of the experience do I attribute these changes to?

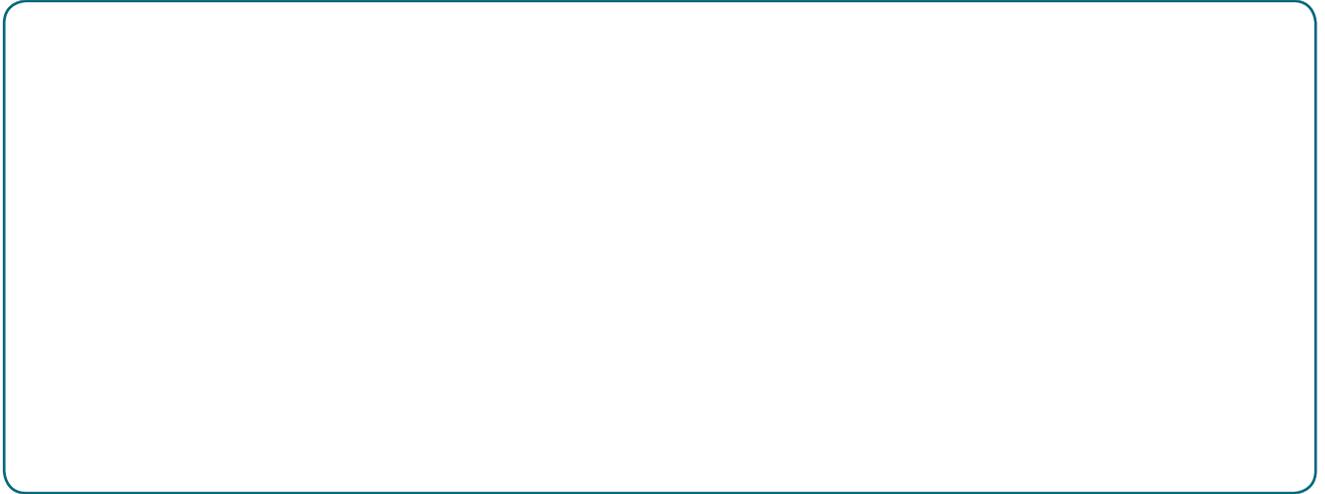
If my views on my role in society haven't changed, is there any reason I can point to explain this?

2. Have there been changes in how I view myself?

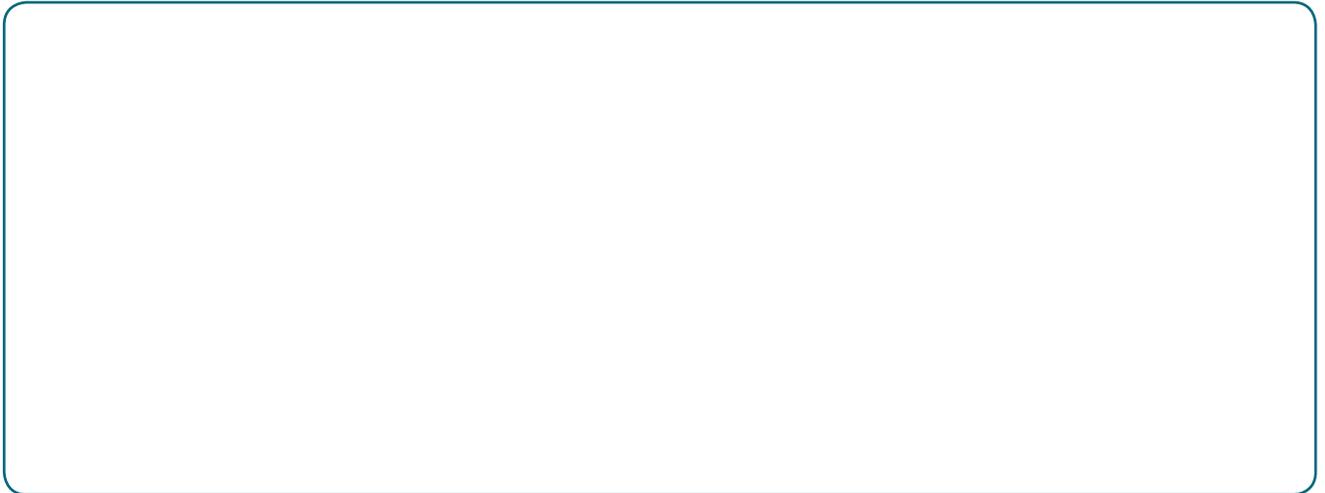
Have I discovered positive traits or characteristics about myself during this process?

Have I discovered characteristics or traits during the process that I would like to change?

3. What have I learned about creating change in society?



4. How do I think I will use this experience in my life after this course?



5. Is there anything else about the experience I think was important for me?





STUDENT HANDBOOK

# DEMOCRACY: from Theory to Practice



