

POL 333 Rubric for Research Paper

Dimension of Research Paper	Underdeveloped/ Minimally Developed	Somewhat Developed	Substantially Developed	Grade
Presenting research question	Has identified an appropriate question to be studied but lacks clear hypothesis (i.e. variables not clearly defined AND purported relationship not clearly stated).	Has identified an appropriate question to be studied but lacks clearly stated hypothesis (i.e. variables not clearly defined OR purported relationship not clearly stated).	Has identified a question to be studied and has a clearly stated hypothesis (i.e. variables clearly defined AND purported relationship clearly stated).	15 points
Quality and Variety of Sources	Uses few appropriate sources and some inappropriate sources.	Uses some appropriate sources.	Uses excellent variety of high quality sources.	5 points
Presentation of Findings in the Literature Focusing on YOUR independent and YOUR dependent variable – what is known in the literature?	Little attention to what is already known about the relationship under study. Presents a “laundry list” organization. Does not establish any links between the different sources.	Superficial attention to what is already known about the relationship under study. Develops some form of organization of sources. Establishes few links between the different sources. (i.e. why might have the authors come to different conclusions – different cases studied, time-frame under analysis.)	Careful attention to what is already known about the relationship under study – including attention to studies which look at countries outside the current research project. Develops a logical framework to organize different sources. Systematically compares and contrasts sources. (i.e. why might have the authors come to different conclusions – different cases studied, time-frame under analysis.)	10 points
Presentation of Variables and Cases	Provides a narrative of the cases which is NOT connected to the research question. Presents well-known information from a few sources with little attention to changes over time.	Provides a narrative of the cases which is somewhat connected to the research question. Presents a variety of information about the variables in the cases under study and some attention to changes over	Provides a discussion of the cases which is closely connected to the research question. There are clear links between the historical episodes or data being presented and the research question. Presents rich information about the cases with careful attention to	30 points

	<p>Consistently presents material which is not relevant for the dependent or independent variables.</p> <p>Does not clearly specify how the cases are classified with regard to the independent or dependent variable and how this changes over time.</p>	<p>time.</p> <p>Presents some material which is not relevant for the dependent or independent variables.</p> <p>Specifies how the cases are classified with regard to the independent or dependent variable and how this changes over time (i.e. low or high degree of government spending).</p>	<p>changes over time.</p> <p>All material presented is relevant to the research question under study.</p> <p>Specifies how the cases are classified with regard to the independent or dependent variable and how this changes over time (i.e. low or high degree of government spending).</p>	
<i>Evaluation and Analysis (might be integrated within another section)</i>	<p>Draws inferences which are not justified.</p> <p>Underdeveloped evaluation of the validity of the hypothesis.</p> <p>Does not weigh different pieces of evidences.</p>	<p>Some evaluation of the validity of the hypothesis but all information presented in the paper is not tied into the analysis. (i.e. how a certain policy or event supports or does not support the hypothesis in question)</p> <p>Tends to lump all the findings together and thus lack nuance in the analysis. Does not consistently weigh different pieces of evidences.</p>	<p>Draws sound conclusions from research and communicates a logical path from the data to the hypothesis.</p> <p>Presents a nuanced analysis. Clearly states when evidence (data, event, etc.) does not support hypothesis. Weighs evidence.</p>	30 points
<i>Conclusions</i>	<p>Does not relate findings to broader debate.</p> <p>Does not assess the validity of the findings in the study.</p> <p>Provides no insights into prospects for future research or alternative explanations.</p>	<p>Partially relates findings to broader debate.</p> <p>Incompletely assesses the validity of the findings in the study.</p> <p>Provides only a superficial look at prospects for future research or alternative explanations.</p>	<p>Clearly relates findings to broader debate.</p> <p>Carefully assesses the validity of the findings in the study (i.e. acknowledges that given this type of research design, it is not possible to “prove” that a relationship exists.)</p> <p>Clearly identifies space for future research and alternative explanations.</p>	10 points

Source: Washington State University Critical Thinking Rubric

(http://www.units.muohio.edu/led/Assessment/Assessment_Basics/Rubrics.htm) adapted for POL 333 by Rebecca Oliver (March 2008)