

Official Topic Proposal Directions

Answer the following prompts in a NUMBERED LIST. Write in complete sentences.

1. My topic is : [phrase or sentence describing topic]
2. My main focusing question for research will be:
3. Additional questions I plan to explore when trying to answer my focused question are:
(Note: These questions should not be tangential.)
4. This issue is relevant or related to our class' larger conversation about disasters, Katrina, etc. in the following ways:
5. I am currently considering the following two or three sources to use in my paper/project:
(Note: These must be specific people, places, organizations, or artifacts you've already found but still need to actually contact/read. Saying "I'm going to find an expert on this topic" is unacceptable. Naming the expert and how you plan to contact them *is* acceptable.) GIVE FULL MLA CITATIONS.

Grading: This will count as one of your Research Progress Reports—which, together, are worth 20% of your overall grade.

I'll grade you based on the following criteria, plus the letter grade criteria posted on the main blog:

- Does the student provide a clear phrase or sentence that sums up the topic he is working with? Is the topic narrow and specific--Did the student use guidelines from Ballenger to narrow down an appropriate topic for the assignment?
- Does the student list an appropriately narrowed, logical, intelligent, arguable and/or researchable focusing question?
- Does the student list logical additional questions?
- Does the student provide adequate, understandable, logical justification of how he arrived at the topic and how it links to our course inquiry?
- Does the student list specific sources?

STUDENT SAMPLE:

ARGUMENT SYNTHESIS

you're reading...

UNCATEGORIZED

Topic proposal

POSTED BY · MARCH 27, 2012 · [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

(1) My topic focuses on **the issue of governments using humanitarian aid organizations to achieve their political agendas in areas affected by war or conflict**. This poses a problem because aid organizations are neutral, independent entities that function exclusively from the government to avoid conflict of interests. (2) **The central question is whether it is possible in today's political climate for aid organizations to remain completely neutral and independent**

of their respective governments, and to remain completely unaffiliated with any particular country. (3) This issue brings up **several other questions, as well. What is the fundamental purpose of humanitarian aid? Is it possible to separate politics from humanitarian aid when the state of country is very much dependent on its government and political structure? Why are aid organizations becoming an increasingly effective means for governments to implement their political agendas?** Because of the fragile political balance in many weakened states affected by conflict or war today, and the complex nature of these conflicts involving several different groups, it is becoming increasingly difficult for such conflicts to be resolved quickly. Thus, governments involved may use more furtive, under-the-table methods of achieving their agendas. Humanitarian aid organizations present an effective means to do this because they can gain access to these countries on account of their neutrality, and aid organizations such as NGOs are liable to Western government foreign policies and often collaborate with these governments and intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank to find solutions for problems in other countries. In this way, many aid organizations are becoming a communication medium for governments, and are losing their neutral and independent status that has once granted them unrestricted access to countries suffering from crises and this has affected the distribution of aid to civilians in need of logistical assistance. A recent example of this can be seen in the Syrian conflict, and my research centers on a specific incident—the barring of aid organizations from entering Homs, the Syrian city most affected by the conflict.

(4) **This particular topic was derived from looking at the humanitarian crisis that occurred in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.** Much of this crisis stemmed from the lack of humanitarian response on the local and national levels. FEMA, the national disaster relief organization in the United States, was largely absent during and after the disaster; instead, humanitarian aid organizations from other countries extended their help. The lack of aid from the U.S. government hinted at its political agenda, which was to demolish public housing and implement several other changes that would have been impeded by humanitarian aid. Similarly, many international aid organizations are exploited by governments for the same purpose, albeit on a larger scale.

(5) **For primary sources, I will be contacting** Dr. Mehrzad Boroujerdi at the Maxwell School for an interview in person. Dr. Boroujerdi specializes in the Middle East and international relations, and I think he would be a good source in explaining the relations between the U.S. and Syria, and putting the conflict in perspective to get a better idea of the interests of both the Syrian and U.S. governments. **Another primary source would be** the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions, which lay out decisions voted on by members of the UN Security Council to maintain international peace and security. Since the UN Security Council has not yet drafted a resolution for the conflict in Syria, recent resolutions for other Middle Eastern nations like Afghanistan (S/RES/2041 (2012)) and Libya (S/RES/2040 (2012)) would provide a general idea of the U.S.'s interests, as it is one of five voting members on the Council.