



WikiLeaks Workshop

Background:

When the author received a book contract from Norton on the WikiLeaks cables, she realized that reading through a database of 251,287 cables would go faster with a team.

This led her to propose the “WikiLeaks Workshop” for CATS funding as a win-win proposition.

Students would gain valuable research expertise while she guided their efforts to divide and narrow what would have been an exhausting and time-consuming search.

While the students would not initially have her level of expertise and editorial judgment, she believed their skills would grow as they became increasing familiar with the data base.

Abstract:

This project used a small team in the Global Studies and International Relations program to analyze leaked U.S. embassy cables for use in an upcoming book on American Diplomacy between 2006-2010. The cables underscored the thesis that there was a disconnect between policymakers in Washington and policy implementers overseas.

Research/References:

The project involved searching through the 251,287 WikiLeaks cables released to the public by Julian Assange, some of which were published in The New York Times and European media.

WikiLeaks has an Internet presence, www.cablegatesearch.net, which features a database that is searchable by country, date, cable title, embassy and/or consulate, and by keyword. Most of the cables were written between 2006-2010.

To date, there have been no scholarly books about the WikiLeaks diplomatic cables.

Several media companies have published compilations of the cables, and some of those associated with the WikiLeaks project have published books about their own experiences, and the event was popularized by a film, “The Fifth Estate.”

The U.S. government still considers the material classified, so no working diplomats have yet commented on the contents of the cables.



Goals:

- Provide outstanding students in the Global Studies and International Relations program with an opportunity to work with a professor conducting original research.
- Show students concrete, applied examples of how U. S. foreign policy is implemented overseas.
- Use primary source material written by working diplomats.
- Learn techniques performing textual analysis.
- Learn to work in small teams.
- Observe how small pieces of research can be compiled into chapters of a book.

Details:

Each week for the 10-week project duration, the instructor provided a set task for the student researchers, corresponding to a chapter in the book. Some examples included anti-Americanism, corruption, biographic reporting, and crises.

Students further narrowed the task by focusing on selected countries, topics, and certain keywords. Student read through dozens of cables, noting those that were the most salient. They then provided short summaries of those cables.

The instructor then shared draft chapters with them, so they could see how their research was incorporated.

The student researchers also constructed a timeline of world events between 2006-2010, to be used in a chapter on crises.

They also searched for examples of anti-American cartoons from around the world to be used to illustrate the chapter on anti-Americanism.

Outcomes:

- Students learned to read and interpret embassy reporting cables.
- Students gained insight into some of the defining issues confronting contemporary U.S. foreign policy.
- Students learned to analyze raw data for content that provided insights into embassy operations, assessments, and challenges.
- Students saw firsthand evidence of the disconnect between policymakers in Washington and the reality for policy implementers working overseas.
- Students will be mentioned by name in the acknowledgements section of the book.
- Students can add the title of Research Assistant to their cvs.

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