

Baumgartner
POLI 421, Framing
Fall 2016
Term paper ideas and generic feedback
November 1, 2016

Lexis-Nexis tips and reminders

Read through the hits you get and remember that any of the bits of information that appear at the bottom of your story are searchable. This includes place codes, including COUNTRY(), and often may include a very good SUBJECT() category. This might be very helpful to many of you. Play around with these and use them to their best advantage.

COUNTRY(United States)
SUBJECT(immigration)

Be careful with the years of coverage. Some of you want to go back before 1980. Look at the library's other resources, including local newspapers, or the New York Times Historical database. However, note that the search process and software will not be the exact same as in Lexis, so adjust according to the web site / product you are using. Each is proprietary and there is no standard, unfortunately.

Your spreadsheets and data presentations

If you have your keywords organized in your spreadsheet as I suggested before, you might move the columns so that they are in order:

Year

Baseline / Topic

Most Common positive search term

Second most common positive

Etc.

Negative search terms, also in order from most common to least common

Rename them from keyword1 keyword2 etc. to labels that can appear in your graphs. Best if you can use one-word labels.

Think about making combined totals: sum of all the positives, sum of all the negatives; ratio of positives to negatives, or whatever other mathematical functions make sense to show the relative share of attention to the individual frames, or to the positive and negative frames combined.

Kevin Roach will be in class on November 17 and will be available to help you with your spreadsheets. I will also provide some more calculations in a template spreadsheet for you.

Structure of the paper

Remember to structure the paper in a linear fashion, not in terms of the sequence of events that got you there. That is, start with a general statement of your question, explain your research methodology, justify and explain your choice of keywords, go through your results in an order that makes sense given the statement of your question, analyze the results, and conclude.

Feel free to use a table, for example for your keywords, something like this:

Concept	Keywords
Baseline	Subject(Capital Punishment)
First Frame	Subject(Capital Punishment) AND xxx
Second Frame	List out all the keywords in a table format like this, even if they get very long and the cells grow to cover many rows. Note that whatever labels you give for the frames in the first column here should be the same as in your spreadsheet and in your graphs. That way, when I look at the graphs, I can easily glance back at this table for one-stop-shopping of exactly what keywords correspond to the labels.

Include some estimate of the percentage of false hits in your keywords. This should be somewhere near where you explain what your final list of keywords is. It's ok to explain that you started with a baseline set of keywords then tested a series of additional keywords until you were able to read xx of the resulting stories and find greater than 80 percent were "true hits". Then, for each keyword, explain (maybe in a table), the number of stories you read, and the number which were true hits.

Number your Tables and Figures: Table 1 shows x. Figure 1 shows y. Figure 2 shows x. (This is preferable than "the graph below shows x because later you will be able to say: Figure 2 showed x, but here we see in Figure 7 that the story is more complicated. Numbering the Figures and Tables lets you more easily refer to them in the text.)

Some things NOT to do:

- Explain what you WANT to see, or what your PREFERENCE or BIAS might be. This is an empirical research project, not an opinion piece.
- Explain all the searches and research steps you took that failed, or which you have to revise and change before you hit upon the process that worked. Just explain what you actually present. A general rule: Write about what you do (in the final version of the paper); never write about what you do not do. I know this makes it seem like you get no credit for all the hard work that ended up just being frustrating, but that's how it goes! Believe me, it makes you look smarter if you just write it up without explaining all the detours, dead-ends, and wrong turns that you took on the way to knowledge! :)
- Use the word 'incredible' unless you actually mean that something lacked credibility. In general, there are many words that you might use in informal speech that have no place in the black and white of a research paper. Use formal language.