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Winning entry for 2019

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Connecticut College

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Respondent: **Mimi Crawford** Submitted on: Monday, February 25, 2019, 4:16 PM

Library Research Prize 2019: Application Form

During which semester was your research undertaken?

- Fall 2018

At approximately what level were you in your undergraduate studies when you completed this research? For example: Sophomore

- Senior

List or create a name for your paper/project/work. For example: Toward a Critique of New Technology: Rethinking Virilio and Haraway.

- The Cause of the Guatemalan Civil War

List the name/department and number of the course for which your research was completed. For example: Freshman Seminar: The Net Generation (FYS 145H)

- Civil Wars (GOV 329)

List the name(s) of the faculty member(s) for whom your research was undertaken. For example: Professor Jane Doe.

- Professor Andrew Levin

List your major/minor fields of study or interest. For example: Film & Philosophy double-major, French minor

- Economics and Government double-major

Which citation style are you using for your bibliography?

- MLA

Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you

consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?

The topic was assigned as part of the course syllabus. Students were required to write a paper analyzing the root causes of civil war in a nation. The civil war had to be either an ongoing conflict, or to have ended no more than approximately 20 years prior to 2018. Additionally, the conflict had to meet the definition of civil war, which is set by scholars of international conflict. Due to these specific parameters, the ability to conduct pre-research to choose the topic was severely limited. A list of civil wars throughout history, dating back to 1816 was provided by the professor for reference. Upon seeing the numerous options on the extensive list, I decided to narrow my choices by eliminating any non-Spanish speaking countries on the list. The reason for this was due to my interest in Latin-America as a region. After consulting with Professor Levin on the acceptability of studying the Guatemalan Civil War (the majority of the conflict occurred outside of specified date parameter), I eventually settled upon Guatemala due to knowing several people who are either from Guatemala or have close ties to the country.

Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: "Ebsco," being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the "library database" is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)

I began my research by scheduling a consultation with the reference librarian, Andrew Lopez. He demonstrated various research methods to me and pointed out different sources of information. First, I utilized OneSearch's advanced search feature by typing in various words and combinations of words to alter the search results. For example, I began with "civil war guatemala", to return results most relevant to civil war generally and Guatemala as a nation. After getting numerous results related to the conduct of fighting, I began introducing more specific terms such as "causes" and "reasons". Then, I focused on terms from theoretical perspectives on the causes of civil war, such as economics and grievances. To increase the number of relevant search results I truncated various terms, anything related to economics became "econom*". Additionally, I searched for specific persons who played a pivotal role in Guatemalan politics with the names "Castillo" and "Arbenz". I applied these strategies to Google Scholar, JSTOR, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Political Science Complete, and Avalon. This lead me to helpful websites, articles, and a working paper published by a graduate student at the University of Illinois. Books in the library were crucial to my paper. I used the call number for Guatemala, F146 and the general J for political science. The

Statesman's Year-Book was retrieved from the Dewey Book Collection in the basement. Additionally, I used the CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room to view archives of declassified government documents pertaining to Guatemala.

Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?

Evaluating the resources to be used was based on several parameters. First and foremost, the resource had to be from a reliable and reputable source. Articles were only considered if they were peer-reviewed, websites had to be tied to a nonpartisan organization or NGO, and books had to be published by academics. Second, to be worthy of inclusion, the resource had to focus on the underlying factors that caused civil war in Guatemala, not on the conduct of civil war, the mobilization of fighters, nor the conditions during the war. To be relevant to the assigned paper topic, the resource also had to be able to fit within one of the five theories of the causes of civil war- international dimensions, state capacity, greed, ethnic identity, or grievances. If the information in a resource could not be synthesized into one of these five frameworks, it was not included. The abstract was the first thing I read in order to determine if a resource fit the parameters. If it did, then I saved the search result by pinning it to my favorites in OneSearch. After saving several resources from search results, I read specific excerpts of the text to determine if it could be used. I looked at the index in books and searched online papers for terms that could indicate pertinence to the theories of causes of civil war, such as "capacity", "conflict", "economics", "ethnic", "greed", and "grievances". Not many resources fit the parameters, but those that did were included.