

Poverty, Justice, Human Capabilities Program Wikipedia Assignment

CONTRIBUTING TO WIKIPEDIA: OVERALL GUIDELINES AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Wikipedia has increasingly become the first resource many internet users consult whenever they encounter an unfamiliar topic. This reliance on Wikipedia is simultaneously exciting in its potential to democratize the availability and production of knowledge and troubling given the possibility that inaccurate, and even malicious, information will be spread and reinforced through the site.

This semester you will have the opportunity to intervene in these debates by participating in the construction and revision of Wikipedia sites relevant to the themes of this course. For this assignment, you will propose and then carry out either a substantial revision of an existing Wikipedia entry by rewriting it and creating additional sections, expand a “stub” for a topic that is not sufficiently covered on the site, or create an entirely new entry. (Since new sections added to existing entries receive far more traffic than completely new entries, which can be orphaned in Wikipedia, you will need to provide a justification if you propose to create a new entry rather than revise or expand upon an existing entry.)

Through this assignment, you will have the opportunity to educate readers about the topics discussed in class and be part of a worldwide conversation about these issues. Most immediately, during the semester you will join the Article Discussion page and WikiProject page, under which your entry falls, and participate in the discussion.

The Five Pillars of Wikipedia

Wikipedia operates under five fundamental principles that should be kept in mind while you are planning and writing your entry. They are:

1. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia, not an advertising platform, an indiscriminate collection of information, or a dictionary.
2. Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view (NPOV). Wikipedia avoids advocacy and aims to present issues in a balanced and impartial manner instead of sparking debate and controversy. All articles must strive for verifiable accuracy using references; unreferenced material may be removed.
3. Wikipedia is free content that anyone can edit, use, modify, and distribute. Since all contributions are freely licensed to the public and no editor owns any article, contributions can and will be edited and redistributed.
4. Editors should interact with each other in a respectful and civil manner. When discussing articles with fellow Wikipedians, avoid personal attacks, avoid edit wars, and assume good faith on the part of others.

5. Wikipedia does not have firm rules. Because rules in Wikipedia are likely to change in wording and interpretation, be bold in updating articles and do not worry about making mistakes.

Sources and Verifiability

If your chosen topic has been a matter of public debate, you may encounter a variety of opinion or blog pieces about your topic. Do not use these as your sources. Instead, find articles by researchers who have conducted studies or provided scholarly analyses of your topic. Legitimate research can be found in articles and policy papers by trained specialists such as economists, sociologists, and anthropologists or in investigative pieces by respected journalists who conduct in-depth research on a particular topic. Your course readings are excellent sources for your entries. By using the citations at the end of these readings, you can find additional resources for your entry. Scholarly journals relating to the course material may also provide useful sources. You may search for such sources via Google Scholar or IDEAS or by journal title. For information on citations, please see

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:CITATION>

and

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_templates

Be aware that your entry will likely be deleted if it is deemed “original research.” (See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research.)

Thus, you cannot include your own observations of a phenomenon or your own new theories or opinions on the research in your entry. Instead you need to summarize and cite the work of other researchers, showing how their theories and evidence illuminate the subject of your entry. (See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>.)

Maintaining a Neutral Point of View

Your work will be original in the sense that you are compiling information and studies relevant to your topic, choosing what to include, and suggesting how the different studies or pieces of information relate. However, your tone must be neutral and evenhanded, so as to appear factual and based on the scholarship of others, rather than in the form of presenting your own innovative ideas and scholarship.

Read the following Wikipedia articles for more information on maintaining a neutral point of view (NPOV). These pages extensively cover information, tactics, and resource information for how you can be sure your contribution content is neutral and conforms to Wikipedia’s guidelines.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Words_to_avoid

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view/FAQ#There_27s_no_such_thing_as_objectivity

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Describing_points_of_view

See also:

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/intersection/2010/01/15/blinded-by-science-how-balanced-coverage-lets-the-scientific-fringe-hijack-reality/>

Additionally, a good article meets the following criteria. Bear these in mind as you plan your contribution, whether you are revising and adding new sections to an existing article or creating a new one.

Wikipedia: The Perfect Article:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:The_perfect_article

Guide to writing better articles:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Guide_to_writing_better_articles

Countering systemic bias:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Countering_systemic_bias

Grading:

To receive an A, entries must meet all of the criteria below.

1. *Thesis and Analytic Focus:* Is the contribution on a manageable and focused topic that can be addressed with detailed scholarly support? (Contributions on overly broad topics are discouraged as these can be difficult to do well.)
2. *Content and Analysis:* Does the contribution include a reasonable outline for the material that fully covers the topic, relevant issues, and key debates? (Note: you can propose more sections than those you actually write.) Are the points well supported by evidence with sufficient references and analysis? Does the contribution consider a variety of perspectives rather than relying on just the point of view of one or two scholars? Does the contribution take an appropriate tone in providing competing points of view? Are nuances and subtle distinctions clarified appropriately?
3. *Wikiproject and Article Discussion responses:* Does the contribution adequately take into account responses to posts by the contributor (you) to WikiProject and Article Discussion pages?
4. *References and attributions:* Are all claims supported where appropriate with references,

and are sources represented accurately, with references following an approved form? Is language precise, so that sources do not overstate claims and represent the nature of studies and the evidence provided? (For example, instead of writing that Source A “says” or Authors C and B “write”, supportive references are presented with such phrasing as “[Author A] compiled survey results taken from 100 women to show...”).

5. *Links*: Does the entry link to a wide variety of other entries? Are there sufficient links to relevant related topics?
6. *Organization and style*: How well written is the entry? Does it have a clear focus and is it well organized? Are the paragraphs well structured?
7. *Language*: Are sentences carefully crafted to be clear, avoiding passive voice and grammatical errors? Is the entry accessible to Wikipedia’s broad audience, including people from different educational levels, backgrounds, nationalities, and expertise in English? Is complex language avoided when simple words and sentences will express the same idea clearly and concisely?
8. *Mechanics*: Does the contribution follow the appropriate Wikipedia style? Has the entry been proofread to remove typos, wording errors, misspellings, etc.? Has the submitted entry followed the proper formatting details of Wikipedia? Is the entry legible when printed and in 12pt font?
9. *Response to Previous Comments*: Have previous comments made on the proposal, and by others on the WikiProject and Article Discussion pages, been taken into account and adequately addressed?

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