**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
Research Methods Posc 302**

RESEARCH ON THE DESKTOP

I.   TODAY'S SESSION:
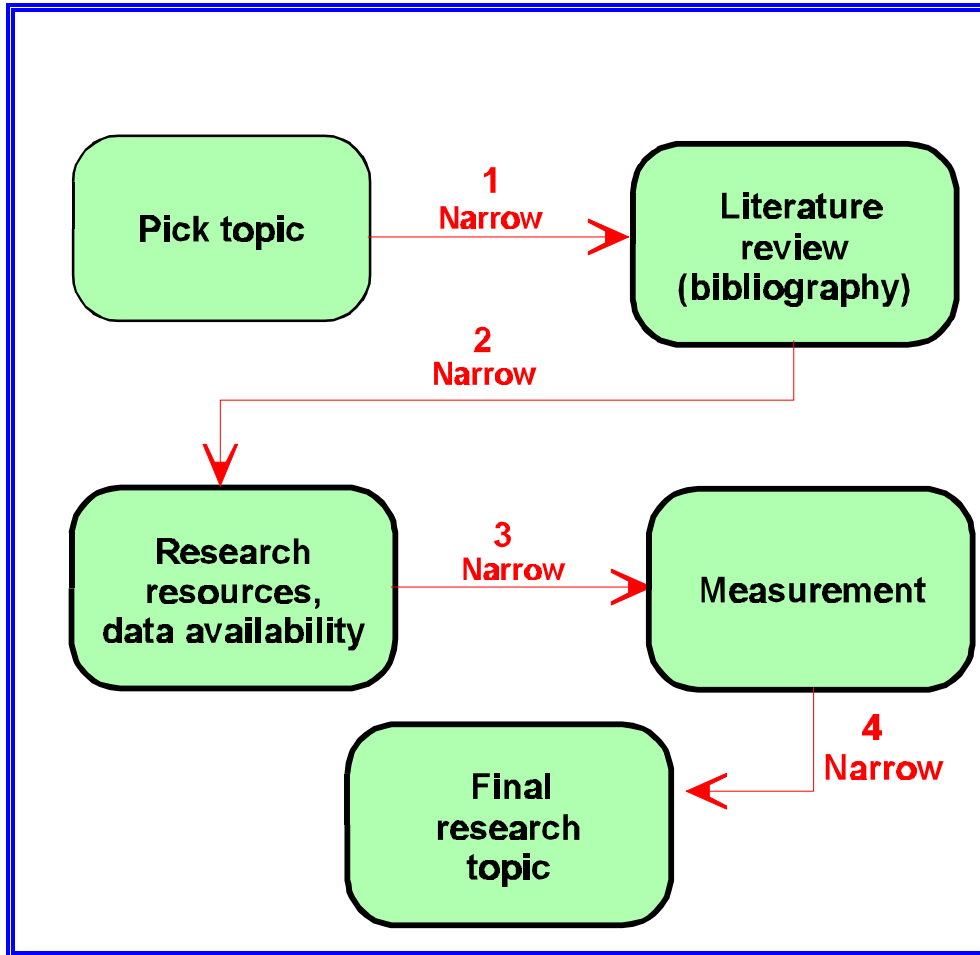A.   Narrowing a research topic
1.   Narrowing as an iterative process
B.   Literature review
1.   Using the net to search for background information
i.   Effect search strategies
C.   Side trip: making sure everyone uses desktop computing effectively.

II.   RESEARCH TOPICS:
A.   Advising the First Lady
1.   Background: as we discussed last time, Hillary Clinton may be in a bind.
i.   Here again is the excerpt from the Times that motivated the problem:
1)   "The President's [Clinton's] offer of clemency on Aug. 11 for the Puerto Ricans raised questions about whether he made the offer to help his wife, who seems all but certain to run for the Senate from New York, to curry favor with New York's 1.3 million Puerto Ricans. The offer prompted outrage from a wide range of people, including law enforcement officers and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Democrat whom Mrs. Clinton seeks to replace. Clinton's action may have hurt his wife's campaign more than helped it, and on Saturday, she released a statement from Camp David, where the couple was vacationing in private after their more public vacation in New York last week, saying the President should immediately withdraw his offer. That, in turn, set off its own firestorm of criticism today among many of New York City's prominent Hispanic residents.
2.   Our task: what advice should we offer:
i.   We need to narrow the project to two or three questions or issues:
1)   Where does she, a Democrat, stand with Latino or Hispanic voters?
2)   What position, if any, do (will) Hispanics take on the issue of clemency for the Puerto Rican naitonalists?
3)   What is their rate of turnout?
a)   How does it compare to whites and other ethnic groups?

                    b)   When income, education, age, and other factors are taken into account, what is the comparative rate of participation?

                    c)   Does she need to pay attention to this group?

        3.   Actually we'll need to narrow the subject further for purposes of this illustration.

    B.   A tip: try to find a controversy that you can resolve.

        1.   Example: using the search tools listed below I found two arguments about the rate of Hispanic participation in American elections:

            i.   On the one hand, "While last week's mayoral election was marked by a generally sparse turnout, an unexpectedly large number of Hispanic residents cast ballots, suggesting that the Hispanic vote in New York City is turning into a formidable force -- one that is not necessarily aligned with the Democratic Party." (Clifford J. Levy, 1997 N.Y. Times News Service, quoted in Latino Link, "NYC's Hispanic Voters Emerge as a Powerful and Unpredictable Force," at http://www.latinolink.com/news/news97/1108nhis.htm

            ii.   On the other hand, "A U.S. Justice Department attorney came to the city this week to investigate whether local elections have discouraged Hispanic voter participation, city officials said...The officials said Hart-Edwards asked them about low voter turnout among Hispanics, the hiring of minority poll workers, and the handling of bilingual ballots. The officials said Hart-Edwards asked them about low voter turnout among Hispanics, the hiring of minority poll workers, and the handling of bilingual ballots." (From Lexis: "The Associated Press State & Local Wire December 11, 1998, Friday, AM cycle.")

            iii.   The two articles, although not completely contradictory, suggest that the Latino vote may be decisive even though turnout is not high. The question then is: just what is the rate of voting and how will it affect the New York senate race.

III.   DEFINING A TOPIC AS AN ITERATIVE PROCESS:

    A.   Consider the following diagram:

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┌─────────────┐                    ┌─────────────┐
│             │      1             │  Literature │
│  Pick topic │    Narrow  ──────► │   review    │
│             │                    │(bibliography)│
└─────────────┘                    └─────────────┘
                    2
                  Narrow
                                          │
        ◄─────────────────────────────────┘
        │
        ▼
┌─────────────┐      3             ┌─────────────┐
│  Research   │    Narrow  ──────► │             │
│ resources,  │                    │ Measurement │
│data availability│                │             │
└─────────────┘                    └─────────────┘
                                          │
        ┌─────────────┐      4            │
        │   Final     │ ◄──── Narrow ─────┘
        │  research   │
        │   topic     │
        └─────────────┘
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1.   At each stage in research we will probably have to adjust (more than likely) limit our objectives.

    i.   But we always want to keep the subject relevant and important.

2.   We've discussed step 1.

3.   Step two involves a literature review: an analysis of what has already been published about the subject.

    i.   What does and doesn't need investigation.

    ii.   Importance

    iii.   Sources of data and other background material.

4.   As we've discussed and will see again, when we think about resources and available data we'll no doubt have to further limit the subject.

    i.   Example: its not going to be possible to conduct a survey of New

Yorkers at this **early** stage so we'll have to rely on national polls.
5.   Finally, as we translate the problem into "operations" or measurable concepts further narrowing will undoubtedly be required.

IV.   LITERATURE REVIEW:
    A.   What already been written about the subject.
    B.   Three types of background sources:
        1.   Scholarship (the best)
        2.   Journalistic accounts.
        3.   "Inside" opinion (e.g., politicians)
        4.   Common sense as seen in general writings.
    C.   Before searching:
        1.   Know the topic as well as possible.
            i.   Look in bibliographies and notes of textbooks.
        2.   Think about synonyms and related words for key terms
            i.   Hispanic: Latino, Latin American, ethnic groups.
            ii.   Voting turnout: participation, registration, elections
        3.   Define phrases rather than words.
            i.   Search for "Hispanic" is probably too general; "Hispanic voters" might be better.
        4.   Develop a plan and "stopping place."
            i.   "Relevant" hits and misses.
            ii.   When using an "automated" search tool (e.g., the Internet), most citations will not be germane or useful.
            iii. Keep a list (on Notepad or Wordpad or even paper) with dates in order to organize sources.
            iv.   If using the net, keep multiple screens open, one for word pad, one for the "search engine," one for "search tips."
    D.   Searching the Internet: Tips and strategies:
        1.   Use standard "search engines" available from browsers, Internet access and pages.
        2.   Always look at engine's search tips.
        3.   Usually the following techniques work. (But check.)
            i.   Here are some suggestions I cribbed from the Lycos site.
                1)   "Choose Your Words Wisely: Improve your search results by being specific." If you search just for "Hispanic" you will doubtlessly get much more information than you expected and almost all of it will be useless. Try instead "Hispanic voter" or "Hispanic registration" or "Hispanic political participation." Most search programs find only the documents that contain all of the words.

2) Again, from Lycos: "Consider International Spellings: Don't forget the "world" part of World Wide Web: international differences in spellings could be hiding useful information if you search using only your own preferences. On Broadway, it's "theater," but in the land of Shakespeare it's "theatre."

3) Many people suggest that you "bookmark" your search results by using your browser's standard key or button for making a bookmark for the "URL" or internet address..

4) I suggest instead using the cut and paste features of your browser and word processor to make a custom link.

   a) Be sure to include the URLs. See the examples.

5) Here's more ideas from Lycos. I've adjusted the examples [thus]. "Despite differences in each search engine's tools, there are tools that many search engines have in common. The following tools can help narrow your search:

   a) "Quotation marks: Sometimes you can add characters to your words or phrases to more closely define your intentions for the search engine. For example, enclosing a multi-word phrase in quotation marks tells the search engine to list only sites that contain those words in that exact order.

   b) "Plus and minus signs: If you type a plus sign (+) directly in front of a word, you are indicating that the word or phrase must appear in the search results [(for example, voting+Hispanic +United States)]. Similarly, a minus sign (-) indicates that the word or phrase should not be included in the search results [(Hispanics -foreign)].

   c) "Boolean operators: Boolean operators include AND, OR, AND NOT, and parentheses. To work, these operators must appear in ALL CAPS and with a space on each side.

      1) "AND - Similar to the plus sign, AND indicates that the documents found must contain all the words joined by the AND operator. [For example, to find documents that contain the words Hispanic, political, and participation, enter Hispanic AND political AND participation.]

      2) "OR - Documents found must contain at least one of the words joined by OR. For

                 example, to find documents that contain the word dog or the word puppy, enter dog OR puppy.

        3)   AND NOT - Similar to the minus sign, using AND NOT indicates that the documents found cannot contain the word that follows the term AND NOT. [For example, to find documents that contain the word voters but not the word British, enter voters AND NOT British.]

        4)   'Parentheses - Parentheses are used to group portions of Boolean queries together for more complicated queries. [For example, to find documents that contain the word Hispanic and either the word voter or the word registration, enter Hispanicet AND (voter OR registration).

     4.   Example:

           i.   This returned quite a few items, only a few of which were useful.

E.   Sources:

     1.   General and least useful:

           i.   Yahoo, Lycos, Goto.com, Netscape, HotBot, Excite, and so forth.

               1)   You can usually find them on your browser's search page.

     2.   Libraries and academic sites:

           i.   University of Delaware's "Library Networked Databases"

               1)   You probably have to be working at a University site or calling from within the "302" area code.

                   a)   To reach Delaware's electronic library resources

contact User Services for a quick adjustment to your browser. (http://www.lib.udel.edu/lndb/gen-camp.html.)

2) Lexis (http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe.)

3) "Jstor" (www.jstor.com)

   a) This is a great place to find academic articles that were published somewhat before 1995.

   b) Example:

Search JSTOR - Basic Search

| Search | Reset Search Form | OR | Go to the Advanced Search Form |

Search for:

hispanic   in full-text

AND

voting   in full-text

OR

                                  in full-text
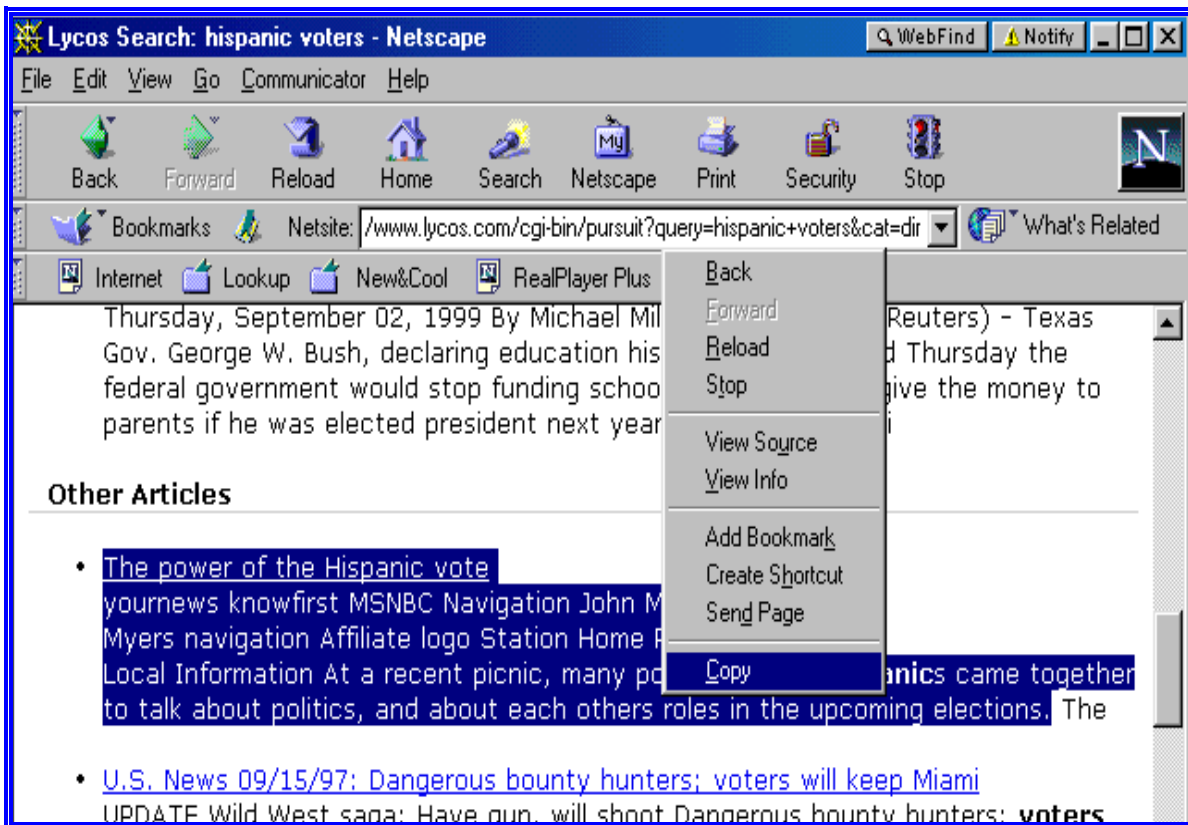
AND

                                  in abstract

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4) Carl Uncover (http://uncweb.carl.org/.)

ii. University of Michigan.

   1) Document Center: http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/docnews.html

3. Commercial and not-for-profit sources.

   i. See the course web page's "Polls and Surveys."

4. Raw data

   i. See the web page.

5. Time permitting we'll see some more examples.

V. DESKTOP OPERATIONS:

   A. Multiple windows.

   B. Notepad

   C. Drag to highlight

   D. Left click for options.

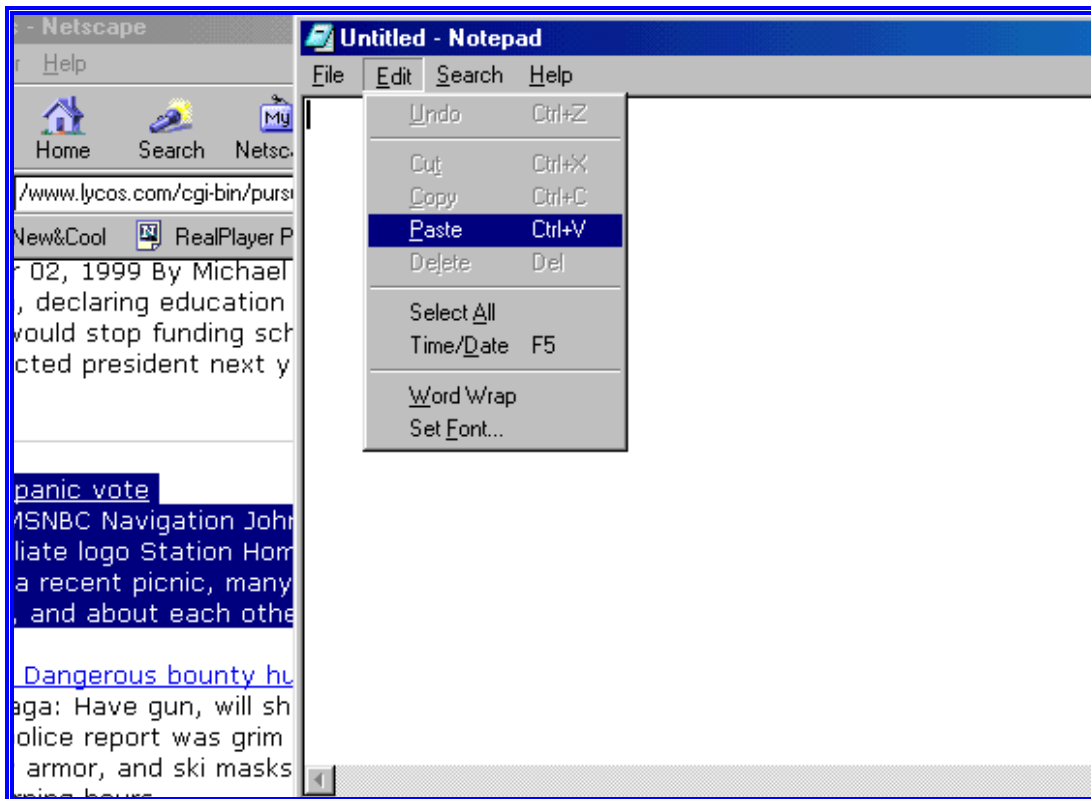   E. Examples:

1.   Here I'm just highlighting and cutting and pasting.

2.   Now I'll just paste it on the Notepad.
          i.   Next page.

VI.   NEXT TIME:
        A.   Additional examples of searching.
        B.   Reading:
                1.   Johnson and Joslyn, *Research Methods*, Chapter 6.