

Digital Portfolio

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Final Reflective Essay

Over the course of English 161 I feel I have improved my drafting process as well as gotten better at both giving and receiving feedback and utilizing said feedback to improve my work. I also greatly improved at conceptualizing writing for a specific audience rather than just writing for myself. I think my writing improved quite a lot between drafts, mostly due to the feedback from my instructor as well as some from my peers. I do not feel that my writing style changed all that much from the interface analysis project to the research project, however my drafting and revising process certainly changed throughout the term and I hope to develop it more as my college career continues.

The interface analysis project was the first assignment I have received where I really had to consider the audience, context, and setting I was writing for. In the past, I would usually just barge blindly into my first draft. For the interface analysis, I first wrote out my statement of purpose, as required. The statement of purpose really allowed me to narrow my focus, even to the level of the tone I was planning on writing in and the implications of my argument with current real-world events. Overall, the statement of purpose was surprisingly helpful, and I think I will be doing something similar even when not required on my future assignments. I was also able to utilize the statement of purpose to refine the rough outline I had drafted up, which I unfortunately no longer have access to. I basically had laid out all my arguments arranged into body paragraphs, as well as what I wanted in my intro and conclusion. From there I was easily able to blast through a rough draft, with lots of revision afterwards. By considering the audience and context before even beginning to type my draft, I was able to both streamline the drafting process as well as make more conscious rhetorical decisions than I usually would. For example, I chose a quite formal tone for my interface analysis project. I really wanted my ideas to not be

immediately dismissed by teachers and other academics and the best way to accomplish that seemed to be to gain their respect through grammatically correct and formal writing. I was also able to shape a lot of my paper around the pandemic and bring in the current events we are all facing, which is not something I would usually consider doing on a paper for class. Overall, adjusting to my specific audience, situation, and context improved my writing greatly and also helped improve my writing process so I can create better work with more ease.

I brought many of the skills I learned while writing the first paper forward into the research project. Although I was a bit tight on time for my rough draft and never fully wrote out a statement of purpose, I still considered the audience and context for the research paper. I also brought forward some research skills I had acquired in high school in order to effectively browse the web for scholarly articles. A lot of the Google Scholar stuff was also covered here in ENGL 161 and I think I was able to quickly find articles and papers that were useful to me. I ended up reading through three or four more papers than I ended up using since a lot of them covered the same information, but by reading the additional articles I was able to narrow down my selection of sources into the ones I trusted most and found contained the most useful information, rather than just using the first sources I came across. In the future, I would probably do a little more research on the author's behind these scholarly articles in order to make sure I am getting information from all sides of the debate and try to reduce the bias in my sources as much as possible. Because my draft was a little rushed, there was a lot of improvement to be made between my rough and final drafts. Since I did not receive much constructive feedback from my peers, I relied heavily on feedback from Mr. Jason Abad as well as the feedback my peers left on each other's papers. I specifically made sure to narrow the focus of my thesis statement and worked to connect all of the evidence I listed back to my thesis as best as I could. Due to external

reasons, I could not work on this paper quite as much as I had wanted too but I still tried to smooth out the transitions and make the work overall flow better. It helped a little, but definitely could have used a bit more work. During this unit I also focused on giving useful feedback to my peers since I noticed a bit of lack in the feedback I was receiving and wanted to try and get better at giving criticism, so I do not put others in the same situation in the future. I tried to use the sandwich method, placing a suggestion or revision in between a few compliments so that my peers would not feel dissuaded by negative feedback. I also tried to focus on helping my peers adjust their work to better appeal to the audience or context that they seemed to be shooting for. From the rhetorical processes we have been discussing throughout this course, I think I picked up some good lessons on how I can improve the feedback I give to my peers.

The advocacy infographic project was actually the first time I had been tasked with making an infographic of any sort really. I chose to do my work in Adobe Photoshop rather than in Piktochart in order to develop my skills, but I think most of the lessons I learned doing this project came simply from being forced to work in a different medium. For one, I had to consider a different audience. An infographic like this is meant to be spread on the web, which means it needs to pop out of the screen to be noticed and then also be quickly digestible in order to not lose the readers attention. In my first draft, my text was a bit dense and there was not a whole lot going on visually. Both my instructor and peers pointed out this flaw, and in my next draft I was able to spruce up the visuals and break the text apart a bit more in order to make it read easier. Now that I know I need to plan for differences like this, my drafting process for new mediums and genres will probably look a little bit different. Maybe instead of just jumping right in, I will first explore some prior works and see if I can find the constraints and criteria I need to work within before finishing up the rough draft. Overall, working in a new medium was pretty

intriguing, and since I was forming a previous work of mine into an infographic, I feel like I got to focus more on adapting to the new genre rather than having to worry about all the research again.

In conclusion, I believe that this course has shaped my outlook on the drafting and revising process quite significantly. I will certainly try to bring the skills I have picked up and honed in this course into my future works and can hopefully even hone these skills more as I get better and better at the project scoping and drafting process.

P1 Interface Analysis

Statement of Purpose

For the subject of my paper, I am choosing Zoom as a digital interface to analyze. I am going to be looking at Zoom in the context of the classroom and how it can be used as a digital education and communication tool. I hope that my paper will influence teachers and school administrators, especially since online education has become extremely prevalent during this pandemic.

My chosen audience, as I mentioned, is teachers and school administrators. My paper could also be relevant to workplace managers and others who want to host online meetings, but I will be focusing on the digital education aspects. While most are technologically adept, not all teachers have a good grasp on technology, and I hope I will be able to show them some of the easy to use features Zoom offers. I will need to make sure I do not use too much jargon so that people with different levels of experience with technology will be able to understand my writing. I believe Zoom is a tool that all educators should be aware of, especially during this pandemic where most education will be online for the foreseeable future. Even when we are past Covid-19, digital education will probably be more relevant now that more communities across the world have been forced into adopting it. Overall, I hope my audience of teachers and administrators will react positively to my paper and consider using Zoom in their classroom, or at least look more into it.

My primary goal for this paper is to complete your requirements in order to get a decent grade in this course, which will involve critically and thoroughly examining Zoom's interface design. However, I do intend to write the paper as if it will be distributed among teachers and

administrators, and if I have the opportunity to do so, I will. I do believe that Zoom is a useful tool and I would encourage all teachers to investigate it, although there may be other good options out there. I will not be focusing on comparisons to WebEx or others and will leave that as an exercise to the reader. My inspiration for choosing Zoom was pretty simple, it has been a tool that I have used constantly for the last six months and I can see its value in the classroom, especially during a pandemic or other time meeting in person is not ideal. I hope to both inform and educate teachers and others about Zoom and its application and features, and maybe even persuade them into implementing it into their education curriculum.

I do not expect my paper to actually make the rounds as I will not actively try to distribute it. However, if hypothetically the opportunity arose, I would want my paper to be distributed as an article among teachers and school administrators, perhaps on pages where educators frequent as well as in their social circles and emails. I plan on writing my paper quite formally, as I want my audience to perceive me as a credible source of information, and I expect that teachers would appreciate a well put together paper. I also want to emphasize Zoom's use during this pandemic, as I don't see it ending anytime soon and I want teachers to have a full arsenal of tools they are comfortable using in order to make sure the kiddos get the best education possible.

In summary, my primary audience is teachers and school administrators. I want to analyze Zoom from an educator's perspective and inform said educators on its ease of use and various features. Zoom is especially relevant now due to Covid-19 and I think that it's important to see its value during the pandemic. If possible, I want my paper to be circulated among teachers so they can all be informed and potentially persuaded to implement Zoom in their

classrooms. I plan on putting all of this together in a formally written essay so that those reading are more likely to think of me as a credible author.

Rough Draft

Zoom as a Remote Learning Tool

Due to the ongoing pandemic, 2020 has been the year of remote learning. When Covid-19 revealed itself to be a threat to our communities in early March, schools across the nation rushed to transition to online platforms in order to contain the spread of the virus. Due to its ease of accessibility, its range of simple to complex tools, and its ability to efficiently allow students to communicate with instructors and vice versa, Zoom quickly rose to the top. It has become one of the most popular platforms for remote learning in both primary, secondary, and post-secondary school settings, and for good reason. Zoom is a useful tool for teachers and other educators, as its powerful design and features attempt to imitate a real classroom and make it easy to facilitate remote learning when meeting in person is difficult or impossible.

Zoom is an online real time communication tool. It can be used with either small or large groups, with the default free plan allowing up to one hundred participants. There are a few license add-ons one can purchase, allowing a single call to support up to a thousand users. The host has the ability to designate co-hosts, which can help moderate and control large groups. Other tools the host can use for moderation includes limiting the ability of the participants to unmute themselves, removing disruptive users, and mute or unmute all users. The host has many different options to present during the call. They may share their screen to show slide shows or videos, which they can annotate over in real time, or they may choose to just show their webcam. Hosts can also split the call into “breakout rooms”, in which they place a small group of manually or randomly selected participants, who then have the opportunity to talk among themselves until the host calls them back. Both the host and co-hosts can then hop into any breakout rooms they choose to check in and answer questions and such. Another feature the host

can make use of is the ability to display a survey to all participants. The results of this survey can be seen by the host, who can then share the results with the rest of the class if they so choose. These surveys can be used to check for general understanding of the presentation, facilitate discussion, or even just to check if anyone is paying attention. The participants in a Zoom call also have many options to communicate with the host or co-hosts. Participants may send a variety of different emojis, allowing them to raise their hand, answer yes or no to a host's question, clap at the end of a presentation, or display other reactions to the host's content. There is also a chat box in which users can send messages to the host or other participants, or even everyone in the call. This wide array of features allows Zoom to be utilized in a multitude of ways, however some of the features appear to be particularly suited for remote learning and classroom use.

As a remote learning tool, Zoom has many different essential features. As mentioned, teachers and professors can present through video, webcam, or PowerPoint and other computer programs. They can annotate and write notes over their presentations, as well as even record their presentations for later viewing. These features are perfect for presenting lectures, especially when students are distributed across time zones, as the recorded lectures can be uploaded to YouTube or similar platforms and viewed at any time. The host can also allow students to share their screens, so they can present their projects or show an explanation to a question. In classrooms with young or rowdy students, the moderation tools can control disruptive behavior and maintain order in the classroom, while still allowing discussion when necessary. Class discussion can take place in chat, through surveys and reactions, or through the students' microphones either in the main call or in smaller breakout rooms. The breakout rooms can also allow students to split into pairs or groups to work on homework or group projects, or even

create one-on-one discussions with the teacher, professor, or teacher's assistants. After their normal classroom session, students can additionally set up their own Zoom call to continue working on a group project with their classmates. Finally, an educator could use Zoom during testing to make sure students are not using their phones or other external resources, although there are better programs to prevent cheating. Overall, Zoom has found its purpose as a remote learning tool during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, and now that it has its foot in the door, Zoom will probably continue to evolve its classroom-based tools.

While Zoom is also used in the workplace and for casual meetings among friends and family, its features are perfect for the classroom. During the pandemic, Zoom has certainly been adding these features in order to appeal to educators and education administrators.

Accommodating to teachers and students has been wildly successful, as Zoom is now the go to program for remote learning and classroom needs. Due to Zoom's extremely prevalent use in the classroom, it would be hard to imagine that the Zoom developers are not considering students and teachers as they add new features and capability. Because educators and students encompass a wide range of age and ability, Zoom needs to be both simple enough for the younger students and older instructors with less technological experience, as well as have enough features so that the tech-savvy users do not choose a more complex program. Zoom accomplishes this goal quite well, as setting up a simple meeting is fairly straightforward and can be achieved in just a few button clicks, and there are still many more advanced options for those who go digging for them. Students also cover a wide range of the socio-economic scale and may not have access to the newest technology. However, Zoom has accounted for this. One can tune it to a Zoom call from a Windows or MacOS desktop application, through a web browser on a public library computer, from either an Android or IOS phone or tablet app, or even by dialing in through a traditional

landline telephone. Zoom is accessible to anyone with any access to internet capable technology, allowing it to be used in school districts in both high income and low income neighborhoods. Zoom's audience and userbase of educators and students has undoubtedly influenced its ever-evolving list of features.

Zoom's interface has become the primary method of social interaction for some young students during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the main system through which students are being educated in the US during the 2020 spring and fall semesters. Due to this, the features of Zoom are highly influential on young and growing minds. One of the positive social aspects of Zoom is that it allows the instructor to split the call into breakout rooms of a few students each. In these breakout rooms, students can unmute themselves and share their webcams, as well as share their screens if necessary. Students are able to discuss or work on a group project and interact with other students. This helps bring some social interaction to the remote learning environment, which can be rather bleak and devoid of genuine human contact. Another thing that aids the classroom atmosphere is that the host can both present a slideshow or video while having their webcam on so that it feels more like the student is being actively taught rather than just viewing a pre-recorded video. The chat and emoji reactions allow students to interact with their instructor in real time, and students can even unmute themselves and speak up if they have a question or need clarification. Additionally, the built-in survey function allows the instructor to receive live feedback and check for understanding. Overall, Zoom's interface defines how students and educators interact in a remote learning environment, and with its current set of features there are many different ways to do so.

Zoom, with its powerful yet simple array of features, is a sufficient tool for remote learning during times where in-person meeting is discouraged. There are many options for

presentation and structuring of a Zoom call, many of which are not necessary for a basic session but can be quite useful in the hands of a technologically savvy instructor. Zoom has clearly developed its features with the classroom in mind and will most likely expand the variety of options available in the future. It is accessible to most people with a varying level of resources available to them and is therefore useful in both low income and higher income school districts. The interface of Zoom allows students and instructors to interact with each other through various methods and has shown itself to be useful in many different applications. Instructors and administrators who are not aware of Zoom should be encouraged to investigate it, as its variety of features can be utilized in many diverse ways.

Rough Draft Instructor Feedback

This is a good thesis. To push this further, however, you might specify what you mean by powerful design and features. What specific features that allow it to simulate the classroom experience will you examine in this paper?

What impact does this feature have on the interface's ability to simulate an in-person classroom environment?

Why does the interface provide this feature or what does providing this feature do if the main argument is that zoom simulates an in-person classroom environment?

Good.

There's some good analysis in this paragraph. Can you connect it back to your thesis, however? For instance, why does the ability to pair off make Zoom like a real classroom? Is that ability central to what makes a classroom a classroom?

Good job! This draft is well written and makes some great points! You've done an especially good job selecting portions of the interface as evidence to support your thesis.

For the final draft, I would encourage you; however, to try and make your thesis more pronounced in your introduction and to deepen your analysis of the interface.

Rough Draft Peer Feedback

Ryan Morfoot

Hi Matthew,

I really enjoyed your intro and closing statements. I thought they were well written and but a good frame around the paper. I think that your best paragraph was the one right before the conclusion. You went into how the tools help the students and not just explaining the tools. Sometimes while going through the paper I felt that you were just pointing out tools and not really analyzing. However, that can be fixed by just explaining how the tools you pointed out contribute to the effectiveness of Zoom. I think you laid a really nice groundwork for your paper.

Final Draft

Zoom as a Remote Learning Tool

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Mr. Jason Abad

September 23, 2020

Due to the ongoing pandemic, 2020 has been the year of remote learning. When Covid-19 revealed itself to be a threat to our communities in early March, schools across the nation rushed to transition to online platforms in order to contain the spread of the virus. Due to its ease of accessibility, its range of simple to complex tools, and its ability to efficiently allow students to communicate with instructors and vice versa, Zoom quickly rose to the top. It has become one of the most popular platforms for remote learning in both primary, secondary, and post-secondary school settings, and for good reason. Zoom is a useful tool for teachers and other educators, as its powerful design and features, such as breakout rooms, presentation tools, and surveys, attempt to imitate a real classroom much better than a normal video call and make it easy to facilitate remote learning when meeting in person is difficult or impossible.

Zoom is an online real time communication tool. It can be used with either small or large groups, with the default free plan allowing up to one hundred participants. There are a few license add-ons one can purchase, allowing a single call to support up to a thousand users. The host has the ability to designate co-hosts, which can help moderate and control large groups. Other tools the host can use for moderation includes limiting the ability of the participants to unmute themselves, removing disruptive users, and mute or unmute all users. The host has many different options to present during the call. They may share their screen to show slide shows or videos, which they can annotate over in real time, or they may choose to just show their webcam. Hosts can also split the call into “breakout rooms”, in which they place a small group of manually or randomly selected participants, who then have the opportunity to talk among themselves until the host calls them back. Both the host and co-hosts can then hop into any breakout rooms they choose to check in and answer questions and such. Another feature the host can make use of is the ability to display a survey to all participants. The results of this survey can

be seen by the host, who can then share the results with the rest of the class if they so choose. These surveys can be used to check for general understanding of the presentation, facilitate discussion, or even just to check if anyone is paying attention. The participants in a Zoom call also have many options to communicate with the host or co-hosts. Participants may send a variety of different emojis, allowing them to raise their hand, answer yes or no to a host's question, clap at the end of a presentation, or display other reactions to the host's content. There is also a chat box in which users can send messages to the host or other participants, or even everyone in the call. This wide array of features allows Zoom to be utilized in a multitude of ways, however some of the features appear to be particularly suited for remote learning and classroom use.

As a remote learning tool, Zoom has many different essential features. As mentioned, teachers and professors can present through video, webcam, or PowerPoint and other computer programs. They can annotate and write notes over their presentations, as well as even record their presentations for later viewing. These features are perfect for presenting lectures, especially when students are distributed across time zones, as the recorded lectures can be uploaded to YouTube or similar platforms and viewed at any time. The host can also allow students to share their screens, so they can present their projects or show an explanation to a question. In classrooms with young or rowdy students, the moderation tools can control disruptive behavior and maintain order in the classroom, while still allowing discussion when necessary. Class discussion can take place in chat, through surveys and reactions, or through the students' microphones either in the main call or in smaller breakout rooms. While the surveys are not specifically imitating a classroom experience, they do allow for ease of engagement from the students. Engaging with the instructor in a Zoom call can be rather intimidating for students,

much more so than in a regular classroom, due to the lack of usual interruption that one might experience in a physical room. The surveys allow the students to engage and the teacher to receive feedback that they may not otherwise get over a video call. The breakout rooms can also allow students to split into pairs or groups to work on homework or group projects, or even create one-on-one discussions with the teacher, professor, or teacher's assistants. The ability to work with all of your peers and your instructor, who is able to answer questions and clarify instructions, is one of the main benefits of working in a classroom. Without the aspect of interaction, you might as well be watching an uploaded video, but Zoom imitates the normal daily interactions of a classroom quite well. After their normal classroom session, students can additionally set up their own Zoom call to continue working on a group project with their classmates. Finally, an educator could use Zoom's live video during testing to make sure students are not using their phones or other external resources, although there are better programs to prevent cheating. Overall, Zoom has found its purpose as a remote learning tool during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, and now that it has its foot in the door, Zoom will probably continue to evolve its education-focused tools so that it may more effectively imitate all the important social aspects of a classroom.

While Zoom is also used in the workplace and for casual meetings among friends and family, its features are perfect for the classroom. During the pandemic, Zoom has certainly been adding these features in order to appeal to educators and education administrators.

Accommodating to teachers and students has been wildly successful, as Zoom is now the go to program for remote learning and classroom needs. Due to Zoom's extremely prevalent use in the classroom, it would be hard to imagine that the Zoom developers are not considering students and teachers as they add new features and capability. Because educators and students encompass

a wide range of age and ability, Zoom needs to be both simple enough for the younger students and older instructors with less technological experience, as well as have enough features so that the tech-savvy users do not choose a more complex program. Zoom accomplishes this goal quite well, as setting up a simple meeting is fairly straightforward and can be achieved in just a few button clicks, and there are still many more advanced options for those who go digging for them. Students also cover a wide range of the socio-economic scale and may not have access to the newest technology. However, Zoom has accounted for this. One can tune it to a Zoom call from a Windows or MacOS desktop application, through a web browser on a public library computer, from either an Android or IOS phone or tablet app, or even by dialing in through a traditional landline telephone. Zoom is accessible to anyone with any access to internet capable technology, allowing it to be used in school districts in both high income and low income neighborhoods. Zoom's audience and userbase of educators and students has undoubtedly influenced its ever-evolving list of features.

Zoom's interface has become the primary method of social interaction for some young students during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the main system through which students are being educated in the US during the 2020 spring and fall semesters. Due to this, the features of Zoom are highly influential on young and growing minds. One of the positive social aspects of Zoom is that it allows the instructor to split the call into breakout rooms of a few students each. In these breakout rooms, students can unmute themselves and share their webcams, as well as share their screens if necessary. Students are able to discuss or work on a group project and interact with other students. This helps bring some social interaction to the remote learning environment, which can be rather bleak and devoid of genuine human contact. Another thing that aids the classroom atmosphere is that the host can both present a slideshow or video while

having their webcam on so that it feels more like the student is being actively taught rather than just viewing a pre-recorded video. The chat and emoji reactions allow students to interact with their instructor in real time, and students can even unmute themselves and speak up if they have a question or need clarification. Additionally, the built-in survey function allows the instructor to receive live feedback and check for understanding. Overall, Zoom's interface defines how students and educators interact in a remote learning environment, and with its current set of features there are many different ways to do so.

Zoom, with its powerful yet simple array of features, is a sufficient tool for remote learning during times where in-person meeting is discouraged. There are many options for presentation and structuring of a Zoom call, many of which are not necessary for a basic session but can be quite useful in the hands of a technologically savvy instructor. Zoom has clearly developed its features with the classroom in mind and will most likely expand the variety of options available in the future. It is accessible to most people with a varying level of resources available to them and is therefore useful in both low income and higher income school districts. The interface of Zoom allows students and instructors to interact with each other through various methods and has shown itself to be useful in many different applications. Instructors and administrators who are not aware of Zoom should be encouraged to investigate it, as its variety of features can be utilized in many diverse ways.

Reflective Memo

In my interface analysis paper, my main goal was to show the reader how Zoom is a tool that can effectively replace and imitate a classroom. I believe my paper was well aimed at my intended audience of teachers, instructors, and school administrators, but I am not sure it was as persuasive as I originally intended. I still think I overall followed my statement of purpose, as I did show that Zoom could replace most aspects of a classroom, especially when you consider how many more features it has over a standard video call. At first, I had focused more on just the tools that Zoom offers, but after some solid feedback from both you and my peers, I realized I needed to go more in-depth on the actual classroom imitation part. Once I had elaborated on how exactly the specific features can imitate a classroom, my purpose had been accomplished. I do not think this paper will actually end up reaching instructors other than yourself, but if it were in the hands of a teacher or school administrator, I am sure they would at least consider using Zoom in their digital learning curriculum.

One of the decisions I made early on was to write in a formal manner. I chose a formal tone with my audience in mind. School administrators and professors are not exactly thought of as those who would appreciate a paper filled with slang and other casual devices, although I am sure there are exceptions. I did notice some of the other papers were written very informally, and it actually worked quite well for some of them, but I am glad I kept mine formal overall.

Although we did not cover it in our reading, I believe this uses the Greek rhetorical appeal Kairos, or choosing an appropriate tone and topic for the situation. Another decision I made was specifically to analyze Zoom in the context of the classroom. Zoom is a tool that could be used in families, friend groups, business meetings, or a number of other situations that are not the classroom. However, I am a student, and my experience with Zoom has been during a time

where remote learning is a critical aspect of controlling this pandemic. Because of this, I knew that I would be able to understand why some features of Zoom are useful to a classroom better than other situations. I was also hoping it would give me at least a little credibility, surely my audience is much more likely to listen to someone with firsthand experience than some random corporate guy convincing them to use his product. Overall, I think these choices did help me reach my audience better and follow through with my statement of purpose.

I was able to demonstrate my rhetorical awareness of audiences, situations, and context in my analysis. My analysis of Zoom was very context aware, it relied on the current pandemic, my experience as a student, the audience of school administrators and teachers who are in search of tools that can facilitate remote learning, and Zoom itself as an emerging program whose stock price has increased around 8x in the past year as it exploded into the market. I do not think such an analysis would have been useful without the current situation we are all facing in 2020. I also think I was able to critically think about writing and rhetoric through reading, analysis, and reflection. I want to focus on reflection, as unlike in the past where I have just done my paper to get it over with and not really revised or edited at all, I think this time I was able to take both your feedback and the feedback of my peers and really improve my analysis. Specifically, I was able to turn my list of Zoom tools into an analysis of how those tools help Zoom better imitate a classroom.

In conclusion, I think I stayed on the track my statement of purpose laid out. My design choices aligned well with my intended audience and I met the rhetorical goals I set for myself. I also think I was able to demonstrate the course outcomes fairly well, but I will not know for sure I guess until I see my final grade.

P2 Researched Argument Essay

Rough Draft

Russia's Interference in the future of Democracy

In the past 4 years, a lot of investigation around Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election has occurred. According to Mueller's report on the issue, Russian agents were researching in the US as early as 2014, collecting information to build social media accounts and gaining thousands of likes and follows on Facebook (Mueller, 2019). The report also states that Russian agent-controlled content was viewed by up to 126 million people on Facebook, as well as hundreds of thousands of US citizens on Instagram and approximately 1.4 million people on Twitter. Russian agents posing as US organizations also purchased advertisements on social media and posted content that was shared by official outlets. Exactly what Russia was trying to accomplish with all of their efforts to sway the minds of American voters is unknown, but we can speculate on what it means for the integrity of future democratic elections in America. If a foreign superpower is able to control the outcome of our elections successfully without the populace knowing, the democratic process that America values highly is as good as dead.

There is a lot to look at relating to Russia and the 2016 presidential election. The most influential act by Russia was most likely their social media disinformation campaign. According to the "Report On The Investigation Into Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election", the Russian IRA, or Internet Research Agency, began operations in the United States in 2014 (Mueller, 2019). The report states that IRA operatives used false personas to control social media accounts and pages meant to address divisive political issues and attract a wide US

audience. Employees of the IRA travelled the US to gather intelligence and take pictures to post on their social media pages. During the election season, they posted derogatory information about a number of candidates, specifically those running against Donald Trump. Some of the employees even communicated with individuals associated with Trump's campaign in order to coordinate rallies and other political activities. They reached hundreds of millions of people through their campaign, swaying minds and spreading disinformation while creating a divide between the main political parties in the US. The report concludes that their investigation established, without a doubt, that Russia's "active measures" social media campaign had in fact interfered with the results of the 2016 presidential election (Mueller, 2019). A separate report that analyzed Twitter with machine learning methods found that over five million users made 43 million tweets that may have contained manipulated and false content that originated from a source trying to interfere with the election (Badawy, Lerman, & Ferrara, 2018). The paper states that many of these users were found to be Russian-controlled "troll" accounts that spread false, conservative-leaning and pro-Trump content in order to shift public opinion to the right. Moving on from social media, the report has made it clear that Russia did far more than tamper with the minds of the voters. The GRU, or the Russian Federation's Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff, hacked computers and email accounts of many organizations relating too and employees of the Clinton Campaign (Mueller, 2019). They targeted the DNC, the campaign chairman John Podesta, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. After stealing hundreds of thousands of documents, they chose specific, impactful times to release them on WikiLeaks and similar outlets. The GRU released the first wave of stolen emails on October 7th, 2016, immediately after a video was published of Trump using derogatory language towards a woman. The release of the documents stolen by the GRU was coordinated with social media

campaigns by the IRA in order to spread anti-Clinton publications. The GRU also succeeded in planting malware in both DNC and DCCC networks, enabling them to collect and exfiltrate data with ease. On top of stealing documents, the report claims that the GRU continued to target individuals related to administration of US elections, such as secretaries of state and county governments. It is not publicly known if Russian agencies were able to tamper with actual voting machines and ballots, but the report does mention that they were able to get their hands on lists of registered voters in multiple states (Mueller, 2019). The investigation has made it clear that Russia had their fingers in many facets of the 2016 election and undeniably interfered in some manner with the results, even if we do not fully know to what extent.

Many think that Russia's interference in the 2016 election was primarily to further increase divide and distrust between supporters of America's two major political parties. In "The Kremlin's Plot Against Democracy", Polyakova outlines how Russia's social media campaign in 2016 aimed to amplify division relating to race, immigration, and religion, and overall creating chaos and undermining faith in democracy (Polyakova, 2020). She also states that due to Trump's refusal to accept information about Russia's meddling as anything but an attack on his own legitimacy, the US government has been slow to respond to Russia's attacks 4 years ago and they are now open to attacks and meddling from other countries that may benefit from America's decline. One specific government was mentioned, the Iranian government, who has stepped up their disinformation campaign and started to use tactics that are reminiscent of the IRA's behavior in 2016. According to Polyakova, Iran has specifically focused on racial social issues in the US and UK, promoting memes involving Colin Kaepernick and other recent political figures. The article concludes saying that without strong counteraction from Washington, the 2020 election could easily be a repeat of 2016's, and that no future American election may retain the

democratic integrity it held in the past (Polyakova, 2020). Another source, a paper titled “Doxing Democracy: Influencing Elections via Cyber Voter Interference” by Isabella Hansen and D. J. Lim, investigates the exact effects that “cyber voter interference” has on the outcome of elections. They conceptualize cyber voter interference as three actions, including doxing, or leaking confidential or identifiable information to the public, disinformation, such as spreading fake news and other false content, and trolling, or invading online forums with provocative posts meant to cause a reaction (Hansen & Lim, 2018). After generating a model, they found that Russia had in fact taken part in all three of these actions in order to increase polarization among citizens of the United States during the 2016 election. While measuring the exact impact of Russian interference on the results of the election is nearly impossible, the article states that the timeline of Clinton’s fall in the polls roughly correlates with the release of stolen emails by Russian operatives. When shown alongside statistics from national exit polls which suggest that Trump won among voters who decided October and early November, right around when the most damning emails were released by Wikileaks, it appears that the Russian’s managed to influence enough voters to eke out the few battleground states Trump needed to win the electoral college (Hansen & Lim, 2018). Since Russian interference in the 2016 election has practically been confirmed, author Nikolas Gvosdev looks into Russia’s motivations for meddling in his article titled “Is Russia Sabotaging Democracy in the West?”. He concludes his article compellingly, stating that “Russia will continue to utilize all of the “sharp power” tools at its disposal as long as the Kremlin believes that democratic processes, left to their own internal devices, will not produce governments friendly to Russia.” (Gvosdev, 2019). By this, he means that, barring the collapse of either Russian or American power, the US-Russia relationship will remain tense. Since Russia will by all means continue to meddle in our democratic elections, and

the United States has not made any hard attempt to stop them, they may very well succeed in sabotaging democracy in the west.

Body 3 – My argument

Conclusion

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2020, from <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/8508646>

Rough Draft Instructor Feedback

Hello Matthew,

I think you've done a great job so far with this draft. In the paper, the evidence you use is appropriate for supporting your argument, and you frequently explain how each piece connects your evidence back to the paper's central claim.

In the revised draft, I think, to strengthen your paper, I would recommend that you:

- 1). clarify and strengthen your thesis in the opening paragraph. As it is, this thesis isn't exactly debatable. You could frame this in a way so that you argue the method by which this control occurs. For instance, you might argue that the ability to disseminate propaganda over the internet coupled with the public's inability to evaluate information presents a unique situation where Russia is able to exert a measure of control over American elections. Phrasing it in such a way presents the method of control as an argument rather than the control itself.
- 2) improve the focus of the paper by explaining how the evidence you use supports your main argument. You do this to some extent, but, since the body of your paper doesn't line up perfectly with the thesis in your introduction, any adjustment to that thesis would require you to revise the places where you make connections between your evidence and your argument.
- 3) improve paragraph cohesion and transitions. Some of this seems like it's because this is an early draft, but you have some very large paragraphs that contain more than one main idea. Breaking these up and building in transitions would make the paper easier to follow.

You have a clear thesis here; however, I feel there's room to expand this a bit. For instance, could you explain in the thesis how foreign influence would control the election. At the

moment it's more of a statement that most people would agree with rather than an arguable thesis.

I think the evidence you use in this paragraph works well to support the main claim of your paper. There are a lot of things going on in here, however, and you might benefit from breaking this up a bit and working on the transitions.

Rough Draft Peer Review

Connor Truax

Hey Matthew,

One thing that I think you should think about adding to your paper is if you have a personal example of seeing the Russian false ads on your personal social media.

Final Draft

Russia's Interference in the Future of Democracy

Matthew Van Ausdal

First Year Engineering, Purdue University

ENGL 10600

Mr. Jason Abad

November 6, 2020

In the past 4 years, a lot of investigation around Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election has occurred. According to Mueller's report on the issue, Russian agents were researching in the US as early as 2014, collecting information to build social media accounts and gaining thousands of likes and follows on Facebook (Mueller, 2019). The report also states that Russian agent-controlled content was viewed by up to 126 million people on Facebook, as well as hundreds of thousands of US citizens on Instagram and approximately 1.4 million people on Twitter. The misinformation spread by Russia may have had the potential to sway a significant population of votes, maybe even enough to change the results of the election. Given what we know about the events surrounding the 2016 election, was Russia's attempt at a disinformation campaign enough to effectively cripple American democracy? We will certainly find out following the 2020 election, but Russia very well may have the potential to plunge the West into darkness.

There is a lot to look at relating to Russia and the 2016 presidential election. The most influential act by Russia was most likely their social media disinformation campaign. According to the "Report On The Investigation Into Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election", the Russian IRA, or Internet Research Agency, began operations in the United States in 2014 (Mueller, 2019). The report states that IRA operatives used false personas to control social media accounts and pages meant to address divisive political issues and attract a wide US audience. During the election season, IRA agents posted derogatory information about a number of candidates, specifically those running against Donald Trump. Some of the employees even communicated with individuals associated with Trump's campaign in order to coordinate rallies and other political activities. They reached hundreds of millions of people through their campaign, swaying minds and spreading disinformation while creating a divide between the

main political parties in the US. The report concludes that their investigation established, without a doubt, that Russia's "active measures" social media campaign had in fact interfered with the results of the 2016 presidential election (Mueller, 2019). A separate report that analyzed Twitter with machine learning methods found that over five million users made 43 million tweets that may have contained manipulated and false content that originated from a source trying to interfere with the election (Badawy, Lerman, & Ferrara, 2018). The paper states that many of these users were found to be Russian-controlled "troll" accounts that spread false, conservative-leaning and pro-Trump content in order to shift public opinion to the right.

Moving on from social media, the report has made it clear that Russia did far more than tamper with the minds of the voters. The GRU, or the Russian Federation's Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff, hacked computers and email accounts of many organizations, specifically targeting the DNC and the Clinton Campaign. After stealing hundreds of thousands of documents, they chose specific, impactful times to release them on WikiLeaks and similar outlets. The GRU released the first wave of stolen emails on October 7th, 2016, immediately after a video was published of Trump using derogatory language towards a woman. On top of stealing documents, the report claims that the GRU continued to target individuals related to administration of US elections, such as secretaries of state and county governments. It is not publicly known if Russian agencies were able to tamper with actual voting machines and ballots, but the report does mention that they were able to get their hands on lists of registered voters in multiple states (Mueller, 2019). The investigation has made it clear that Russia had their fingers in many facets of the 2016 election and undeniably interfered in some manner with the results, even if we do not fully know to what extent.

Many think that Russia's interference in the 2016 election was primarily to further increase divide and distrust between supporters of America's two major political parties. In "The Kremlin's Plot Against Democracy", Polyakova outlines how Russia's social media campaign in 2016 aimed to amplify division relating to race, immigration, and religion, and overall creating chaos and undermining faith in democracy (Polyakova, 2020). She also states that due to Trump's refusal to accept information about Russia's meddling as anything but an attack on his own legitimacy, the US government has been slow to respond to Russia's attacks 4 years ago and they are now open to attacks and meddling from other countries that may benefit from America's decline. One specific government was mentioned, the Iranian government, who has stepped up their disinformation campaign and started to use tactics that are reminiscent of the IRA's behavior in 2016. According to Polyakova, Iran has specifically focused on racial social issues in the US and UK, promoting memes involving Colin Kaepernick and other recent political figures. The article concludes saying that without strong counteraction from Washington, the 2020 election could easily be a repeat of 2016's, and that no future American election may retain the democratic integrity it held in the past (Polyakova, 2020). Another source, a paper titled "Doxing Democracy: Influencing Elections via Cyber Voter Interference" by Isabella Hansen and D. J. Lim, investigates the exact effects that "cyber voter interference" has on the outcome of elections. They conceptualize cyber voter interference as three actions, including doxing, or leaking confidential or identifiable information to the public, disinformation, such as spreading fake news and other false content, and trolling, or invading online forums with provocative posts meant to cause a reaction (Hansen & Lim, 2018). After generating a model, they found that Russia had in fact taken part in all three of these actions in order to increase polarization among citizens of the United States during the 2016 election. While measuring the exact impact of

Russian interference on the results of the election is nearly impossible, the article mentions statistics from national exit polls which suggest that Trump won among voters who decided October and early November, right around when the most damning emails were released by Wikileaks, showing that Russia may have swayed enough voters to make a difference (Hansen & Lim, 2018). Since the evidence behind Russian interference is overwhelming, author Nikolas Gvosdev looked instead into Russia's motivations for meddling in his article titled "Is Russia Sabotaging Democracy in the West?". He concludes his article compellingly, stating that "Russia will continue to utilize all of the "sharp power" tools at its disposal as long as the Kremlin believes that democratic processes, left to their own internal devices, will not produce governments friendly to Russia." (Gvosdev, 2019). By this, he means that, barring the collapse of either Russian or American power, the US-Russia relationship will remain tense. Since Russia will by all means continue to meddle in our democratic elections, and the United States has not made any hard attempt to stop them, they may very well succeed in sabotaging democracy in the west.

We can already see the impacts of the Russian interference from 2016 on the 2020 election. The season was already tense, given that most are either fiercely loyal or rabidly opposed to Donald Trump's policies, but even two days after election day no winner has been declared and the counted votes are extremely close. There are accusations flying from both sides concerning election interference and voter fraud, many of which have no basis and are likely inspired by the events of 2016. No matter who ends up winning, there will be lawsuits, recounts, protests, and potentially even more extreme actions. This is the outcome that Russia was likely aiming for, along with other parties that may be interested in the demise of democracy in the west. With all of this chaos and infighting, the US government will be tied up dealing with

internal affairs rather than international ones, allowing hostile foreign nations to potentially move to further disrupt democracy or diminishing friendly nations trust in the west as a whole. There is also little doubt that Russia, given their actions in 2016, have had some level of influence on 2020's presidential election as well, whether it be spreading misinformation or actively manipulating the polls. Russia has done a fantastic job sowing distrust among both Democrats and Republicans, creating a large divide where both sides are too busy attempting to bureaucratically shut down the other instead of attempting to solve the real problems the American populace is facing, such as poverty, environmental issues, corruption, and discrimination. America used to be a beacon of progress and innovation, but it is quickly becoming an international laughingstock as petty politicians refuse to give any ground to the opposing part. Overall, Russia's actions in 2016 have certainly crippled American democracy, potentially beyond repair.

Whether you believe that Russia actively interfered with the 2016 presidential election or not, you can still see the impact of the distrust and misinformation that came from it. American democracy, even with all its flaws, appears to still be holding on precariously, but it is entirely possible that Russia has triggered the beginning of the end. Western democracy is starting to crumble, between the widespread and increasingly drastic divisiveness between Americans, our increasingly tense relationship with foreign nations, and the growing distrust of our democratic processes. Over the few months following the 2020 election, the fate of democracy in America will hang by a thread. Either it will be pulled up by the upcoming generations, or it will plunge into darkness and fade away.

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Reflective Memo

My rhetorical goals during P2 were to fluidly incorporate scholarly articles in my research paper. While the frequency of references to various articles may be a bit overwhelming, I do believe that my paper ended up blending quotes and statistics into my own ideas fairly smoothly. My purpose was to explain the events behind the 2016 election to those who were not informed, and then continue with presenting both the conclusions of various scholars and myself. My target audience was uninformed American citizens, and I do not know if I was fully able to effectively communicate with them as I threw a lot of statistics and quotes at the reader pretty quickly. However, I do think that I provided a decent starting point that briefly covered most of the facets of Russia interference as well as some potential drastic-sounding consequences that may cause people to realize they need to look into it more.

I chose to start off with a bunch of evidence of Russian interference in the election. Many people debate against the fact that any interference happened at all, even when presented with boatloads of evidence, so I wanted to make sure that those who had maybe heard that interference hadn't happened were presented with the facts. Although it is maybe a bit out of line given the assignment, I also chose to not include any sources that argued Russian interference did not happen, since it is clear to me that it in fact did to some extent and anyone arguing otherwise is misinformed or purposely spreading disinformation.

I think I showed how much I researched this topic given the large body paragraphs of citations and statistics. I also went through a few sources that I did not end up using due to potential or blatant misinformation. I also really tried to cut down on the useless facts and only include evidence that supported my thesis, although there may still be some remnants of rambling. As far as feedback goes, I really tried to sandwich some improvements that could be

made to my peers' papers between some things they did well so they could be better motivated to make said improvements. Unfortunately, I did not receive really any useful feedback from my peers, but I did incorporate the feedback that the instructor left on my first draft. My first draft was written quite hastily and I think the final draft improved the first by quite a bit, I ended up pretty happy with it overall although I think I can make it a bit stronger as we go into P3.

P3 Advocacy Infographic

Statement of Purpose

My intended audience is uninformed US citizens, such as those that do not pay close attention to politics or current news but still would be impacted by the administration in power. Many people vote uninformed or do not know all the facts or are dissuaded by the partisan bias that is often surrounding issues that voters should be made aware of. While the issue of election interference during the 2016 appears very partisan, my intent is to approach this from a fact-based perspective in order to not alienate my audience by appearing accusatory or heavily biased. Of course, the facts themselves may be clearly biased in one way or another, but I want to make sure my presentation of the facts does not imply a bias.

The reason I want to present these facts from an unbiased perspective is due to the rising belief that facts can somehow be partisan. Climate change, vaccines, even mask-wearing have all become partisan, politically charged issues in the US even when facts clearly support the issue one way or the other. Hopefully by removing any apparent bias in the way I present, people on both sides of the issue will be willing to use their critical thinking skills and consider the facts for what they are. Given how partisan the issue of election fraud already is, this approach may not work, but I think it's my best bet to reach the maximum number of uninformed voters as I possibly can. I plan on accomplishing this by spinning the Russian interference as a threat to America's democracy and values rather than a threat to a certain political party. I will use generic US graphics and try to lean away from using either blue or red as a main color in order to not sway political bias. I will also try to use passive words and not come off as accusatory or aggressive.

I would intend for my graphic to be distributed on social media. My primary target would probably be Facebook, as there is a lot of political misinformation on there and it was the most heavily hit target by the Russian social media campaign. Facebook also has a large demographic of older people who vote often but may not be fully informed on issues they are voting on. My secondary target would probably be Instagram and Twitter, as these platforms have a large demographic of younger people that may not pay attention to new cycles and may just not care enough to vote. I suppose my graphic could also be printed in public places such as libraries, but I feel like people who go to libraries and town halls and such are already active and informed citizens so those locations will not be my main focus. Because this is going on social media, I need the text portions to be especially concise as those browsing social media do not always have the greatest attention spans. It also has to be particularly eye catching with large font so it isn't just mindlessly scrolled by. Overall, I think I will be able to accomplish my goal of reaching uninformed citizens with some of the strategies I laid out, and hopefully I will be able to reach voters on both sides without showing too much of a political bias.

Rough Draft

A Guide to Cyber Voter Interference and its threat to Western Democracy

① Doxxing

Doxxing is the action of leaking confidential or identifiable information to the public

In late Oct 2016, Russian agents strategically leaked hacked emails in order to sway voters who were undecided



② Disinformation

Disinformation is the purposeful spread of misleading articles and "fake news"

66.3%

of US Facebook users were exposed to Russian disinformation approaching the election



③ Trolling

Trolls invade online public forums and make provocative posts meant to cause a reaction

A machine-learning algorithm found that over 5 million Twitter accounts, many of which were Russian-controlled "troll" accounts, had made around 43 million tweets in order to spread misinformation and shift public opinions

Russian interference is a threat to American ideals

"Russia will continue to utilize all of the 'sharp power' tools at its disposal as long as the Kremlin believes that democratic processes, left to their own internal devices, will not produce governments friendly to Russia."

- Nikolas Gvosdev



Without action from the US government against Russia, Western Democracy will fall apart.

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Rough Draft Instructor Feedback

Hello Matthew,

Overall, I like how you've designed this infographic. The structure of your infographic is good. I think you make good use of the title and subheadings to give your audience an understanding of your argument at a glance. While there aren't a lot of visual elements, what you use in the infographic are mostly functional. From a visual design perspective, you make good use of contrast, alignment, and repetition to direct the eye of the reader and indicate a visual hierarchy, which makes the infographic easier to navigate.

There are a couple things, however, that I think you might consider polishing for the final draft. In terms of content, most of the work in the infographic is done by the text. You might consider if there's a way to shift some of the burden over to the visual elements. Additionally, the infographic also seems a bit dense. You might consider using breaking up some of the text and using space to further indicate different sections or blocks of text.

Rough Draft Peer Feedback

Peter Messiha

Hey

I like what you have here and your information is really good and it proves your point well. The color scheme you used is also cool and visually pleasing. In terms of criticism, there aren't enough visuals for the amount of information that you have. I would probably recommend adding a few visuals to keep the audience entertained. Other than that it looks real good.

Good luck!

Final Draft

A Guide to Cyber Voter Interference and Russia's threat to Western Democracy



1 Doxxing

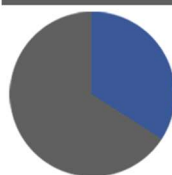
Doxxing is the action of leaking confidential or identifiable information to the public

In late Oct 2016, Russian agents strategically leaked hacked emails in order to sway voters who were undecided in the days leading up to the election



2 Disinformation

Disinformation is the purposeful spread of misleading articles and "fake news"



66.3%

of US Facebook users were exposed to Russian disinformation approaching the election

3 Trolling

"Trolls" invade online public forums and make provocative posts meant to cause a reaction

As many as

5 million

Russian-controlled Twitter troll accounts posted over 43 million tweets meant to cause discourse and divide leading up to the election

Russian interference is a threat to American ideals

"Russia will continue to utilize all of the 'sharp power' tools at its disposal as long as the Kremlin believes that democratic processes, left to their own internal devices, will not produce governments friendly to Russia."

- Nikolas Gvosdev

When our democratic elections are manipulated by foreign influence, the will of the people is ignored.



Americans must protect our democratic processes and prevent Putin from continuing to decide our leaders in his favor

Mueller, R. S., III. (2019, March). Report On The Investigation Into Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election. Retrieved October 27, 2020, from <https://www.justice.gov/storage/report.pdf>
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Reflective Memo

I think that, after revision, my infographic has more effectively accomplished my goal of presenting the issues surrounding foreign interference in the 2016 election in a fairly nonpartisan and concise manner. Visually, I readjusted the spacing of the text to hopefully make it easier to read and appear less blocky. I also made the essential numbers in the listed statistics larger and easier to read in order to draw in the reader's eyes. I also added a few more decals, as I received feedback from multiple sources that said I should. I chose to place a "vote" icon as well as the Russian flag near the top of the infographic to initially draw the reader into the flow of the page. I was originally going to use the presidential seal, but as it turns out that is illegal and carries a hefty fine. I chose the two icons in order to quickly communicate the topic of the infographic, Russian interference in the 2016 election. I also rearranged the bottom segment of the page in order to make the quote pop to the eye a bit more as well as add a sort of call to action as a final statement.

In my statement of purpose I focused on the partisanship of this issue and how I could avoid showing a bias to my audience. Although I specifically stated no blue, I did end up using a dark, grey-ish blue as a main color for my infographic. I chose the shade since it contrasted well with the dark grey, white, and creamy orange colors I was already using, and would be friendly to colorblind individuals. I did choose a blue with a grey tint to it in order to distinguish it from the lighter blue that the Democrats often use in their campaign material and I think that it should not affect the readers perception of my own bias in my infographic. Beyond the use of color, I also think I managed to convey a patriotic tone rather than a partisan one for either party. I finished with some statements about how we must protect American ideals, which should be appealing to both moderate democrats and anyone farther right. I may have framed Russia as the

enemy a bit too aggressively, I don't want this entire issue to be centered on us vs them, but I do think it'll help the right wing be more inclined to look at the facts of the situation rather than immediately dismissing the issue due to the partisanship surrounding it.

Overall, I am happy with the visual design. It may be a bit amateur, but I am not a graphic designer and I think I did an okay job making the infographic easy to follow and read. I probably should have tried a little harder to incorporate an additional graph or other visual, but I think the large font size statistics will be enough to keep the readers' eyes moving. I am also happy with the appearance of lack of bias throughout the infographic and I hope it would be effective at causing some thought and discussion were it to be spread on social media.