

COM Library's How to Research Hot Topics

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This COM Library Guide describes the best way to find resources for Hot Topics. Find books, eBooks, articles, Internet resources or get help finding topics. Available online (most current version) at <http://library.com.edu/PDF/Hot.pdf>.



Books

How to find print books and eBooks

Subject Headings

There is no single subject heading for current & controversial topics. When you want books on current & controversial topics, do a subject search in the COM Library Catalog using your topic. Try the Library of Congress Subject Headings books for even more. Access the catalog at: <http://comcat.com.edu/>.

Call Numbers

Since subjects vary, so do the call numbers. If you want to browse the shelves, the following call numbers in reference and the main collection include books on current & controversial topics.

HD-Industries. Land use. Labor.

HE-Transportation and communications

HQ-The family. Marriage. Women.

HV-Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology



HT-Communities. Classes. Races.


JC-Political theory




R-Medicine




RA-Public aspects of medicine

Series Books

COM Library has several series of books that focus on current & controversial topics. You can access these in COMCAT by performing a Series search and typing in the title of the series. If you do a subject search, these series books will show up on your list if the series covered that subject. The series listed below with  are especially good for current & controversial topics. The titles with , indicates a series with both pro and con articles for each topic covered. These series books are a good resource for getting ideas for topics.

At Issue 
Contemporary Issues
Contemporary World
Issues

Current Controversies 
Legal Almanac Series
Opposing Viewpoints Series  

Point counterpoint 
Reference Shelf 
Taking Sides 

eBooks

COM Library has access to eBooks, electronic versions of printed books. To access them, go to *Find Books* and click on *eBooks*. From this page you can access both free eBooks and eBooks only available to COM Library users. Through *netLibrary* you can access thousands of full textbooks. Please note the special instructions on the *eBooks* page for accessing the *NetLibrary* collection: http://library.com.edu/Find_Books/eBooks.htm#COM.



Top Tip

Searching NetLibrary using the same term as the *Quick Catalog Search* will usually retrieve good results.



Articles

How to find articles from print journals and online databases.

The COM Library has online databases that can help you locate articles on current & controversial topics.

Online Databases

COM Library has access to many online databases that have full text articles.

Best Bet Databases

To access the COM Library databases that are your best bets for articles and information on current & controversial topics, go to COM Library's *Databases: News & Current Topics* (http://library.com.edu/Find_Articles/Databases.htm#News)



Tip: Use Alternate Terms

When you want *more* articles or other resources try to think of alternate ways of describing your topic. Be flexible with your search terms when looking for resources. Some topics may have synonyms or terms that are close in meaning. For instance, when researching the Death Penalty, using the term Capital Punishment will also retrieve articles or Internet resources on the same topic. There are also frequently terms which are not synonymous, but which indicate a built in bias about the topic. These terms can also be used to retrieve more resources. For instance, when researching abortion, the following terms can also retrieve articles or Internet sites on abortion: Pro Choice, Pro Life, Reproductive Freedom, Right to Life. You may not always know these related and alternate terms until you start looking for resources.

Periodicals

The list below reflects current & controversial topics periodicals currently available in print at COM Library:

Congressional Digest
Current History
The Economist
Foreign Affairs

National Review
New Republic
Newsweek
The Progressive

Social Forces
Time
UN Chronicle
US News & World Report



Internet Resources

How to find articles from Web sites and other Internet resources.

The Internet can be an excellent resource for current & controversial topics. COM Library's *Public Policy & Issues* (http://library.com.edu/Find_Internet/Government/Public_Policy.htm) has a collection of sites that are great for current & controversial topics. These sites are a good resource for getting ideas for topics, some of the best ones are listed below.

Best Bets on the Internet

The Internet can be an excellent resource, though you have to be discriminating. Here is a list of some of the best places to start:

American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy: Research:

<http://www.aei.org/research/filter./default.asp>

Cato Institute: <http://www.cato.org/>

civilrights.org: <http://www.civilrights.org>

Heritage Foundation: Research: <http://www.heritage.org/research/>

nationalissues.com: <http://www.nationalissues.com/>

opensecrets.org: <http://www.opensecrets.org>

RAND: Publications: <http://www.rand.org/publications/electronic/>

Urban Institute: Research by Topic: <http://www.urban.org/issues/index.cfm>

United Nations: Economic And Social Development: <http://www.un.org/esa/>

Finding Topics

Stumped for ideas? There are several resources that can give you topic ideas: all of the series books; *CQ Researcher* and *FACTS.com: Issues and Controversies* databases; and the web sites listed on COM Library's *Public Policy & Issues* page, particularly *Yahoo! US Full Coverage*. The topics listed below can also get you started.

Abortion	Child Labor	Hate Crimes	Privacy
Addiction	Civil Rights	Health Care Reform	Racism
Affirmative Action	Cloning	The Homeless	Racial Profiling
Aging	Death Penalty	Human Rights	Social Security
Animal Rights	Domestic Violence	Hunger	Reform
Assisted Suicide	Gangs	Immigration	School Violence
Biodiversity	Gay Rights	Mental Health	Suicide
Biological and	Gender	Nuclear and Toxic	Terrorism
Chemical Weapons	Discrimination	Waste	Victim's Rights
Campaign Finance	Genetic Engineering	Police Brutality	Violence in Media
Reform	Genocide	Pollution	Violence Against
Censorship	Global Warming	Poverty	Women
Child Abuse	Gun Control	Prison	Welfare Reform



Tip: Narrow Your Topic

The Topics listed above are very general and will probably have to be narrowed down for

your paper. Why bother? If you choose a topic that is very general or broad your paper would have to be very long to cover all aspects of the topic. You would also have to sort through thousands of articles or Web sites. It's generally better to focus on a specific aspect of the topic. Sometimes that can be hard to do, but there some techniques you can use to help you focus your topic:

Technique 1

One way to do it is to ask a question about your topic. What question about the death penalty do you want to answer? Perhaps something like: "Should juveniles get the death penalty?," or maybe "Is the death penalty constitutional?" Key words to enter in a search would be juveniles and death penalty. Remember you can also use synonyms, so you could search for juveniles and death penalty or capital punishment.

Technique 2

If you don't have a specific question in mind, you can do a general search on the death penalty and see what articles have been written about it. Each author of those articles had to find a way to narrow down the topic--see which ones interest you the most. What terms in the articles did the authors use that you could use in a search to retrieve more like it? Combine those terms in a keyword search with your broad topic, death penalty.

Reserves

Material placed on reserve by your instructor should be requested at the circulation desk. Some library items are placed on permanent reserve and also must be requested at the circulation desk. You may check for reserves by clicking on the *Course Reserves* tab in the Library Catalog and searching by *Department* or *Course*: <http://comcat.com.edu/>.

Questions?

If you still have questions after reading this guide, try some of COM Library's *Just the FAQs* (http://library.com.edu/How_To/Faqs/index.html), access *How to Understand Library Jargon* (http://library.com.edu/How_To/Guides/Library_Jargon.htm) for definitions of library terms, or you may ask the Reference Librarian for assistance. The Reference Office is located on the ground floor of the library near the Online Library.