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## Current Controversial Issues

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Researching a controversial issue can be a time consuming experience. Usually, there is a vast amount of information published on such topics, and it ranges from personal Internet homepages to scholarly research produced by experts in the field. If you know little about your topic, are just beginning your research or need to narrow your research to a specific aspect, it would be best to start with one of the resources listed under [Background Information](#) below. The resources on this page are examples of what is available, not an exhaustive list.

## Finding Books & Other Materials in the Library

To find books and other University Library materials, such as government documents or videos, about a particular topic, search the [Library Catalog](#). To begin, use the **Basic Search** and check that **Keyword (s)** is selected in the **Search By** menu. Click in the **Search For** box and type a combination of terms that describe what you are looking for. Enclose any phrases of two or more words between quotation marks. Combine multiple terms with Boolean operators (**and**, **or**, **not**). To find variations of a word that begin with the same set of letters, use the truncations symbol, which is a question mark (?), at the end of the root. Click on  to run the query. For example:

**prevention and "teenage pregnancy"**  
**prevention and teen? and pregnancy**

For more detailed information about using the catalog, including additional search tips, check out these user guides created by campus librarians: [How to Use the Library Catalog: 1. Basic Search](#) and [How to Use the Library Catalog: 2. Additional Features](#).

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## Background Information

If you are unfamiliar with a topic, or looking for ideas for topic, it is best to begin your research with general information sources that could provide a brief introduction or overview of topics, such as

dictionaries, encyclopedias and handbooks. Here are a few examples of such resources:

- *CQ Researcher*

This serial is available in print and online, and is generally considered to be one of the best starting places for researching any controversial issue. Each weekly installment of CQ Researcher provides an outline of events, issues and other key facts surrounding a specific hot topic, ending with a bibliography of sources where you can get more information.

To find topics in the print version, use the index at the back of the most recent compilation.

Location: Reference Collection, on Current Affairs shelf near Reference Desk

Library has: 1991 - Present

To find topics in the online version, search by keywords.

Online: [CQ Researcher](#) *W*

Library has: 1991 - present

For issues older than 1991, consult CQ Researcher's predecessor, the Editorial Research Reports.

Location: Reference Collection, on Current Affairs shelf near Reference Desk

Library has: 1924 - 1990

- *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*

Use the index in the back to browse for specific topics.

Print: Reference Collection BJ63 .E44 1998 vols. 1 - 4

- *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*

Print: Reference Collection QH332 .E52 1995 vols. 1 - 5

- *Encyclopedia of Ethics*

Print: Reference Collection BJ63 .E45 2001 vols. 1 - 3

- *Encyclopedia of European Social History from 1350 to 2000*

Print: Reference Collection HN373 .E63 2001

- *An Encyclopedia of War and Ethics*

Print: Reference Collection U24 .E53 1996

- *The Power of the Press*

Print: Reference Collection AC1 .R4x v.71 no.1

To find an reference book on a different topic in the University Library, use the [Library Catalog](#) to **Search by Keyword** for a term describing the general subject area and a term describing the type of resource, such as:

**encyclop? and wom?  
dictionar? and weapon?**

There are also several series of books in the library that may assist you in finding a topic. Do a **Search by Title** in the Catalog for any of these series:

- *Current Controversies*
- *Opposing Viewpoints*
- *Reference Shelf*
- *Taking Sides*

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## Periodical (Journal, Magazine & Newspaper) Articles

The databases listed below are good places to begin looking for articles on your topic. A complete list of online databases can be reached from any University Library webpage by selecting Databases from the Find menu. Select Articles from the Find menu to reach shorter lists databases arranged by subject: [General Indexes](#), [Arts](#), [Business](#), [Education](#), [Government](#), [Humanities](#), [Law](#), [Medicine](#), [Sciences](#), [Social Sciences](#).

- [Academic Search Premier](#) <sup>W</sup> (EBSCOhost) **How to Use**  
Covers a wide range of popular and scholarly publications in many subject area including the social sciences, humanities, education and more.
- [ABI/Inform Global](#) <sup>W</sup> (ProQuest) **How to Use**  
Covers a wide range of popular and scholarly publications in accounting, finance, marketing, management, international business, real estate and taxation.
- [Criminal Justice Abstracts](#) <sup>W</sup> (CSA) **How to Use**  
Indexes a wide range of popular and scholarly publications in criminal justice, security issues, policing, organized crime, juvenile justice and law enforcement.
- [OmniFile Full Text](#) <sup>W</sup> (WilsonWeb) **How to Use**  
Search several databases from WilsonWeb at one time, covering a wide variety of subjects. Databases include: Business Full Text, General Science Full Text, Humanities Full Text, Readers' Guide Full Text, and Social Sciences Full Text.
- [ProQuest Newspapers](#) <sup>W</sup> (ProQuest) **How to Use**  
This database contains "ProQuest Newsstand", "Wisconsin Newsstand" and several large newspapers. A good place to look for information that ties your topic in locally.
- [Sociological Abstracts](#) <sup>W</sup> (CSA) **How to Use**  
Contains records from 3,000 journals covering sociology, social work, and other social and behavioral sciences.


Sometimes the fulltext of an article will be in the database being searched. If it is not, a [Find It](#) button may appear which can be used to locate the fulltext. If there is no Find It button, either search the [Citation Linker](#) for an article citation, the [Journal Holdings List](#) list for periodical title, or the [Library](#)

[Catalog](#) for a book title (some of these databases also index books) to see if the library owns or subscribes to a particular item. The University Library does not necessarily own every item listed in online databases. If there is something you want, but it is not in the Library, you may borrow it using Interlibrary Loan via [ILLiad](#) for a small fee (usually \$1).

## Like to Browse?

Although browsing is not the most efficient way to find articles on a known topic, it can be helpful in finding a current topic. Ethical issues are often controversial and debatable, because there may be no single correct answer, and so would have both proponents and opponents. The University Library currently subscribes to about 38 periodicals devoted to the subject of ethics, either in print, online (individually) or as part of an online database system. This selection from our **Journal Holdings List** shows you a [list of ethics periodicals](#). Recent print issues are shelved alphabetically by title in the Current Periodicals stacks on the library's first floor. Online issues are linked directly from the list, although you may need to do a search for the periodical title and limit by date to find the most current articles when the resource opens.

## Public Opinion (polls, speeches)

- [The Gallup Organization](#) (Free)  
Latest public opinion polls on politics & elections, business & the economy, social issues & policy, managing and lifestyle.
- *Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing*  
Great resource that takes the pulse of America on key issues.  
Print: Current Periodicals Stacks  
Library has: 2002 - present
  - **Continues:** *Gallup Poll Monthly*  
Library has: no.291 (1989)-no.438 (2002:Mar.)  
Print: Periodicals Bound Stacks (Non-Circulating) (Shelved A to Z)
    - **Continues:** *Gallup Report*  
Library has: no.185 (1981)-no.290 (1989)  
Print: Periodicals Bound Stacks (Non-Circulating) (Shelved A to Z)
- *The Gallup Poll*  
This resource takes the pulse of America on key issues. Comes with a cumulative index of poll topics.  
Print: Reference Collection (Non-Circulating) HN90 .P8 G35  
Library has: 1935 - 1984, 1990, 1993
- [National Public Radio](#) (Free)  
Try a Keyword Search for topics or programs. To locate polls, search for poll and [your term].
- *Polling the Nations*   
Online: [Polling the Nations 1986 -](#)
- *Public Opinion Quarterly*

Print: Periodicals Bound Stacks (Non-Circulating) (Shelved A to Z)

Library has: 27 (1963) - 56 (1992)

CD-ROM: Periodicals Microform Room, BPO CD-ROM

Library has: (1987:Spr.) - (2001:Fall)

Microfilm: Periodicals Microform Room, Film

Library has: 1 (1937) - 26 (1962)

Online: [ABI/INFORM Global](#) <sup>W</sup> (ProQuest: 1971- )

**How to Use**

Library has: 62 (1998) - Present

Online: [Public Opinion Quarterly](#) <sup>W</sup> in the **JSTOR Arts & Sciences I Collection**.

**How to Use**

Library has: 1 (1937) - 63 (1999)

- *Vital Speeches of the Day*

Online: Current issues available through [several databases](#) <sup>W</sup>

Print: Current Periodical Stacks (Non-Circulating) (Shelved A to Z)

Library has: v. 70 n. 1 (2003)- present

CD-ROM: Periodicals Microform Room, BPO

Library has: BPO (1987:Dec.) - (2001:Dec.)

Print: Bound Periodical Stacks (Non-Circulating) (Shelved A to Z)

Library has: v.4 (1937)-v.30 (1964)

Microfilm: Periodicals Microform Room, Film

Library has: v.1 (1934)-v.3 (1937), v.31 (1964)-v.56 (1989/1990)

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## Facts, Figures (statistics, almanacs)

- [Fedstats: The gateway to statistics from over 100 U.S. Federal agencies](#) (Free)

- *Population Index*

An annotated bibliography of recently published books, journal articles, working papers, and other materials on population topics.

Online: (Free) <http://popindex.princeton.edu/index.html>

Provides a searchable and browsable database containing 46,035 abstracts of demographic literature.

Dates Available: (1986) - (2000)

Online: [Population Index](#) <sup>W</sup> in the **JSTOR Arts & Sciences I Collection**.

**How to Use**

Library has: 3 (1937) - 51(1985)

- **Continues:** *Population Literature*

Online: [Population Literature](#) <sup>W</sup> in the **JSTOR Arts & Sciences I Collection**.

**How to Use**

Library has: 1 (1935) - 2(1936)

Microfilm: Periodicals Microforms Room, Film

Library has: 1 (1935) - 2(1936)

- [Social Statistics Briefing Room](#) (Free)

The purpose of this service is to provide easy access to current Federal social statistics. It provides links to information produced by a number of Federal agencies. It contains information in these four areas: crime, demography, education, health.

- *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*

Print: Reference Collection (Non-Circulating) HA931 .C3

- *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

Print: Most current edition shelved at Reference Desk (Non-Circulating) C 3.134:

- [U.S. Census Bureau](#) (Free)

To find statistical information for states or municipalities, use the American FactFinder option.

## Legal Information (laws, legislation, articles, & more)

- [LexisNexis Academic: Legal](#) *W*

Click on Legal, select type of legal search from the menu on the right. Includes [Wisconsin Statutes, Constitution, Court Rules & Advanced Legislative Service](#) plus other state and Federal cases, legislation, statutes, codes and more.

- [LexisNexis Congressional](#) *W*

Includes legislative histories for public laws and testimony from congressional hearings. Track bills and search the Congressional Record and Federal Register, and locate information about congressional members and committees.

- [WestLaw/Campus Research](#) *W*

Online legal research tool designed and built especially for undergraduates and other non-law students. It is an abridged version and allows retrieval of cases and legal documents from both federal and state sources.

- [GPO \(Government Printing Office\)](#) *W*

Covers all types of U.S. government documents, including Congressional reports, hearings, debates, and records; judiciary materials; and documents issued by executive departments (Defense, State, Labor, Office of the President, etc.).

## People/Organizations (directories, homepages)

Public and social policies are often controversial issues. Most of the websites below are the homepages of organizations who specialize in researching and presenting public and social policy issues. This is not a comprehensive list, webpages for other organizations can be found by searching the Internet.

- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#) (Free)

The mission of the ACLU is to protect the civil liberties granted under the Bill of Rights, including freedom of speech, association, assembly and religion, freedom of the press, the rights

to privacy, equal protection under the law and due process. They also work to extend rights to minority groups that have traditionally been denied them.

- [Amnesty International](#) (Free)

An U.K. based human rights organization, which is financed mostly by subscriptions and donations from individuals and nongovernmental organizations. It is independent of any government, political persuasion or religious creed. Its mission is "to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of our work to promote all human rights."

- [Heritage Foundation](#) (Free)

This foundation's mission is "to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense."

- [Human Rights Watch](#) (Free)

Human Rights Watch is the largest U.S. based human rights organization. It is "an independent, nongovernmental organization, supported by contributions from private individuals and foundations worldwide. It accepts no government funds, directly or indirectly." It is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world.

- [Moving Ideas](#) (Free)

This online magazine is part of the Moving Ideas Network, which is a project of [The American Prospect](#), whose aim is "to contribute to a renewal of America's democratic traditions by presenting a practical and convincing vision of liberal philosophy, politics, and public life."

- [ProCon](#) (Free)

ProCon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, public benefit corporation. Its purpose is "to inform the public about controversial issues using facts, news, and hundreds of diverse opinions in a pro-con [for-against] format."

- [RAND](#) (Free)

This nonprofit organization was the original think tank. Its mission is to "improve policy and decision making through research and analysis." Its first task was researching national security issues for the Air Force, but over time, its research has expanded to assist all branches of the U. S. military community, and cover social and international issues as well as domestic policy issues. Here are their [Rand research topics](#).

- [Urban Institute](#) (Free)

The Urban Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization established in Washington, D.C. It "publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration." Here are [Urban Institute research topics](#).

- [U.S. Department of State: Issues & Press](#) (Free)

The State Department's information portal for the State Department and U.S. foreign policy . It is managed by the Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs.

## Further Research (guides, bibliographies)

- [Poly-Cy: Internet Resources for Political Science](#) (Free)  
Public Policy and Policy Issues Areas - (Robert R. Du Duval, West Virginia University Department of Political-Science and the West Virginia University Institute for Public Affairs)
- [SOSIG: Social Science Information Gateway](#) (Free) - (UK)
- [Yahoo! Directory: Society and Culture : Issues and Causes](#) (Free)

## Evaluating What You Find

Once you have found material, it is important to do some critical evaluation to decide whether it is an appropriate and usable source for your University research assignment.

One important issue to consider is bias. When considering controversial topics, it is extremely likely that you will find resources that are biased in some way. It is up to you to determine which side of the issue is being represented, so that you can use the resource appropriately in your assignment. Many students find that making a list of pros and cons for the issue helps them do this, then comparing points made in a particular resource to the list to determine the stance.

If you are evaluating a website, one of the methods listed on the [Evaluating Internet Resources](#) page may provide you with useful guidance in determining the source, scope, currency, accuracy and bias of a site.

For assistance, contact a reference librarian at (262) 472-1032, by [email or chat](#) or in person at the Library's Reference Desk.

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University of Wisconsin - Whitewater, 800 West Main Street, Whitewater, WI 53190-1790.

[Circulation Desk](#): 262.472.5511 | [Reference Desk](#): 262.472.1032 | [Periodicals Desk](#): 262.472.1545

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