

## Liam Little Reflective Essay

In the process of conducting my research for the paper I would write in class PHPE 402 which is the Philosophy Politics and Economics senior capstone course I followed the structure laid out by Professor Moller. After deciding what country we would write about, the week two assignment was to go to Mckeldin Library and find a book that would be interesting to start the research. What I did was look on the online UMD database and I found the book *Trade and Women's economic empowerment: evidence from small and medium-sized enterprises* written by Yiagadeesen Samy. I then went to Mckeldin Library and found the book and the information I gathered became crucial to the final paper. I learned about several powerful incentives provided by the Senegalese legal institutions concerning the regulation of workers and working conditions that were disincentivizing economic growth. In addition to the disincentives these institutions have put in place on female entrepreneurs, traders, and the ownership of land. Additionally, I found four books on Google Scholar, three book chapters in Jstor, and three books on Amazon which provided me with more context and information about the country. I didn't end up using all of these as sources but the process helped me figure out my thesis and the perspective I was going to bring to the essay. The next step was looking at scholarly articles, we were required to find three, though I went and found 10. Again I did not end up using all these sources but I continued learning and probing what my angle would be. I read a Science Direct article on the use of natural resources in Senegal written in 2004 using 40 years of satellite images, a Lancet article on the malaria epidemic in Senegal, a study from 1990 to 2012, a Wiley article on the inner workings of institutional corruption in Senegal. In this process, I was gathering a bigger historical picture of a country I had lived in for four years (my time at high school). The third step was to find charts and graphs from our world in data to provide a better comparative

understanding of Senegal's situation to its regional countries. In my final paper, I used eight figures and five of them came from our world in data providing information on perceived corruption in the public sector, perception of corruption by institutions, land ownership percentage of men vs women, separation of powers score, and transparency laws. These graphs and pieces of data were crucial in the construction of my argument. The fourth step in the research process was reaching out to experts. I was lucky to be given the opportunity to interview three in-country experts. I interviewed Chris Merriman who at the time was the country development officer for USAID in Dakar, Senegal. Along with Seydina Mouhamadou Ndiaye the president and co-founder of several civil society and activists organizations in Senegal such as Consortium Jeunesse Senegal and Collectif Des Volontaires du Sénégal. And Seydina Ndiaye, who works for the Senegalese government and is a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence. These three individuals gave me very different perspectives to think about and in large part, my conversations with them inspired the policy recommendations I made at the end of the paper. Specifically with the recommendations that had to do with open data transparent governance and checks and balances on the executive power. The last step was when I went on Proquest and searched for as many recent New York Times Articles as I could find which were about the Senegalese Political economy. I was able to find five articles that became my foundation for a part of my argument about the abuse of presidential power in Senegal. The New York Times articles were specifically focused on the last years of Macky Sall's presidency where there were many incarcerations of his political opponents which resulted in violent protests and deaths of several Senegalese. The variety of sources I had found up to that point created a foundation for which I could develop and organize my paper. The final part of the research process was figuring

out while I was drafting the paper what information I needed or what I could use to supplement, support, or counter what I had already found. Part of this process was going back and finding more academic papers and research that described the inner workings of the Senegalese institutions such as the paper by Kristine Juul “Decentralization, local taxation and citizenship in Senegal.” This article became an important source specifically because of its detailed understanding of the impact of local-level institutions and the process of taxation in these rural communities. Another part of this process was going through papers we read for class such as Acemoglu’s “Paths to inclusive political institutions.” The Acemoglu article was useful in grounding my essay in political theory about political and economic institutions and their impact on sustainable economic growth. This task of finding theoretical analysis and real-life analysis, or historical and current or secondary and primary sources left me with a variety of information to lean on and construct the best essay I could.