

An example of the Outline Tool method of research paper writing

Title: Social Media as a Revolutionary Tool

Preliminary tasks:

Choose presentation format: I'm going to write this paper using geopolitics as the organizing rubric. Specifically, I'm going to look at the recent revolutionary movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and show how social media such as Twitter and Facebook played a part in these uprisings. I will give some historical background about the use of other tools in previous geopolitical movements, and offer some qualifications, limitations, and cautions.

Develop a basic theme: This is the initial guiding idea which drives the paper. It usually has to be tweaked (and sometimes even re-written!) in light of the evidence found in this process. My theme: Modern social networking (such as Facebook and Twitter) in North Africa are only the latest examples of the use of tools in the service of popular and democratic revolution.

Topic Outline (remember: no intro, no conclusion, short phrases only)

- I. Social Networking definition
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Twitter
 - c. Common elements
- II. Previous examples
 - a. Post Office during American Revolution
 - b. Text Messaging and the downfall of Joseph Estrada (Philippines, 2000)
 - c. Moldova and Twitter in 2009
 - d. Iran's failed Green Movement in 2009
- III. Tunisia
 - a. The use of Twitter in Tunisia 2010
 - b. Availability of the tools and the ability of the government to crack down
- IV. Egypt
 - a. The use of Twitter in Egypt in 2011
 - b. The use of Facebook in Egypt in 2011
 - c. Availability of the tools and the ability of the government to crack down
- V. Libya
 - a. The use of Twitter in Libya in 2011
 - b. The use of Facebook in Libya in 2011
 - c. Availability of the tools and the ability of the government to crack down
- VI. Evaluations and common factors
 - a. The availability of the tools is key
 - i. Cute puppy factor
 - b. Governments who are already marginalized are less affected
 - i. Egypt's government NEEDS global trade and its tools
 - ii. Tunisia's government LIKES global trade and its tools
 - iii. Libya's government IGNORES global trade and its tools

Now, examples of turning a topic phrase into a key full-sentence:

II. b. It is impossible to discuss the downfall of Phillipine President Joseph Estrada in 2000 without including some consideration of the use of cell-phone text-messaging to coordinate political flash-mobs by the opposition.

VI. a. i. While it is relatively easy for a government to block or even shut down a website devoted entirely to its political opposition, it is very difficult or impossible to block access to tools which are used by ordinary people and ordinary businesses to conduct their everyday affairs.

--==--

Now, a paragraph which takes VI. a. i. above and develops it/explains it.

While it is relatively easy for a government to block or even shut down a website devoted entirely to its political opposition, it is very difficult or impossible to block access to tools which are used by ordinary people and ordinary businesses to conduct their everyday affairs. Simply put, if technological tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and texting are used by businesses every day to carry on commerce, then shutting down those tools will be quickly detrimental to both the economic and political viability of that government. Furthermore, if a tool such as Facebook is widely used for purposes other than political dissent, such as the sharing of “Look, here’s a picture of a cute puppy!”, it becomes increasingly difficult for a government to justify blockage of said tool on political grounds. Internal dissent, even among the enforcers of such blockages, will virtually guarantee that massive leakages will occur, and then it’s “game over” for the regime.