

POLS 2940 - Introduction to International Politics
Second Term Essay Assignment 2015-2016

Students must address one of the topics below in their essay. You will need to develop an argument in response to the topic which you support both analytically and empirically. Remember that this is a research essay, you must use scholarly readings and sources of information from outside of the course outline. But at the same time, you must also locate your argument within a theoretical frame, you are linking both theory and research in this paper. You must also use proper citations of those sources throughout your essay.

An outline for the essay is due on February 10 and must be handed in to your TA leader in groups. This outline is worth 5% of the course grade and it should be no more than two pages in length and can be written in point-form. It must: 1) state your question; 2) state your tentative thesis statement and outline of your main points; 3) indicate the theoretical work you will employ and how it will contribute to the paper; 4) outline the research you have conducted thus far (this can be in the form of a preliminary bibliography of work you have read); 5) indicate the research you must still conduct and any problems you are having in finding sources. TAs will, upon review of the essay outlines, require some students to meet with them in person to discuss the essays. The essay itself should be 8-10 typed double-spaced pages and will be due on March 23rd. Guidelines for the essay assignment follow the questions, below.

1. The Islamic State (ISIS) has attracted widespread international attention because of the spectacles of violence and extensive military campaigns in which it has been involved. One area that receives particular attention is the intensely patriarchal view of women espoused by ISIS. In light of this, reports that women have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS have, as Nimmi Gowrinathan observes, confounded experts: "For many, the idea of women as violent extremists seems paradoxical. After all, why should women want to join a political struggle that so blatantly oppresses them?" Explore this issue and its implications for the study of gender and international relations using at least two theories covered in the course.
2. The Canadian government's recent \$15 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia has been described as the largest military exports contract in Canadian history and has also been subject to much criticism because of human rights violations within Saudi Arabia. Describe the issues surrounding this case and use at least two theoretical approaches discussed in the class to explore the issues that arise with the sale. The new Liberal government has said at this point it will not cancel the contract - what kind of advice would you give to the government in light of your analysis in your paper?
3. The first UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) set out to halve 1990 poverty and hunger rates by the end of 2015. While the goal for hunger rates was not achieved, the goal for poverty reduction was reportedly reached five years ahead of schedule, in 2010. At the same time, there is some debate about the way in which global poverty reduction was measured and some question about whether the goal, on a global scale, was ever reached at all. Explore the efforts, successes and failures to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal concerning both poverty and hunger. In light of your analysis, what is your view of the prospect of achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals which have been proposed now that the MDGs have expired?

4. The response of many states around the world to the 2007-2008 financial crisis has been very different from state responses to the Great Depression of the 1930s. In the latter case currency wars and trade blocs pitted states against one another as they tried to pull themselves out of crisis while more recently we have seen instead agreement and convergence around the use of austerity politics across many countries, along with attempts at achieving greater integration through new trade agreements. Using two country examples, examine contemporary responses to financial crises in the current period. How would liberal and critical theorists understand state responses to the current crisis? Which understanding do you find most persuasive?

5. China is the world's second largest economy and its current economic slowdown is expected to have repercussions throughout the global economy. Describe the slowdown and its potential impact on developing countries. Using at least two theoretical approaches discussed in class as well as two country examples, consider the possible prescriptions developing states may need to adopt. Which do you think are more likely to succeed?

Essay Guidelines, POLS 2940A

These guidelines signal the necessary elements expected in the second term essay for this course. You might also find relevant style guides (for example Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing) a useful source of information about writing essays.

Introduction:

The introduction to the essay should situate your topic, in terms of current international context (why it 'matters' given what is going on in the world) and in terms of the scholarly debate that is being conducted around the topic. The introduction will also state your thesis. This must be done clearly and in analytical terms: a thesis statement does not simply describe what topic you will cover in the essay, but states what your argument will be in the essay. The introduction should also have a 'business' statement, or even entire paragraph: once you describe what you will be arguing, you need to alert your reader to the steps you will take in support of that argument.

Body of Essay:

This part of the essay constitutes the bulk of the paper. You will need to cover the points you want to make in support of your argument. You need to cover these points systematically, and in a logical fashion. Develop an outline of the essay, and particularly the body of the essay, before you start writing so that you have thought through the order in which you plan to cover the points you want to make. Do not just assert points as though they are self-evident, support every point you want to make, with arguments and with data. Every point you make needs to build to the next point, with obvious links between each. You need transitions between points that explain the rationale for moving from one point to the next.

You should also be asking yourself the 'so what?' question as you write: after each paragraph, ask yourself, so what? What have you just written that helps to support your argument? If you aren't sure, you have a problem. Part of writing a good essay means knowing what is extraneous: there is a lot of interesting information out there on your topic, but not all of it will be useful in the development of the argument that you are trying to make. You need to make choices about what stays in and what you cut. Students should always have far more research than they can actually use in their essays.

You will be dealing with both theoretical and empirical material and also need to organize your presentation of this material in a way that makes sense: perhaps by starting with the theory and using the empirical material afterward to illustrate; or, perhaps starting with the empirical and moving to the theoretical. Either of these approaches is fine, so long as the logic of your presentation is clear to anyone reading the essay. If there is no logical flow, if you just jump from point to point without building toward the development of your argument, your reader cannot follow the rationale of your presentation.

Conclusion:

In a conclusion you re-state your argument and the central points made in support of your argument. This is your final statement that signals to the reader why they ought to be persuaded by the argument you just presented to them. You do not raise new points in the

conclusion. But you can remind the reader (usually by picking up on some of the issues raised in the introduction, where you set the context for the paper): why the topic matters and what you contributed, in your essay, to the topic.

Throughout the Essay: Treatment of Theory

The essay must address the theoretical concerns as raised in the essay question, even if you are not explicitly asked to address theory in the question. Assume that it is implicit in all of the questions. This means that an entirely descriptive essay will not be successful. Students must recognize the theoretical arguments that inform their own position and the positions of those they are reading. What is important here is not simply affirming the position that you have adopted, but providing a detailed engagement with how the other perspectives view the same issue differently. Simply describing the general differences between the approaches (for example by reiterating lecture notes) is not sufficient – you want to demonstrate that you understand the application of the theoretical approaches to the specific issue that you are addressing, and can argue why one perspective is more persuasive than the others.

Throughout the Essay: Addressing the Question as Posed

The essay should address the question as posed, not go off on tangents that do not directly focus on the concerns raised in the question. There are many ways to cut in to the topics raised in the assignment questions, the point in this assignment is to organize your treatment of the topic in terms of the framework provided by the question.

Throughout the Essay: Form, Style, Syntax and Grammar

The essay must be written in a style appropriate to a second-year university course. This means that you must use proper grammar, syntax and make appropriate vocabulary choices. Make sure you know how to punctuate properly, how to introduce direct quotes, and how to write in proper English form. Use vocabulary that is appropriate to your subject and your year level. This does not mean using the largest and most complex word, but the right word. Use the Writing and Learning Resources available on the course web site and at the University and read the appropriate chapters from relevant style guides.

Throughout the Essay: Sources

This is a research essay, you should be looking for as many sources as possible but we would expect a minimum of six separate sources (outside of course readings). These need to be a combination of scholarly sources and materials from reputable sources. For every six sources you use, we expect three to be solid scholarly materials and the remaining three to be information from a reputable source. For example, statistics generated by the United Nations would be a reputable source of information, a Wikipedia entry would not. Journal articles and scholarly books are scholarly sources; statements from the UN, films, newspaper or magazine articles are not scholarly sources – these latter can provide useful quotes, some direction to information, and so on, but they cannot substitute for scholarly sources.

Throughout the Essay: Proper Citations

Sources used in the essay must be properly cited. Students must use and employ direct and paraphrased quotes appropriately, and use a single citation format throughout the essay in a consistent fashion. An improperly cited essay, no matter how well other elements of the assignment were addressed, is grounds for failure of the assignment and a charge of academic dishonesty.