

Paper Guidelines, Foreign Governments, POLS 1201

The final paper for this class will be **8-10 pages long**. It should use **outside sources** (at least 5, of which two should be books.) You need to **include a bibliography** and use **footnotes for citation** – Chicago Style for both. The following the guidelines below will help you write a great paper.

You need to pick a country, choose an issue related to one of the topics we're covering this term, and explain why that issue looks the way it does in your country. Examples might be changes in laws related to gender in Kuwait, income inequality in India, or democratization in Poland.

Format:

Please use a standard 12 point font; 12-point font (Times, Times New Roman, Cambria, or Calibri) with 1.25" margins. **Be sure to check your formatting settings before beginning to write your paper!** The assigned length of the paper is 2,700-3,200 words, this is 8-10 pages not including your footnotes.

Your paper should have a title page (which will not be included in the word count), including the following information: Your name, the course number, the date it was handed in, and a title. **Number the pages of your paper** - the bibliography and title page do not count towards the final word count (they also do not count against it). All papers will be submitted through **turnitin** on Canvas BEFORE THE DEADLINE! If you have questions about how to do any of the above in a standard word processing program (word, open office, etc) please see the writing center.

The format of your paper does matter; tweaking the font size, spacing or margins to make your paper longer or shorter is generally quite obvious to the reader (particularly since I'll have a stack of papers in front of me to compare it to) and falls under the heading of "not doing the assignment properly," which will have a negative impact on your grade. (This may sound unnecessarily exacting, but attention to detail is a skill that will stand you in good stead in your time at Temple.)

Quotations, Citations and References:

If you aren't sure how to put together a proper bibliography, a good place to start is *Doing Honest Work in College* by Charles Lipson. The general principle is, cite any idea which is not yours, including the author's name, and, in the case of specific concepts, the page number. If you aren't sure whether you should cite something or not, err on the side of caution and cite it. A little googling will find you a good citation guides and examples – you must use the Chicago Manual of Style. **The final paper requires citation from at least five sources with at least three of them being books, and at least three of them coming from outside the class readings.**

Quotations over three lines long should be indented (0.25" on both sides) and **single spaced**. This is called a "block quote." Quotations that are three lines or fewer should NEVER be made into block quotes. Try to avoid very long quotes; sometimes someone has phrased something so well that you just have to use their words, but generally, I want to hear what *you* have to say about the author's ideas. Quoting a paragraph from one of the readings word for word in your essay is less impressive than writing, for example "Smith argues that democratization has no effect on poverty, but her argument is unconvincing because..."

Writing Style:

Formal academic writing requires a certain tone. To this end, as you are editing your work, ask yourself, does this read like an email to my roommate? If so, the tone probably isn't formal enough. (If it reads like a "txt mssg, thn u prob" have some serious revising to do.) Reading aloud may help. Avoid using contractions, informal rhetorical questions, and exclamation points.

On the other hand, aim for clarity. If an adjective isn't necessary to add information to the sentence, then it probably isn't necessary at all. Phrases such as "I think" (poor writing) or "I believe" (even worse) are likewise often unnecessary – have confidence in the point you're trying to make! You don't need to qualify it.

Edit your work or go to the writing center. Be consistent with capitalization, and be sure that you use punctuation correctly. Make sure that you use "its" and "it's", "our" and "are", "then" and "than", and "they're", "there" and "their" correctly. Introduce all acronyms by explaining what they stand for the first time you use them. While we all make mistakes in our writing, the use of spell check and careful editing can cut down on these a good deal.

Structure and Organization

A term paper is not a mystery novel. The ending is not supposed to be a big surprise. Your introduction should explain to the reader what your topic is, what your central question is and what your thesis is. If your thesis doesn't appear on the first page, then your introduction isn't doing its job. It's not a bad idea to try writing your introduction last, as you may have a clearer sense of your paper's overall structure and argument after you've finished writing it.

Also, beware of tangents – you don't need to include every bit of information you find. Some of what you find will be interesting, but not necessarily relevant. (If you do find something that's just so cool you have to include it, even though it's not strictly germane...that's what footnotes are for. But footnotes are, by their very nature, short.)

Every paragraph should have a purpose and fit into the paper's larger argument. Don't leave the reader assembling the academic equivalent of Ikea furniture and wondering "what's this weird twisty part for?" An important step to ensuring that your paper works well is to start by making an outline (in fact, an outline is a part of this paper project for just that reason), including what

you're trying to prove and the steps you'll take towards proving it. (This is doubly true for essay exams, by the way, when you're working under time pressure.)

Content:

Some general suggestions:

1. Pick an appropriate topic.

This sounds really obvious, but it isn't always. Ask yourself, is this something I can cover in the space allotted? Is it something I'll be able to find information on? Does it relate to the class? And of course, make sure it's something you're actually interested in. Make sure your topic is neither too broad nor too narrow, and that it's appropriate to the course.

2. Have a puzzle.

Your paper should be the answer to a question relating to your topic. This question should, ideally, be a 'why' question. Why did events transpire the way they did? Why did a state behave a certain way? Why did we see a certain election result or political conflict? 'What' questions tend to be more descriptive than analytical. Your paper should be making an argument! (see #4)

3. Know your variables!

The answer to the puzzle addressed above comes in the form of your thesis statement. This thesis statement should contain both an independent and a dependent variable. In the statement "X caused Y to happen," X is the independent variable, and Y is the dependent variable. The phenomenon you're interested in (the emergence of democracy in Botswana, the revolution in Iran, industrialization in China) should be either the dependent or independent variable; that is, you should be able to explain either what effects it has, or where it comes from. Don't just describe what X is, tell me what it does, and what its relationship is to Y.

4. Argue, don't describe.

Your thesis statement should be something that someone, somewhere, might disagree with. In other words, pick a fight! You need to be making an argument, as to why you think X, as opposed to anything else, is responsible for producing Y, or why it's an important factor in producing Y, or why you can't have Y without X. There are a number of ways of making an argument about the relationship between your variables; just be sure you're making one. A good way to form an argument is to find a piece of writing on your subject that you think is useful, but flawed and begin by deconstructing and reframing that flaw.

5. Be theoretical!

Your paper also needs to address the broader thematic content that we've covered in the course. That is, you need to look at one of the issue areas we've covered, and try to understand that outcome in your country of choice. So, you'll want to look at some of the possible explanations that we've covered for those outcomes so far, and try to address them. If you're explaining how a country became a democracy, for instance, you might want to address some of the material on democratic transitions that we'll cover in class, and discuss how the logic presented by those authors applies (or not) to the case you've chosen.

Things to avoid:

The "should" argument: Most political science research explains why things happen, not the way things should be. When writing a political science paper, focus on evaluating these theories, and telling the reader whether or not you find these arguments satisfying, and why. Try to avoid arguing in favor of the way people and states should behave; for this paper, I want to see analysis, not prescription. I'm looking for "why does civil war happen", not "why civil war is bad."

The "because I said so!" argument: A strong paper demonstrates not only knowledge, but also insight. Assertions left undefended and unexplained will do little to improve your argument, and may only leave the reader wondering "where did that come from?"

Tautologies... "it is what it is..."

The one-sided fight: Great papers not only provide evidence to support their own position, but also challenge competing arguments head-on. Evaluating the opposing arguments and explaining why they are wrong will strengthen your own argument considerably. For instance, if you are arguing that the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s were caused by political elites manipulating the public, your paper would be even more impressive if you also explained why the counterargument that the war was all about ancient ethnic hatreds is not convincing.

The kitchen sink paper: Just throwing in every detail you can think of regarding a particular issue does not make for a convincing argument. Make sure that you're using information strategically and appropriately, so that I can see you really know what you're talking about.

Lateness Policy:

Papers that are turned in late, unless arranged with me in advance (and by "advance" I mean **a minimum of 24 hours in advance**), will receive a penalty for said lateness. For each day of lateness you will lose ½ letter grade (e.g. an "A" will be an "A-" and a "D-" will be an "F"). Each day (for lateness purposes) begins at 12:01pm beginning the day the paper is due. Papers submitted more than 5 days late (not before 12-noon on December 11) will automatically receive an "F" and Zero credit for the assignment.