

## Comparing Foreign Political Systems Op Ed Assignment

### *Essay due the last day of the term*

As noted in the syllabus, one of your assignments for this term is an **opinion** essay that will allow you to apply the analytical and critical thinking skills that you have developed in this class to a topic of your choice. Specifically, you will submit a typed essay that is 1800 words in length, excluding the required bibliography. This assignment is worth 10 percent of your course grade.

**The assignment.** *Your essay should address an important, contemporary international problem on which Americans (or at least elements of the American government) and the government of Iran, Russia, China, or India strongly disagree. Carefully analyzing (1) the perspective of our society, (2) the arguments and perspectives of the other country, and (3) your own ethical views, please provide an informed argument of how you think the issue should be addressed.*

It is highly recommended that you submit your topic for instructor preapproval to make sure you are on the right track. In past terms, students have written on a variety of issues, including: who should bear the burdens of addressing climate change, erecting trade barriers that give advantages to American goods and services, humanitarian intervention by the UN or powerful states, nuclear arms agreements that allow some countries to have and deploy WMDs while others may not, global poverty, the presence of American military bases in close proximity to hegemonies, and whether international norms of human rights should be enforced equally everywhere.

The essay must draw upon a modest amount of (i.e., **at least 5 high –quality, peer review** articles at a minimum) of independent research that does not include work assigned as part of the regular workload for this course. You need to include a properly formatted bibliography listing the sources used to write the essay.

You may not submit work for which you have received or will receive credit in another class, and all of the writing for the essay must be your own. Of course, you may not plagiarize, which includes “patch-writing” (i.e., don’t take another author’s writing and pass it off as your own by substituting various words while still keeping that author’s syntax, style, and core ideas with modest alteration). This paper will be graded with the same criteria used to assess your other writing assignments: [www.highpoint.edu/~msetzler/generalissues/papercritlower.htm](http://www.highpoint.edu/~msetzler/generalissues/papercritlower.htm)

**Suggestions for writing an effective opinion essay.** You also should prepare for this assignment by reading half-a-dozen or more examples of opinion essays from several different authors at [www.realclearworld.com](http://www.realclearworld.com), which aggregates opinion essays from a wide range of foreign and ideological perspectives.

While this is an opinion essay, its format and writing style should be professional and analytical in tone. Effective short essays use a combination of strong evidence and logic, and they are written in a way that shows that their authors have carefully proofed each sentence to make sure that ideas are communicated clearly, efficiently, and elegantly. Ideally, your efforts will produce a high-quality essay that you will consider submitting for publication in a newspaper or magazine. Alternatively, the length of this assignment should make it ideal to use as a writing sample for future internship and job opportunities. You may want to consider these potential audiences as you choose your topic.

Please note that there are a handful of important differences between this type of essay and the other papers you have written in this class to date. First, because opinion pieces are short and focused on a narrow argument summarized by their title, they tend to be more nuanced in their overall organization and much more creative in their language. If the title is well constructed, a thesis statement often is not in the first paragraph, and frequently these short essays' topic sentences do not explicitly link back to the title or thesis statement. Second, because they are advocacy pieces, they do not represent all sides of an issue, and typically either advocate just one position very strongly or provide only the most modest level of support for alternative views. Third, op-ed essays usually make their case with a mixture of creative logic, easily understandable examples and comparisons, clear analysis, and statistics rather than using long quotes or multiple citations to build and support their main argument. Finally, the tone of the writing of op-ed pieces is more engaging, artful, and even somewhat conversational when compared to that of the typical analytical essay. In short, they have elegant, always readable sentences that are written with the explicit goal of holding a fickle reader's attention.