

Comparing Foreign Political Systems Op Ed Assignment Essay

As noted in the syllabus, your last paper assignment 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 that conforms to the instructions below. This assignment is worth 10 percent of your course grade.

Due date: Tuesday, December 5 (our last regular class). Per the syllabus, all papers must be submitted in either MS Word or PDF format. Specifically, the electronic copy must be delivered as an attached document to: psc2510fall2017@sendtodropbox.com. An exact hard copy of the paper is due at the start of class. Because this is a GBS (Global Studies Program) assessment assignment, *you must also submit a third version of the paper*. This will involve you completing a very short, on-line survey and then copying your whole paper—including the bibliography—and pasting it into a survey field. Failure to submit the electronic versions of the paper in specified format will trigger an automatic assignment deduction of ten percent, so please follow the directions closely. The link for the GBS survey and submission site will be available at the end of the term.

Directions. You will submit a typed essay that is 1800 words in length, excluding the required bibliography. The essay must 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 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. All three of these elements—including the reasoning behind your ethical judgment—must be addressed in the paper.

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: how the burdens of addressing climate change should be divided among countries, erecting trade barriers that give advantages to American goods and services, the desirability of humanitarian intervention by the UN or powerful states, nuclear arms agreements that allow some countries to have and deploy WMDs while others may not, responsibility for addressing global poverty, the presence of American military bases in close proximity to other powerful countries, whether international norms of human rights should be enforced equally everywhere, whether the US should have so much of a role in international economic institutions; US relations with Israel and Taiwan; the expansion of the EU and NATO, and relations with Iran.

Research and citation requirements. This assignment requires independent research that does not include work assigned as part of the regular workload for this course. Your essay must draw upon at least 5 high-quality sources written by experts on the topic (i.e., peer review articles, papers produced by well-known think tanks, or longstanding, reputable news magazines and newspapers).

The citation expectations for this assignment are the same as for the other work you have submitted in this class, and you should review those expectations in the on-line handout before you start to write. You will 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 any 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, organization, or core ideas with modest alteration).

Grading criteria and suggestions for writing an effective opinion essay. Your overall paper grade will be the average of two component grades. The first is for the quality of the writing, which includes organization, clarity, grammar, and the logical flow of ideas within paragraphs. The second is for the essay’s content and research, which includes the quality of the paper’s sourcing, the use of compelling evidence and logic, and the correct use of citation. The letter grades for both components will adhere to the university’s definitions of A, B, C, D, and F work, which are explained in the syllabus.

You should prepare for this assignment by reading half-a-dozen or more examples of opinion essays from several different authors at 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.