

Writing Assignment title: Geopolitical Research Paper

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Summary: Students write a short paper analyzing a contemporary geo-political issue.

Objectives:

1. Critical thinking: Students will be able to critically analyze academic texts, international news, maps, histories, and their own received ideologies and received wisdom for assumptions, political and cultural points of view, and stated and unstated biases.
2. Core concepts: Students will have a basic competence in the core concepts of each of the five disciplines, including an awareness of how these disciplines frame problems, and how the disciplines can complement one another.
3. Applying disciplinary contexts: Students will understand how to use historical background, geographical context, political systems, economic structures, and socio-cultural milieu to better understand regional and global developments.
4. Representation: Students develop a recognition that all acts of representation are always partial—that they are shaped by the questions asked and the perspectives of those creating the representation. Therefore, students will be more critical consumers of such representations in the future.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students analyze an international studies issue related to but not covered by coursework.
- Students conduct textual research.
- Students demonstrate knowledge of academic citation practices.

Materials Required: Assignment handout (below).

Assignment Activities:

1. Give students assignment handout in class or as part of syllabus. Read aloud, establish due date. Ask for students' questions.
2. Discuss with students your expectations concerning how they are to clear topics with you: do you prefer a written prospectus to be handed in? Is an email ok?
3. Optional: discuss instructor's preferred citation format in class.
4. Optional: discuss how many sources—coming from which media—are considered sufficient for the “research” quotient of the paper.
5. Optional: discuss selection and assessment of source material (detection of bias, analysis of source's reliability).
6. Optional: if students are keeping news logs or current event journals, ask them to take a few minutes and skim through recent articles to see if any paper topics come to mind, beyond the ones listed on the handout.
7. Optional follow-up: ask students as a class to share these topics for papers—have volunteer write list on board. Model for students the way a scholar goes about focusing a topic.

Geopolitical Short Research Paper

You are required to write a paper of 5-8 pages focusing on one contemporary geo-political issue. It is expected that the paper will attempt to analyze the power and interests of both sovereign states and non-state actors involved in an issue or conflict. Some historical analysis of the conflict is essential. A polemic and uncritical paper will receive a poor grade.

Paper topics should be cleared with the instructor before their completion. Possible relevant topics may include: the nuclear issue in Iran and/or North Korea, Nuclear Non-Proliferation and the role of the United States (or Europe), the role of the United Nations in establishing a democratic community of nations, unilateralism and the role of an American empire, the expansion of the European Union and the stability of Europe, the future position of China in global geopolitics, the conflict in Chechnya, the militarization of space, global warming and the role of the community of nations, global hunger and wealth distribution on the planet, the leftward shift in Latin American politics.

Format requirements:

- Paper **MUST** be formatted in Size 11, in a reasonable font with 1 inch margins and 1.5 spacing, printed in black ink. Paper must not exceed ten pages in length, **excluding** bibliography or appendices.
- Do not use a separate sheet as a cover page.
- Do not use plastic folders, paper clips, or fancy wrappings.
- DO staple the paper in the upper left hand corner. (If you do not have a stapler, get one.)
- A bibliography (including Web-site URL's) must follow the text.
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and writing style are important in communicating your ideas, and the failure to proofread will affect your grade (spell check alone is insufficient for this task).
- The papers must inform the reader of the author's sources of information and should use a consistent citation style (such as that of the American Psychological Association, or the Chicago Manual of Style, etc.).
- Your name **MUST** appear in the upper right hand corner of the first page.
- Pages must be numbered consecutively from the first page.
- **Points will be deducted for not following these guidelines.**