



AMERICA'S FUTURE

Research Paper Assignment

1. **Research Question & Bibliography Due: Friday, December 10th (2.5%)**
 2. **Progress Report Due: Friday, January 21st (2.5%)**
 3. **Final Paper Due: Friday, February 11th (15%)**
- OVERALL PROJECT = 20% of final grade**

For this assignment you will write a research paper on an important question of domestic or international policy. There are three parts to this assignment, each of which has its own grade.

1. Research Question & Bibliography (due Dec. 10th): A good research paper starts with a clear and precise **research question**, not a vaguely formulated topic. Many of the questions posed at the start of the *Taking Sides* chapters would work. Some other examples of appropriate questions are:

- Can we stop the nuclear programs of Iran and/or North Korea?**
- Should the US change its relationship with Israel?**
- Should America take more aggressive action to combat global warming?**
- Are levels of immigration into the US too high?**
- Has globalization and free trade helped or hurt the American economy?**
- Are the recommendations of the President's advisory commission on the national debt sound?**
- Is the rise of China a threat to American national security? Etc.**

You are open to explore any topic as long as it is relevant to current political debates. In order to ensure that you have selected a viable question and have gotten a good start on your project, everyone will turn in a brief paper proposal on December 10th. First, you need an abstract (i.e., a paragraph, not an outline) for your proposed project. This should start with your (main) research question and include the various 'sub-questions' that need to be answered in order to formulate a coherent and intelligent answer to your main question. You also need to think about and elaborate what sorts of evidence and sources you will need to answer these questions. This is the design phase of the project. *The more thinking and work you put into setting up your project, the less work you will have to do at the end of the day!*

Your **bibliography** should include a list of sources that you intend to use in your paper. I do not expect that you will have read all of your sources by this point. This is merely the list of the relevant sources. To this end you should cast your net widely and pull in everything you can; you can always ditch it later if it is not useful. AT A MINIMUM your bibliography should include 4 academic journal articles and 3 books. Academic journals are periodicals that publish research papers that have been reviewed by other scholar to ensure the quality of the work

(hence these are known as 'peer reviewed' journals). A [list of political science](#) journals is available on the American Political Science Association's website. Journal articles can be easily accessed via the JSTOR and Academic Search Premier databases available on the Logan Library website. Both have full text (PDF) versions of articles, but JSTOR does not have more recent years (i.e., since 2006) available. If you are unsure about a particular publication, please ask me. Readings for the syllabus can be used, but do not count toward your reference requirements. A citation guide is available from the course website to show you how to properly construct your bibliography. Your abstract and bibliography should be typed, double-spaced, stapled (*no paper clips, please!*) and include a cover page with your name and proposed research subject. Bibliographies should be listed alphabetically by author for all sources. **NOTE: If you topic and bibliography are not up to standard, it will be returned to you for revision.**

2. Progress Report (due Jan. 21st): It is always tempting to put off a project until the last minute. The purpose of the progress report is to ensure that you don't do that! Your **progress report** should briefly summarize your research findings so far. You started with a research question and various sub-questions. What answers have you found so far? Which questions do still have to answer? What new questions have been raised? Given this, what are your preliminary conclusions?

Second, you need to turn in an **annotated bibliography**. An annotated bibliography includes short summaries of the references being cited. In this case, I want a brief summary of the content of the source and an explanation of how this article helps you to answer your research question and/or which specific sub-question it addresses. As with the original bibliography, you should include at least seven sources, although they need not be the same seven sources cited in Part 1 of the assignment.

3. Research Paper (due Feb 11th): There is no set format, but your paper should describe the policy problem or issue, outline the main perspectives and/or alternative policies dealing with the issue, and discuss the particular explanation or solution that you would advocate. This is a research paper, so you must provide **substantial and valid evidence** to support your conclusions. Your final paper should be typed, double-spaced, stapled and include: (a) a separate title page with your name and title; (b) an introduction that contains your research question and a clearly elaborated thesis (i.e., your answer to the question); (c) the body of your paper with appropriate citations; and (d) a bibliography listing all sources cited in the paper and those used in writing the paper, even if not directly cited. As an appendix, include copies of your submissions for Parts 1 and 2 of this assignment (I want to see the progression from beginning to end). Your paper will be graded on the quality of your research, the strength of your argument (i.e., is it logical? supported by the evidence?), and the quality of your writing.

During all phases of this project PLEASE COME TALK WITH ME if you have ANY QUESTIONS about any aspect of the assignment.