

America's Future (VA 366)

Analytical Paper Assignment



Based on selections from the *Taking Sides* books, you will write **six papers** that summarize the key points made by the respective authors, analyze their arguments, and use this analysis to build your own argument. Each paper will count toward 10% of your final grade (60% total). You must write on three each from the assigned foreign policy readings and three from the assigned domestic policy readings. If you have a strong desire to write a paper on one of the readings that is not assigned, you may do so, but you must get my approval first. Papers can be turned in at any time; however, all papers must be turned in no later than the following dates:

Foreign Policy Papers:	1 st paper due by Monday, September 17th 2 nd and 3 rd papers due by Friday, October 5th
Domestic Policy Papers:	1 st paper due by Monday, October 22 nd 2 nd and 3 rd paper due by Friday, November 9th

There is no strict format or rigid formula for argumentation within these papers. What is important is that your paper cover the substance suggested below. Given the diversity of articles covered in the *Taking Sides* books, there obviously may be other questions that are relevant but not included here.

- **Summarize:** Briefly summarize the main point that each author makes. What is the author's thesis (i.e., his/her one main point -- something that can be stated in a single sentence)? What sorts of arguments are used to backup this point (i.e., 'real world' examples and evidence? theoretical concepts and logical argumentation?)? In addition to what they actually say, are there any unspoken assumptions or implicit arguments that the authors employ to support their points?
- **Analyze:** Critically analyze the two articles you have read. In doing so, you should consider (among other things): Is the argument logically sound? Are the examples or evidence used to support the argument valid? Are they appropriate for the argument being made? Are there other examples or evidence (either historical or from current events) that could counter the argument? On the whole, is this an intelligent and sensible argument?
- **Argue:** Having read these two pieces, which do you think has the better argument (or do neither of them have it right)? What do you think is the proper policy to be pursued for the issue in question? Make sure that you fully elaborate the rationale and implications of your argument. Remember that you need to think your own argument in the same way that you are analyzing others (i.e., in terms of logic, evidence, etc.).

Length and Layout: There is no set length to the paper, but it will be difficult for you to do the above in less than 3-5 pages. Equally, if you start getting up into 7-8 pages, you should talk to me about ways to make your argument more concise. Remember! successful argumentation is a question of quality, not quantity. All papers should be typed and double-spaced, using normal margins and fonts. Please include a cover page with your name on it and staple your paper (no paper clips!). If you do cite references in your paper, please make sure to follow a proper citation format. A guide for basic social science citations is included on the course website.

If you are uncertain about any aspect of this assignment, please come see me!