



RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Topic and Bibliography Due: Friday December 7

Final Paper Due: Monday, February 4

For this assignment you will write a (roughly) 10-15 page research paper on an important political topic related to one or more of the countries studied in this course or the European Union. A good research paper starts with a *clear and precise research question*, not a vaguely formulated topic. Some examples of appropriate questions include the following:

- Has the 'Grand Coalition' government managed to address Germany's economic problems?
- Will the devolution of power to Scotland and Wales lead to the dissolution of the UK?
- Can France successfully assimilate millions of immigrants from north Africa?
- Does Italy need to liberalize its labor markets in order to remain globally competitive?
- Will Gordon Brown pursue a less pro-American foreign policy than Tony Blair?
- Are extreme rightwing parties and movements a threat to democracy in Europe?
- Will a united Europe rival the US as a superpower in the 21st century?
- Can an EU of 25 states remain united without overcoming the 'democratic deficit'?

Paper Proposal: 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 9th. 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. This should be roughly a paragraph or two. *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. The question being addressed really drives appropriate sources for a research paper, so what constitutes a quality bibliography will vary from paper to paper. That being said, a few qualifications are in order.

- Your bibliography should include at *least 10 sources*.
- *No more than five* of these can be websites or online articles. This does not include journal articles that are gathered using an online database (i.e., Academic Search Premier; JSTOR). Even if you download the article from the database, as long as it exists in physical form, it is not considered an online source.
- Wikipedia, while useful as background material, is not a reliable academic source. ***YOU MAY NOT USE WIKIPEDIA ENTRIES FOR THIS PROJECT...PERIOD!***

Your abstract and bibliography should be typed, double-spaced, stapled and include a cover page with your name and proposed research subject. Bibliographies should be listed alphabetically by author for all sources.

NOTE: If your topic and bibliography are not up to standard, it will be returned to you for revision. Please be reminded that the minimum requirements are just that; the *minimum* that is expected from you.

Research Paper: The exact format for your paper is going to vary depending on the topic. However, for most of the likely topics that would be included, you should:

- Elaborate your research question and describe the policy or issue being examined.
- Review the literature. That is, review what scholars have had to say about the subject.
- Outline the main perspectives and/or alternative policies dealing with the issue.
- Discuss the particular explanation or solution that you would advocate.

Again, there is likely to be variation depending on the topic. For example, a more historical question would not necessarily follow the above framework. If you are uncertain as to how to structure your particular paper, you should talk to me outside of class. This is a research paper, so you must provide ***substantial and valid evidence*** to support your conclusions. Length is not an indication of quality, but it is unlikely that you will be able to address your question in less than 10 pages. Equally, if you start getting much above 15 pages, you might want to think about rewriting your paper to make it more concise.

Your final paper should be typed, double-spaced, stapled, and include a separate title page, the body of the paper itself, and a bibliography listing all sources used in writing the paper, even if not directly cited. 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.

General Advice: This is a self-directed project. Other than the initial bibliography we will not be spending time in class working on your paper. I will be happy to field any and all questions that you have related to this, but you need to seek me out – and the earlier in the process that you do this the better. If you leave things until the very end, you will likely do poorly. You will also do better if you treat this project like engineering design: “What do I need to do to solve this problem?” If you come at it with the attitude of “What is the minimum that I need to do to pass?” I guarantee you that you will do poorly.