

International Relations (GL 262)

Policy Paper Assignment – Winter 2008-09



Over the course of the term, you must write papers answering TWO of the following questions. You may choose any two on which to write. Papers may be turned in at any time; you do not have to wait until we have had the discussion on the topic. However, the first paper must be turned in by **Friday, December 19th** (Friday before Christmas Break) and the second papers are **due by Monday, February 16th** (Monday of 10th week). Papers can be revised and resubmitted for a *potentially* higher grade. You must, however, include the original paper with my comments and you will only receive a higher grade if the revised version shows a *substantial* improvement over the original. **Paper turned in during Weeks 8 and 9 are NOT eligible for revision.** All revised submissions are also due by **Monday, February 16th**.

Schedule of Readings: All of the following are from the CQ Researcher *Global Issues* (2009)

Friday, December 5	Chapter 3 – US Policy on Iran
Friday, December 12	Chapter 6 – Crisis in Darfur
Friday, January 9	Chapter 1 – Rise in Counterinsurgency
Friday, January 16	Chapter 14 -- Afghanistan on the Brink
Friday, February 6	Chapter 11 – Oil Jitters
Friday, February 13	Chapter 15 – China in Africa

POLICY PAPER QUESTIONS:

US Policy on Iran – Would a nuclear armed Iran endanger the United States or our allies? What steps should we adopt to address this threat? Either way, should the US adopt a more aggressive stance or would a more conciliatory tone be most likely to advance American interests? Should we, as President-Elect Obama suggested during the campaign, sit down and negotiate with the Iranians without preconditions? Or are our respective interests so antithetical that this would be fruitless?

Crisis in Darfur – Has genocide occurred in Darfur? If so, does the United States and the rest of the international community have an obligation, regardless of the cost, to intervene to halt it? Or is this conflict so deep and complex that external intervention would only exacerbate matters? If we do nothing, does that make us complicit in genocide?

Rise in Counterinsurgency – The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has increased the focus of the US military on counterinsurgency techniques. Should we restructure our military to be able to effectively handle such ‘small wars’ or will doing so weaken our ability to address major conventional threats? Overall, what kind of threats are we likely to face in the future (next twenty years) and what sort of military would be best able to address them?

Afghanistan on the Brink – Did the war in Iraq undermine our efforts in Afghanistan? What would be the best approach to stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan? What can or should we ask Pakistan to do? Is the goal of establishing a Western style democracy in Afghanistan in our best interest? What do you foresee as the status of Afghanistan at the end of Obama’s first term (2012)?

Oil Jitters – Have global oil supplies peaked? Does this mean that we are going to have to move away from a ‘carbon based’ economy or is this problem overblown? Is it possible for the world as a whole to move away from oil as long as China and India continue to expand their economies so rapidly? What should the US government do to address this issue?

China in Africa – China has been rapidly expanding both business interests and diplomatic ties into sub-Saharan Africa. Is this a threat to American interests? Are these new ties a political and economic benefit or threat to those African nations? Is Africa likely to become a point of conflict between China and the West?

ANY TOPIC – If none of the topics above appeal to you, you may write your paper on one of the other topics from the *Global Issues* book that we do not discuss in class. If you are going to do this, however, you need to discuss this with me and clarify the question that you are going answer *in advance*.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: The goal in this assignment is for you to present a reasoned, analytically sound, empirically valid, and well written argument that provides a (policy) answer to the question raised in the assignment. You are expected to take a position on the issue at hand and to back up your points with sound research. **As such it is both an opinion piece and a research paper.** All of the above questions are based on the topics in *Global Issues*, although they also relate to issues from the main textbook and lectures. Before writing on any of these topics, make sure you read the appropriate chapter(s) in Nau as well as the *Global Issues* book.

RESEARCH: In order to make your argument persuasive, you need to provide appropriate factual evidence to support your claims. The *Global Issues* book contains a wealth of information and sources on each of the topics discussed (which is why we are using it!), but it is unlikely to contain everything you need. You are thus **expected** to find sources beyond the textbooks for these papers. You must have a reference for *any* factual information necessary to support your argument that is not common knowledge. (Note the bibliography and “For More Information” sections at the end of each chapter of *Global Issues* for help with this.)

FORMAT: Papers should be typed, double-spaced with normal margins and fonts, include a cover page, and stapled. *No paper clips please!* There is no required minimum or maximum length for these papers, but it is doubtful that you will be able to effectively address any of these issues in less than 3-4 pages. Equally, if you are getting up to 8-9 pages you should try and tighten your arguments and delete superfluous points.

WRITING MECHANICS: Your grade will be based primarily on the quality and substance of your argument, but this is significantly influenced by your ability to write clearly and concisely. A poorly written essay with multiple mistakes cannot make an intelligent and persuasive argument. Spelling and grammar thus are relevant to your grade.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

Tip #1: Start early. It is very much to your advantage to do these papers early on rather than leaving them to when you have assignments due in all of your other classes.

Tip #2: Talk to me about your papers before you turn them in. I can highlight problems in your arguments or guide you to sources. This almost always results in a higher grade. Of course, to do this you need to follow Tip # 1 above.

PLEASE NOTE: I will not read rough drafts. Rough drafts get a ‘rough’ reading and, as a result, I may give a false impression that the paper is fine only to find problems during my more careful ‘official’ reading. However, I will be happy to talk through your argument in as much detail as you wish.

Tip #3: Understand both sides of the issue. In order to make a really persuasive argument for a particular position, you need to not only explain your position but to effectively refute the opposite. In order to do so, you need to fully understand the arguments of the other side. It may be useful in all cases to make a list of ‘Pros and Cons’ for the issue/policy in question. In terms of writing the essay, think of yourself as a lawyer in court. You not only have to persuade the jury (the reader) as to why your ‘client’ (your argument) is innocent (correct), but also why the ‘prosecution’s case’ (the counterargument) is not sound. Although you know that I will be the reader, you should always write such essays as if they are to be read by others.

Tip # 4: Revise and resubmit. You have the option to redo your paper for a higher grade. **Use it!** However, this requires addressing the comments that I made, especially regarding the substance of your argument or the appropriateness of your sources. I certainly expect that ALL spelling and grammar errors are corrected in any resubmitted paper, but simply doing this alone will not alter your grade.

Overall, this assignment is an interactive one that requires effort, focus, and creativity. If you stay on top of things and talk to me frequently, you will likely do well. If you throw your paper together at the last moment, you will likely do poorly. As with everything in this course, if you are not sure about something, ask questions.