

Writing Studio Guide to International Relations

International Relations is an interdisciplinary major consisting primarily of courses from Politics, History, and Economics. Each discipline will demand different essay formats and writing styles, and requires the student to be capable of using both MLA and APA citations for papers.

Politics

Politics courses in international relations are text heavy and require the student to research paper topics outside of class discussions. Papers should connect with the greater theme of the course, but allow the student to be creative and deepen their own knowledge independently. Students should be capable of using academic search engines JSTOR, EBSCOhost, and Project Muse to help find scholarly articles on their topic. Students should have a firm understanding of the Intl. Relations Schools of Thought (Liberal, Realist, and Constructivist) and how these beliefs have shaped the assessment of history and current politics.

1. How to analyze a politics article

- a. Research the author's background. Where and when was he/she born, and what life experiences may have caused him/her to come to these conclusions.
 - i. Word of caution. Although Wikipedia-ing an author may provide some interesting information on his/her background, err on the side of caution in putting such extra details into any paper. The article is far more important!
- b. Analyze the author's point of view and decide what school of thought is he/she from (Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, or other?). There may not be a clear answer as to what school an author belongs to. You may need to decide for yourself where the author fits.
 - i. You will also have to decide whether you agree or disagree with the author's viewpoint, and be ready to explain his/her logic fully in your assessment.

- c. Further research may be necessary. Check the cited sources the author used in his/her research, and read over those sources to further understand the topic at hand.

2. **How to write a politics essay**

- a. Politics essays are normally written in the 3rd person with an academic and professional tone. The 1st Person voice can be used, however, to describe your personal opinion regarding the topic, but should remain professional. Creative writing and artwork are seldom found in this style of essay.
- b. When writing the essay, your opinions should be stated as fact, and because of this, they must be defended heavily with evidence and analysis. For example, instead of saying, "I believe the sky is blue," be firm in your statements and write boldly, "the sky is blue as a result of..."
- c. Politics papers are often trying to solve a political issue or answer a profound question. You most likely will not be the first person to write about a problem, and therefore, you will need to research the essays on the subject that have come before you.
- d. In trying to solve a political issue/question, you will inevitably need to critique the sources who have tried to answer the question already. Be sure to have already analyzed such sources, and know whether you agree or disagree with their conclusions.
- e. Be sure to further contribute to the discussion. Do not just regurgitate your source's ideas and theories. Be ready in your analysis and conclusion to critique and expand upon them! Explain their faults, their genius, and help try and solve the political issue with your own thoughts.

History

History courses are similar to politics in that they are also text heavy, and require a good deal of independent research when writing papers. Information on historical events provided in class, however, is also capable of being used in essays as straight fact when done so appropriately.

1. How to analyze a historical document

- a. Historical documents can be divided primarily into 2 categories, 1st and 2nd Accounts.

Know what type of account you are reading.

- i. 1st hand accounts describe historical events at the time they occurred (or shortly thereafter) and often involve usage of the 1st person.
- ii. 2nd Hand accounts describe and analyze historical events after they have occurred. The author is generally not directly connected to the event, nor was around during the time it occurred.

- b. Historical documents, particularly 2nd hand accounts, often interpret events and how they influenced history thereafter. Be aware of the author's personal belief and how it shapes his/her idea on history. Just because it is written down, does not make it necessarily a pure fact.

2. How to write a history paper

- a. History papers are commonly written in the 3rd person and also use an academic tone. Where politics courses have more room to be creative, history papers rarely use the 1st person voice or include creative writing.

- b. Historical events, dates, names of people and figures, (i.e. the information provided by your professor) do not need to be cited. They fall into the “universal information” category that is free to be used in any scholarly article.
- c. Theories or specific data on events, people, places, etc. that scholars gathered/created by themselves must however be cited, and credit should be given.
- d. Historical papers often ask that you answer/solve a question or make an accusation about history. Find a topic that allows for interpretation and flexibility to take multiple sides.
- e. Do not regurgitate your history book. You are writing an academic essay not to explain what happened, but to examine things in a deeper way.

Economics

Economics courses are the most mathematically intensive out of the Intl. Rel. departments. Not all economics courses will require students to write academic pieces, but may instead ask for short economic analyses on current events.

1. How to write an economics paper

- a. Be aware of the economics terms used in professional news papers and magazines. Econ-terms often share words with normal English, but may have completely different meanings.
- b. Be able to relate a news article to a topic covered in class, and be able to clearly show how the current event is connected to economics.

- c. Do not only describe the event, but explain how the event relates to economic theories or rules.

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