

First Paper Assignment

Paper Length: 5-6 pages

Due Date: 11/1/2016 using Safeassign (your TA will send uploading info).

Write on one of the following topics:

Paper Topic 1: Should the federal government and/or state and local governments take measures to decrease the rate of incarceration in this country. What measures? Why or why not?

Paper Topic 2: Is the death penalty as it is administered in this country an appropriate method of punishment. Why or why not?

Normative Claims: As far as the normative claims you make are concerned, their persuasiveness should rest on the content of what you say in their support, as opposed to the authority of the people who espouse those views. So you will want some part of your paper to defend the normative claim you are using.

You may use a quotation in support of a normative point, but that should be because the person puts the point particularly well, not because the person is a of moral authority whose views are beyond question. (Of course with the empirical claims, someone's status as an authority might count. For example, a biologist will be better at estimating the effects of oil spills than some other people.) Thus (for example), if you use principles that you accept for religious reasons, you should also include some defense of these principles that someone who does not share your faith might find reasonable.

Empirical Claims: Your conclusion will rest in part on your view of the empirical facts surrounding the topic. To the extent that your views rely on such empirical assumptions, cite sources which substantiate these facts. For example, if your view depends on an estimate of the number of people effected by alternate policies, cite a source for the figures. **Citations should be in a format that allows checking of sources and thus should include page references. If the source is on the internet, cite a URL.** (You may of course question official estimates. For example you may use the likelihood of a particular source's slanting an estimate as a reason to treat that estimate as exaggerated. At times it may make your paper more credible if you take the bias and reliability of sources into account.).

Crediting Sources: You must **cite all sources used**. You may use *any standard citation format* so long as it gives a reader the relevant information about sources. An appropriate citation format will allow a reader to easily locate the source of the information cited, and to check what you say. Hence, author, title, journal (if a periodical), date and page number are usually required. References to web sites must include the URL so that they can be checked. You may feel free to consult with anyone you like in writing this paper, including us, your classmates, or anyone else who you think can be of help. **You must give credit where credit is due.** *If you get help from a friend, credit that friend in a footnote.* Essays **must be in your own words with quotations clearly indicated using quotation marks or indentation of the standard sort.** Paraphrases must indicate the source, and a quotation is still a quotation even with the substitution of a few words. Feel free to ask for advice if you are unsure of how to cite appropriately.

Many, if not most, of the empirical claims you will rely on stand in need of substantiation and you will need to supply support for them. Thus citations actually make your paper more persuasive. Be sure that the sources you cite are in a position to verify the claims you make on the basis of your citation. Controversial empirical claims not backed up by appropriate sources may be discounted by the reader.