

First Paper Assignment

Paper Length: 5-6 pages

Due Date: Wednesday December 7, however, if you want your paper back with comments before you take the final, it should be handed in by Wednesday November 30.

Write on one of the following five topics (alternatively you can write on the topic I will pass out for the final exam, in which case you should write on one of these for your final – I don't advise it since I think it will be easier to do this one outside of class, but it is permitted):

Paper Topic 1: As you know, parts of Iraq and Syria are now under the control of a militant group known as ISIS or ISEL and the Iraqi and Syrian governments (together with Iran to some extent) are fighting back. The United States has begun using air power to fight against the group. Some people argue that we should do more yet, perhaps including reintroducing ground troops to Iraq. Others argue that we should not be using any military force to remove ISEL. What should we be doing with respect to this conflict?

Paper Topic 2: Was the United States' recent involvement in bombing of parts of Libya, and other military activities in support of Libyan rebels justified? Explain why or why not.

Paper Topic 3: There is a lot of division over what the US should do about the civil war in Syria. Some of that has to do with issues surrounding the first question, but some people want the US to act more aggressively against the Syrian government. Russia recently got more deeply involved on the side of the Syrian government. So far the US has funded and armed some proxy but not itself intervened. The president seems reluctant to intervene more forcefully, but some disagree. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton recently said she supported a coalition including the US enforcing a no fly zone over Syria and former Republican Presidential candidate Chris Christie "has said he would shoot down Russian jets to enforce a Syrian no-fly zone." (New York Times, Oct. 19, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/20/us/politics/gop-candidates-leading-charge-in-call-for-syrian-no-fly-zone.html?_r=0) Should the United States intervene militarily in Syria, and if so how?

Paper Topic 4: There has been much recent talk about attacking Iran to stop their nuclear program, much of it in response to the recently negotiated treaty with Iran scaling back their nuclear program and much of the rest of the world scaling back sanctions on Iran. Does it make sense for the US or its allies to attack Iran to stop its nuclear program rather than go forward on a treaty?

Paper Topic 5: When President George W. Bush decided to invade Iraq in March 2003, was starting a war with Iraq justified?

Normative Claims: To the extent that your views rest on accepting some particular normative principle regarding wars and violence, say which principle or principles you rely on. (You may rely on more than one, or you may think that no matter what principle you rely on, your answer is justified. If so say so.) Also explain why the principles you rely on are appropriate. In other words, defend your normative assumptions.

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. You may use a quotation in support of a 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 war – how many people were at risk, which acts were acts of aggression, the likely effects of military action, etc.. 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 lives lost under various scenarios, 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 government'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.)

If your argument depends on estimates of the probable outcome of alternative courses of action, defend your view of those likelihoods. I realize that probability judgements cannot be fully precise, but some are better than others, and supported probability estimates are better than unsupported estimates. Since this paper is being written about contemporaneous and evolving events, we will be somewhat forgiving about an inability to supply hard data to back up claims. But a better paper will include more references to back up it's claims.

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 does not become something else 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.