

Notes to Guide Reading

Week 1, Section 2: Traditional Research Paper, and Global Justice as Normative Ethics

Baglione, “[...] Teaching Research-Paper Writing by Unpacking the Paper” (2008)

- The aim of this paper is have students think about the structure of the academic paper and the aim of the literature review.
- While Baglione, who writes for political science majors, focuses on creating a research design and incorporating empirical research into one’s writing, she makes several points relevant for our purposes.
 - For example, she stresses that good academic writing “is more than simply proper grammar, usage, and paragraph construction; it embodies the conventions, values, and norms of the discipline for which it is written” (595
 - Consequently, note that while this class teaches general principles of good writing that you should be able to utilize to improve your writing in any of your classes, you should learn the conventions of writing in your particular discipline.
 - Moreover, she emphasizes the importance of writing a literature review—which we’ll return to next week. Be prepared to explain what Baglione says writing a literature review consists in and why this stage of writing is important.
- Building on *Knowing Words* chapter 6 on the components of the academic argument, I encourage you to structure your academic papers—at least in this class—in the following way.
 - Though, I wish to stress that so long as you satisfy the requirements of any given writing assignment, it is your choice as a writer how to structure your papers. My only expectation is that your argument is clearly articulated and well-supported.
 - **Introduction:** grab your readers’ attention and make them want to read on. With your writing in this class, you should strive to start your normative arguments with some real-world example (descriptive or empirical claim) that demonstrates why we should care about your thesis.
 - **Background:** clarify important and/or contested concepts, terms, ideas that give your reader the context necessary to understand the argument you make. This will require you to think through the rhetorical situation and determine who your target audience is and what assumptions and pre-existing knowledge they may have about your topic.
 - **Argument:** present a clear, specific, and interesting/contestable claim (thesis); provide adequate and compelling reasons and evidence in support of the truth of your claim; develop a plausible warrant (underlying justification) for your argument.

What counts as acceptable evidence in normative political theory will include descriptive and empirical facts (e.g., case studies (that is, specific examples) or statistics), informative hypotheticals or analogies, appeals to fundamental values or ethical principles, etc.

And remember that without “analysis,” you’re not making an argument: to fail to explain how specifically your reasons and pieces of evidence justifies your thesis statement is to assume your reader will make the logical connection you should be explaining. You must do the legwork here.
 - **Counterarguments:** the strength of your argument depends on responding to possible weaknesses in or objections to your argument—whether these counterarguments regard your assumptions, central claim, reasons and evidence, or warrant—that reasonable people may level against you. You must both show why the objection is plausible (why a reasonable person would accept the objection as true) and also why it is ultimately wrong.

- **Conclusion:** briefly summarize your argument, but your focus should be on explaining important implications/consequences of the truth of your claim. For example, if you're analysis is correct, what does this mean for scholarship on your topic, for foreign policy decisions, etc.?
-

Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Subjectivism," in *Reason and Responsibility* (2008)

- Shafer-Landau's aim here is to demonstrate how to critically analyze competing arguments—in this case between normative subjectivism and meta-ethical subjectivism. Shafer-Landau's related central claims are that (1) conventional arguments in support of normative subjectivism are unconvincing and (2) conventional arguments in support of meta-ethical subjectivism fair better than normative subjectivism but is still vulnerable to three possible objections.
 - The aim of this reading is to develop an understanding of normative subjectivism, which contrasts Caney's defense of normative objectivism in *Justice Beyond Borders*, chapter 2.
 - That said, you should focus your reading on the following considerations—and be prepared to answer the following:
 - What is the difference between normative subjectivism and meta-ethical subjectivism? And how do normative subjectivists differ from objectivists?
 - What is one reason why the argument from tolerance fails?
 - What is one of the five problematic implications of normative subjectivism that Shafer-Landau discusses? And why does meta-ethical subjectivism still entail that "we abandon our aspirations for moral knowledge?"
-

Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders*, Chapter 2: Universalism

- This chapter is central to Caney's arguments on the various issue-areas we'll be studying: this concept of universalism, of cosmopolitanism is necessary to make any sense of the idea that principles of justice extend beyond borders.
- There are a lot of different arguments being made in this chapter, but you should focus your reading on the following considerations—and be prepared to answer the following:
 - What is the definition of universalism? And why would Caney qualify his central claim to say that the notion of universalism only applies to "some" moral principles.
 - What is the difference between universalism of scope and universalism of justification, and why is this distinction an important one for Caney's argument?
 - Explain three reasons or pieces of evidence Caney uses to demonstrate the truth of his claim, and explain what the warrant (underlying justification) for his argument is.