

Paper 3: Open Topic

WRTG 3020-101: Global Justice (summer 2017)

General Overview of Position Paper Assignments

This brief writing assignment requires you to construct a thesis-driven and evidence-based argument in response to a contemporary problem of justice.

It is characteristic of the ethical questions and the normative political theory literature we explore in this class—and, thus, it is also characteristic of the subjects you will be writing about this semester—that there is no clear right or wrong answer. However, there *are* stronger and weaker arguments, and in your writing you must do more than merely explain your opinion. This would fundamentally fail to satisfy the expectations of these assignments, and of writing in political theory more broadly.

Your task with this assignment is to take a stand on the issue below, and to construct an educated and informed argument—which not only incorporates specific ideas from required course readings that support your thesis, but which also draws on outside scholarly sources, and which defends your claim against possible objections. This assignment should be treated as a short position paper, in which you try to convince your audience that your perspective on the issue is the correct one.

Open Topic: Exploring a problem of justice related to a topic in your major

Your task for Paper 3 is to develop a normative argument in defense of a properly-formulated thesis that pertains to some contemporary problem of justice—some problematic international social, political, economic, environmental, or scientific status quo of your choice.

Examples of acceptable paper topics include, but are not limited to

- structural injustices (like unfair trade policies) that prevent wage laborers in developing countries from achieving a minimally decent standard of living,
- the mistreatment (rape and murder) of women and children in times of war,
- the influence of corporate special interests over American foreign policies,
- pharmaceutical companies inflating the costs of life-saving drugs and preventing their access in poor nations,
- environmental racism and the inequitable exposure to public health risks among poor nations and indigenous peoples,
- the trade in hazardous waste to developing countries with weaker environmental policies,
- the state-perpetrated violence against innocent civilians in Syria, and so forth.

Whatever issue of global justice you choose, I encourage you to start with an empirical or descriptive fact that demonstrates the normative problem you are engaging: a real-world example (or case study) that either demonstrates the problematic status quo you're writing about or which illustrates the central claim you defend in the paper. (This can count as the real-world example you are required to incorporate into your paper.)

Also, in your paper, you must incorporate the writings of any two authors we have read this semester *in addition to your external sources*.

Specific Directions

1. In 5-6 double-spaced pages (1-inch margins, 12-point font), construct a coherent and convincing normative argument that pertains to the problematic social, political, economic, environmental, or scientific status quo that you have chosen to write about.

2. Your paper must state a strong and properly-formulated claim (thesis), it must briefly explain the assumptions your argument may make (ideas you assume are true and which you will not defend in the paper), it must explain in detail two conceptual reasons that support this claim and two pieces of descriptive or empirical evidence that supports this claim, and it must provide a strong warrant that explains the underlying justification for your position.

3. Also, each of your reasons and your piece of evidence must be drawn from your sources—either the material you have been assigned to read for class or the external sources from your research.

- Note that when introducing a new reason or piece of evidence, you must state explicitly what source you draw the reason or evidence from.
- Note also that in your paper you must discuss one real-world example that illustrates your problematic status quo or the claim you defend—which can count as the piece of evidence in support of your central claim.

4. You must show explicitly how each reason or piece of evidence supports your thesis (analysis). If you do not explain this for your audience, you leave your readers to assume or infer the connections you see between your reasons and evidence and the claim.

5. With regard to your external sources, *at least two* of the required five external sources must be scholarly or academic—peer-reviewed—literature. The other three sources may be non-peer-reviewed, but you are encouraged to be selective in the literature you incorporate into your paper.

To determine whether a source is academic or peer-reviewed, look for some of the following cues:

- peer-reviewed articles in academic journals will have a volume and issue number on the first page of the article or in the citation—which will be written like Vol. 10, No. 1 or 10 (1).
- unless books are self-published (avoid these), all books are peer-reviewed—but you should try to find books published by university presses or respected popular academic presses
- university presses are easy to identify: Oxford University Press, Michigan University Press, etc.
- some quality popular academic presses include the following (this list is not exhaustive): Hackett, McGraw-Hill, Palgrave Macmillan, Pearson, Penguin, Routledge, Rowman & Littlefield, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Wiley and Sons

Credible or reputable, non-peer-reviewed sources may include

- government agencies (e.g., DOI, DOE, EPA, FDA, DOD, DOJ),
- international governmental organizations (e.g., UN, EU, World Bank, NATO, OPEC, OECD),
- non-governmental organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Doctors Without Borders, International Red Cross),
- think tanks (e.g., Hague Institute for Global Justice, Brookings Institution, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Carter Center, CATO Institute, Migration Policy Institute), or
- respected media outlets (e.g., *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, *Reuters*, BBC News, National Public Radio, CNN, etc.).

6. Your paper must also explain one realistic objection to your argument, why this counterargument is plausible (that is, why the objection is strong and accepted by reasonable people), and yet why the objection ultimately fails to show that your position is wrong.

7. You must correctly summarize, paraphrase, and/or quote material from your sources, properly and consistently applying the MLA, APA, or Chicago documentation style.

8. Lastly, you must mind the rhetorical situation—paying attention to the expectations of a general academic audience with regard to language, style, and tone, as well as attention to the specific grammatical and stylistic issues we will be covering in our sentence-level lessons this semester.

☑ Feeling Overwhelmed by the Directions? Follow this Checklist

Substance of your argument

- I have clearly stated a normative thesis (in one sentence only).
- I have clearly identified and explained each of the conceptual two reasons that support my thesis.
- I have clearly identified and explained each a possible warrant for my argument (a fundamental idea or value on which I could rest my entire argument).
- I have integrated two pieces of descriptive or empirical evidence to support my thesis (e.g., I explain one real-world example of the problem of justice or the claim I'm defending).
- I have developed a coherent argument—explicitly showing how each reason or piece of evidence supports the truth of my thesis, and neglecting to commit any logical fallacies.
- I have clearly described one reasonable objection to my thesis, I have thoroughly explained why the objection is plausible (convincing), and I have effectively explained why the objection is wrong.

Presentation of your argument

- I have provided an introduction that tries to capture the reader's interest and attention by showing the broad relevance of my topic or thesis.
- I have provided relevant background information on the topic to give readers necessary context.
- I have defined important concepts and ideas (especially if they are contestable).
- I have clearly stated the assumptions I am making in my argument.
- I have attempted to make effective rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos) in my argument.
- I have clearly structured my paper, making smooth transitions between ideas (via blueprinting, signposting, foreshadowing).
- I have line-edited my paper to catch and correct any sentence-level errors (spelling, punctuation, and grammar).
- I have implemented the rules of good writing in our working list to the best of my ability.

Using your sources effectively

- I have integrated five reputable external sources into my paper (including two scholarly sources).
- I have accurately reconstructed or represented the arguments and ideas of these authors/sources.
- I have correctly cited my sources in the body of my paper (using in-text citations, footnotes, or endnotes)—including specific page numbers.
- I have correctly provided the full citation of all my sources in my bibliography.

Paper 3 Grading Rubric

Student Name: _____

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<i>Specific Requirements</i>	<i>Omitted</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>% of Total Earned</i>
Rough Draft (10%): students must submit a <u>complete</u> rough draft by the due date.	✓	✓	✓	%
Rough Draft Peer Review (10%): students must participate in the peer-review workshop and complete the questionnaire provided. Your grade on this section will be based on the quality of the comments reviewers give their classmates, and will be determined by your peer-review partner.				
Introduction/Summary (5%): briefly explain the approach you are taking in answering this question prompt, providing necessary background information and clarifying any concepts or ideas that your audience needs to know to understand your argument.				
Thesis (5%): clearly state the normative claim you are defending.				
Reasons, Evidence, Warrant, and Analysis (30%): defend your claim by explaining <u>two</u> conceptual reasons and <u>two</u> pieces of evidence (descriptive or empirical) that support your claim; provide a strong warrant that explains the underlying justification for your argument. Your reasons and evidence must come from your <u>five</u> required sources—and your analysis must explicitly demonstrate how each reason and piece of evidence directly supports your thesis .				
Counterargument (15%): you must explain in detail <u>one</u> objection to the thesis you defend, explain why this counterargument is plausible (why a reasonable person might disagree with some aspect of your argument), and yet why the objection is ultimately wrong.				
Grammar (10%): committing more than <u>six</u> errors—including sentence fragments, run-on sentences, improper punctuation, and incorrect spelling—will result in the loss of half a letter grade. Refer to the grammar review provided on our course webpage.				
Sources, Citations, and Bibliography (15%): you must incorporate <u>five</u> external sources—a <i>minimum</i> <u>2</u> of which must be scholarly or peer-reviewed—and you must incorporate two authors from our assigned readings. You must also properly cite all quotes, paraphrases, and summaries. Specific page ## must be provided with each citation. (If the text lacks page numbers, include n.p. (no page) in the citation.) At the end of your essay, you must include the full citations of all your sources—using MLA, APA, or Chicago style—and the bibliography must be properly alphabetized. This does <u>not</u> count toward the minimum page requirement.				
Grade: Comments:				