

Long Policy Memo

This assignment is to write—with a partner—a long policy memo on an international relations topic of your choice. The memo should:

- identify an important international challenge or problem, including
 - explain why this challenge is important and why it is a ‘problem’
 - describe what is being done about it now
 - explain why what is being done is not adequate/acceptable
- identify two or more potential alternative policies
- advocate for the policy that you believe would be most effective and explain how it improves on current policy

You should write this memo as an expert on international politics writing to an audience of your choice. For example, if you were writing on a problem like aid implementation or donor fragmentation, you could address your memo to NGO aid workers if that were the most appropriate audience. You may also make recommendations for countries other than the United States.

The memo should be between 3,000 and 3,500 words (double-spaced) *not* including bibliographical references. Within this range, more words will not necessarily mean a better grade – brevity and precision are best for communicating policy recommendations.

Formal schedule and grading

By Session 13: Meet with TA to discuss potential topic(s)

Session 20: First draft for peer review due

Session 22: Peer review feedback due

Session 24: Final draft due. Submission must include final draft, peer reviewer comments, and a memo explaining your response to peer review.

Informal Schedule

In addition to the formal schedule, we suggest you observe this informal schedule as a good guide for checkpoints that will allow you to produce a high quality final product.

Session 9 - Pick a partner and a topic (TAs will ask). Choose something easily split up.

Session 11 - Have very rough outline to guide research, division of labor worked out

Session 12 - Have list of 5-7 sources (each partner) to review

Session 15 - Have a filled in outline, look for sources to fill gaps. Check in with the Writing and Communication Center if necessary. A few minutes given in recitations for groups to swap outlines, discuss.

Session 17 - Write 1st substantive section (paper total roughly 4 sections).

Session 18 - Write 2nd substantive section. Check in with the Writing and Communication Center if necessary.

Session 19 – Send draft to partner who will combine. Partners discuss introduction and conclusion together as well as establish responsibilities for writing.

Expectations

This assignment is designed to get you to apply the concepts you are learning in class to real world issues. Memos that regurgitate current events and do not apply key concepts from class will do poorly. Memos that creatively apply concepts from class to propose innovative policies will do well. The instructor and TAs **will not** read drafts of memos, but will entertain conversation about them. The Institute has a Writing and Communication Center that students should feel free to use.

Path to Success

You are going to have to do original research to flesh out the background, current state of play, and the likelihood of different policy options working. This should include: (1) Monitoring press outlets (2), Looking at official policy statements to understand stated objectives, (3) Consulting think tank reports, policy articles, and scholarly studies of the salient countries.

Innovative incorporation of readings from class, including potentially recommended readings, is essential to the policy memo. The core idea is to apply theories we are learning in class to a real world topic.

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