

## Short Analytical Paper #2: Policy or Research Memo

GOVT 204, Spring 2017

**Due Tuesday April 18th at the beginning of class**

The second short paper is intended to give you an opportunity to dive deeper into a policy issue or research question that interests you. You may choose from one of two options.

### Option 1: Policy Memo

If you choose this option, you will start by selecting (1) a policy issue and (2) an actor with a stake in that policy issue. For example, you might select the issue **climate change** and the actor **China**. You will write the policy memo as if you share the interests of that actor and are advising the actor on the best strategy to pursue to achieve those interests.

1. Briefly explain the policy issue.
2. Explain what your actor's interests are with respect to the policy issue. What does the actor hope to achieve? What are the international and domestic obstacles/constraints that the actor faces in achieving those interests?
3. Lay out a few (3-4) **realistic** policy options. Why are those policy choices realistic options for your actor to pursue?
4. Argue for **one** of those options. It is fine if there drawbacks or risks associated with the policy option you propose, but you should explain why it is the best option *relative to the other options that would plausibly be available to the actor you are advising*.

Throughout your discussion (steps 2-4), you should draw on relevant theories we have discussed in class as appropriate. This might include a discussion of causes of war, international institutions, terrorism, cooperation, etc. You need not make connections to all or even most of the theories/concepts we have discussed this semester, only those that you feel are relevant to your policy issue.

### Option 2: Research Memo

If you choose Option 2, you will start by selecting a research question or puzzle in the international relations literature that interests you (e.g., why don't democracies fight one another?). Then, you will select and review a recently published, peer-reviewed research article that addresses that question. The article **cannot be an article that is already on our syllabus**. Possible outlets you might survey include *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, or *Journal of Politics*, among many others. If you are unsure whether or not the article you are interested in reading is appropriate for this assignment, please consult me.

1. Provide a brief overview of the question/puzzle. Why is it important? What, if any, consensus seems to exist on this question? What are some areas of disagreement? At

this stage it may be helpful to revisit the discussion of your topic in our textbook or search for a review article on your chosen topic in the *Annual Review of Political Science*.

2. Summarize the article. Within the broader research agenda you chose, what is the specific question that the authors of the article address and how does it contribute to research on that broader question? What is the central argument that the authors make (i.e., what is the theory)? If applicable, what are the specific hypotheses that the authors test? How, if at all, do the authors test their theory? What are the main conclusions of the study? What avenues for future research do they suggest?
3. Provide a critique of the article. To what extent do the authors account for alternative explanations? In your opinion, how significant of a contribution to the broader research agenda is the article? What, if anything, could the authors do to present a more compelling argument or provide a better test of their theory?

### **General Guidelines**

Regardless of which option you choose, your paper should be thesis driven. For Option 1, your thesis should be a clear statement advocating a specific policy position in relation to a policy issue. For Option 2, your thesis should be a clear statement summarizing your overall assessment of the research article you have chosen to review.

Your paper should be about 5 double-spaced pages (12 point font, one-inch margins, stapled). You should use in-text citations in the author-year-page format (Frieden et al. 2016, 1). Please include a list of references at the end of your paper containing all sources cited in your paper. (The list of references is not included in the page count.) Your references should be in a consistent format. For an example, see the formatting of the readings in the syllabus.

As always, if you have any questions about this assignment or want any additional advice, please let me know.