

Successful Writing for Gov 20

The two short papers (and the essays on your exam) ask you to respond to a prompt by making an argument supported by evidence from this course. There are two goals to this assignment. The first is to teach you the skills to make and defend an argument based in evidence. The second is to demonstrate your knowledge of key course concepts and readings. Therefore, when grading your papers I will be looking at the following five elements:

1. Introduction

- Your paper should have a clear, identifiable thesis that answers the prompt's question
- Your thesis statement should be falsifiable
- Your introduction should contain a roadmap for the rest of the paper

2. Argument

- Your argument should be unique and/or nuanced
- Your argument should be carried throughout the paper
- Your paper should explicitly address existing explanations and how your argument relates

3. Evidence

- The evidence used should advance the argument and be precise
- The evidence used should come from at least 3 course sources

4. Conclusion

- Your conclusion should restate the same argument made in the introduction and body paragraphs
- Your conclusion should not introduce any new content

5. Writing Quality

- Your paper should not have major issues with regards to spelling, usage or mechanics

Recommendations for how to write for political science

- Create a detailed outline
- Rely on class materials (texts and Lecture Notes)
- Start early
- Define key terms
- Avoid normative language
- Clearly tie each paragraph to the argument
- Use quotes sparingly
- Use "I argue..."
- Stick to the page limit
- Meet with me and take feedback seriously