

POL S 305: Blogpost-style essay assignment

Your task is to write a short essay of not more than **1000 words** in a style that one might find on an academic blog. That is, the essay should be written without a lot of technical language (or, at least, you define any terms that are not vernacular in English) and no jargon, in fairly short sentences with lots of paragraph breaks. Nonetheless, it should still reflect a careful reading of the texts and ideas we are studying in class, and should aim to make those texts accessible to an educated but not specialist audience. Rather than only explaining the text (although doing that briefly, clearly, selectively, and accurately is a challenge in itself), it should also show the reader why they should care about it: perhaps it ties in to some topical issue, or political problem, or trope of popular culture?

The assignment will be graded on the basis of:

1. Accuracy in representing the text (building on what you have already learned writing short papers). You don't need to attempt a full synopsis of any particular text for this assignment; you can pick out specific issues, but you should give them some context.
2. Clarity in conveying complex ideas--again, building on what you have learned writing short papers, but with even more emphasis on keeping your writing clear and not too fake-academic.
3. Intellectual creativity in making a discussion or idea relevant or accessible to a wider audience. Can you find some "hook" that would make an otherwise complicated text or debate of interest to people without a lot of expertise in the area? This is a skill related to asking a good critical question, but it's a looser and less formally academic assignment. Our readings on biopower address the politics of sexuality, settler colonialism, LBGTQ issues, terrorism, nationalism, and racial politics, so there are lots of big themes to choose from!

Two pieces of writing advice specific to blogposts:

- a. Have a strong lead (sometimes written "lede"). That is, have a catchy and engaging first sentence or two.
- b. Instead of referencing your paper as you would with a conventional print essay, you can link to citations, evidence, related stories etc.

If your assignment is especially good or *apropos*, I might ask you for permission to post it on my (rather moribund) blog so that it can act as a model for others, and get an audience! (You can, of course, decline.) In this case, comments will be disabled.

The website links some examples of good blogposts.

- **Blogpost #1 is due on Thursday November 29 at 0930 on any issue arising from our reading of Foucault or Puar.**
- **Blogpost #2 is due on Wednesday December 12 at 0930 on any issue arising from our reading of Morgensen, Rifkin, or Povinelli. Note that this is the final assignment for the course, due after the end of classes.**

**Both blogposts should be emailed as Word attachments so that I can follow any links.
Thanks.**