

Final project for POL S 404: The Politics of Sleep
First draft due: 1300 Wednesday March 27
Final version due: 0900 Wednesday April 17 2019

Please email your draft and your final paper as a double-spaced Word document to cheyes@ualberta.ca

From the syllabus:

- Final research project (20% for draft, 10% for final version): you'll draft a final research paper of no more than 3000 words, and receive feedback on that draft from me and from peers. You'll rewrite the final paper in response to the feedback and submit a final version.

This is an argumentative essay or “position paper” that picks up on a question or problem from the material covered in this course. I encourage you to use one of the critical questions posed in your short papers or the work of your class presentation to piggy-back your longer, written paper. Write no more than 3000 words (usually 10-12 pages), including any footnotes and your references page. I imagine this final paper as an opportunity to write a short academic article that you might present somewhere or publish in an undergraduate journal.

1. What is a “position paper”?

This paper is understood as an argumentative intervention in political theory—that is, you must take and argue a position, rather than only surveying a literature or marshalling evidence in support of a solely empirical claim. That said, a necessary part of any paper is also explaining a text or position or setting out a problem.

2. What kind of research should I do for my paper?

I don't require bringing in a long bibliography of new citations, although you will want to refer to at least four course readings. Feel free to ask me for further reading suggestions once your topic is formulated. Use any standard referencing style, but be sure to indicate all citations and quotations very clearly (review the policy on plagiarism, and ask me if you are unsure about this). Add a list of references at the end of the paper if that is appropriate for your referencing style.

3. How should I structure my paper?

There are many different ways of writing a good paper. However, a good model to use is the old standby I teach at the 200-level: introduction (preview of the paper, including a thesis statement); motivation of your question or problem, including or segueing to a concise presentation and juxtaposition of texts you've read in which this problem appears; the stating of your own argument; any anticipated objection to your position, followed by a response to the objection (repeat if necessary); conclusion (summarizing the paper). Many students work from an outline in which you've mapped out the various sections of your paper, the points you want to make, how the readings fit in, and so on. You may find it helpful to draw a “map” of your essay on a giant sheet of paper and refer back to it. Notice, though, that it's mainly the practice of writing and revising that lends a paper its coherence. It's hard to map out something you haven't yet thought—although, often, useful to try anyway.

4. *Where do I start?*

There are two places it can help to start. One is with your question: ask yourself, “What motivates this question?” (notice that’s something you’ve worked on in your short papers) “What theoretical problems does it point to?” “What sorts of off-the-cuff positions is a political theorist likely to adopt in answer to this question?” Write these brainstormings down—eventually they will form part of your paper. The other place to start if you are feeling overwhelmed is with the readings. Pick the texts that you think will be important to your essay, and write brief one-page summaries of them (if you haven’t already). Eventually you may incorporate these into the body of your essay. A third useful trick is to freewrite for 5 or (not more than) 10 minutes: just look at your essay question (or a more specific problem) and write in a stream-of-consciousness whatever you can in answer to the question. You can then edit this material, which is less daunting.

5. *How should I organize my time?*

Spend as much time on actually writing as you can, and **don’t defer writing too long in favour of reading or “thinking.”** Your first draft is due on March 27, and you should start work on this project no later than March 6, even if your presentation has not yet happened. Don’t feel you have to work entirely alone: discuss your ideas with each other or other students, or swap outlines or drafts. *Less* time spent working actively (through writing or critical discussion) is better than *more* time spent staring at a book or blank screen. Obviously, don’t leave this project until the last minute. If you start writing early, you’ll be able to test drive your ideas in ways that make the most of class time. You should also plan for doing real work on the first draft to respond to comments and turn it into a final version; this is probably where most of the learning is going to happen.

6. *What is the difference between a first draft and a finished paper?*

I will be reviewing your draft and providing feedback, as will two of your peers. With that in mind, it must be coherently written as a proper series of paragraphs (no rambling “notes” or bullet points that we have to make into sense), with any footnotes, citations, and references included. It does not, however, need to be perfectly polished. I recommend keeping the first draft on the short side—no more than 2500 words, say—so that you can add to it without being pressured to equally delete, and hence without exceeding the 3000 word limit.

You are submitting your finished paper on April 17 by 0900. This version *must* respond in some way to the feedback you have received from me. You don’t have to *accept* all edits or advice, but you must *engage* them in some way. It would be foolish not to correct typos we have pointed out, but if I write, for example, “how does this paragraph follow?” you could do various things: delete the paragraph, rewrite the paragraph, reorganize the paper. If I say, “how will you respond to the objection that....?” you could add a direct response, you could rewrite the section of the paper that incites the objection. It is extremely frustrating (but also surprisingly common) to give students feedback on their written work, only to receive the same mistakes (sometimes literally the same work) back in the next iteration.

7. How will the draft and the final version be graded?

Your draft will be graded to the standards of a normal term paper at the 400-level in Arts but with a small allowance (of about one grade increment) for it being a draft. (Bear in mind that most students simply submit a first draft as a final paper and never do revision work on their writing anyway!) Your final version will be graded both to those same standards (without allowance) and on the basis of how well you have responded to comments and improved the draft.