

International Politics Writing Guidelines

Planning

- Start work on your essay early.
- Choose a question or topic, and assess exactly what it is demanding.
- Make of a list of possible sources of information (the textbook and reader, additional books, journal articles, media, internet).
- Do some reading, take notes, and outline your essay structure (with the demands of the question uppermost).
- Consult your tutor or lecturer with any queries about the essay question, your essay structure, or sources.

Essay questions

Typically require you to draw on readings and insights from more than one topic.

Are best addressed by breaking down the question into its components:

- key definitions required
- key facts or descriptions required
- time periods
- description/facts versus analysis/argument/opinion

You are required to relate the topic to its treatment and relevance for international politics, not domestic or comparative politics. You are also required to make at least brief references to key international relations theories with relevance to the essay topic.

Doing your research

1. Re-read your notes from the relevant lectures, or re-watch the lecture video.
2. Begin with relevant textbook chapters and the readings for relevant topics in the course reader, then:
3. Consult further sources:
 - a. books listed in the course guide or textbook, or books or articles by the same authors
 - b. journal articles (using social science databases to locate them)
 - c. magazine or media articles, where relevant and from reputable publications
 - d. websites (especially for official documents, publications, international organisations, NGOs or governments; also for media articles; be careful of un-authored articles or obscure websites)
4. Use sources judiciously i. e. where they provide relevant facts, opinion or argument, or quotable quotes. Quotes should be brief and to the point.

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Writing Your Essay

Use a conventional structure: Introduction, Main Body and Conclusion

Use subheadings to break the essay into thematic sections, and to group together sections of argument.

Be concise:

- Avoid repetition of points or arguments
- Make every sentence count, don't waffle

Word Limits: don't fall short of the word limit by more than 100 words; don't exceed the word limit by more than 150-200 words. Use the "word count" function in *Word* (under "tools" menu). Structure your essay carefully and logically, before you begin writing within your outline.

Some tips:

Introduction

1. Set the scene by briefly outlining the key issue, problem or dilemma your essay addresses; outline the stages of your essay

Main body

2. Set out key definitions, facts or description
3. Move into analysis or argument, using facts, sources or quotes where relevant
4. Divide main body into sections, if the question or your answer deals with separate issues

Conclusion

5. Very briefly summarise your key arguments, in two or three sentences
6. Set out your analytical conclusions and final opinion

Example Outline:

Why do civil wars occur? Discuss drawing on specific examples from around the world. (1500 words)

Introduction:

-Outline war and conflict as a standard feature of human social interaction.

-Narrow to civil war as particular type of conflict.

-Briefly outline/ explain that there are various reasons why civil wars occur, e.g. social inequality, distribution of wealth, natural resources, political instability, government policy & law, racial inequality etc.

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-Thesis statement: Civil wars occur because of social inequality fuelled predominantly by large variations in the distribution of wealth and racial differentiation.

-State that this essay discusses these factors by referring to the examples of civil war in West Papua and Rwanda.

-SCOPE: West Papua – focus on distribution of wealth and Rwanda – focus on racial differentiation.

Paragraph 1:

Topic Sentence: Civil war is a specific type of war that is often fuelled by social factors, in particular inequalities in wealth distribution and racial differentiation.

- More in depth discussion of civil war as a specific type of war.
- Provide more in depth information about factors that lead to this type of war – specifically focusing on deeper factors of distribution of wealth and racial differentiation.

Paragraph 2:

Topic Sentence: The ongoing conflict in West Papua that escalated to civil war has been significantly fuelled by inequality in the distribution of wealth between West Papuans and Indonesians more widely.

- Draw on the case study of the Grasberg mine. Outline how mining control over land rights, employment and natural resources all lead to inequalities in the division of wealth between Indonesians and West Papuans.
 - Mining control over land - displacement as locals are relocated by large mining companies to less lucrative areas affecting their opportunities and ability to earn a living.
 - Employment - increased competition as Indonesian migrants relocate to work at the mine, negatively affecting West Papuan locals.
 - Natural resources – the presence of natural resources means that security guards who work at the mine engage in ‘rent seeking’ behaviours; demanding payment from West Papuan locals who try to set up unlicensed businesses in the mining area to survive.

Paragraph 3:

Topic Sentence: Racial differentiation between groups creates inequalities that can lead to civil war as evidenced by the example of Rwanda.

- Draw on the Rwandan civil war that led to the genocide of 1994. Explain how historical tensions arising from the Belgian colonial differentiation between Tutsi and Hutu eventually led to conflict.

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- Outline how Tutsis (the dominant/ elite race) were differentiated from Hutu's (the subordinate/ peasant race)
- Explain how this differentiation led to an uprising that over several decades would culminate in civil war.
- Highlight how the government labelled Tutsis accomplices of the Rwandan Patriotic Front and Hutu members of opposition parties as traitors.
- Explain how this escalated tensions over and over until eventually the civil war became a genocide.

Conclusion:

Summarise that civil war is a particular type of conflict that occur for a variety of reasons. Recap some of the key points from the examples of West Papua and Rwanda to remind the reader that civil war is often fuelled by large variations in the distribution of wealth and racial differentiation. Conclude that these examples show that civil wars occur due to social inequality.

Referencing and Plagiarism

You must ensure that all your sources are cited correctly, and that plagiarism is avoided. There are very serious penalties for plagiarism and cheating. Consult the 'Working with Sources' document on MyUni and read the Academic Honesty Policy. The full policy is available at:

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/policies/230/>.

If you have any doubts, ask your course convenor. You should fully and correctly reference your essay using the Harvard System

(http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/docs/referencingGuide_harvard.pdf). You should also append a Reference List (a list of the sources you have used) at the end of the paper. Failure to do this correctly could be construed as plagiarism.