

POLS 125 Research and Debate Project, Fall 2009

This project has two parts: a paper and an in-class debate presentation.

1. The paper.
 - a. Research the assigned topic. (Or propose a topic of your own to me sometime by November 1). For the debate topics I propose below, I have suggested one reading to get you started, which is available from the CQ Researcher website. You can access this great nonpartisan information source by going through the Copley Library website's database search (http://marian.sandiego.edu/cl_dbs_az.html) and searching for the "CQ Electronic Library." You must use this article, plus **five** others that you find on your own, as the basis for your argument. Try to find the best, most unbiased information you can. Cite your sources in an annotated bibliography (directions on the attached page).
 - b. If you are writing the paper on a Supreme Court case, then you should read the briefs for both sides, and any amicus curiae briefs that are filed with the court. Other sources are unnecessary, though it will be useful to read at least the summaries of other court cases that are referenced as precedent in the argument briefs.
 - c. Your paper should be a reasoned argument in favor of or opposed to the question posed. It should contain a clear thesis statement, outlining your argument and your reasoning. It should be well-organized. It absolutely must consider the opposing arguments to your thesis, and you should remember that a persuasive essay does not lightly dismiss legitimate claims made by opponents.
2. The in-class debate.
 - a. You and two or three others will stage a debate for the class on your question, on the date listed below. How you divide up the work for the debate is up to you. Sometimes, groups assign two people to present the facts, two to argue pro, and two to argue con. Other groups divide into a pro side and a con side and organize their presentations separately. Some groups use multimedia (powerpoint/video). Others incorporate questions to engage the rest of the class.
 - b. The group dealing with cases before the Supreme Court should stage a mock trial. You should argue that particular case for the class, presenting the facts and legal arguments that appear in the briefs (in your own way, and at a level appropriate for the rest of the class that doesn't know the details of the issue).
 - c. The debate **WILL** be graded. Everyone in the group must participate. It should be clear, informative, and engaging.

TOPICS

The topics for your debates are as follows:

Should the United States send more troops to Afghanistan?

Debate date: December 4.

Read: "The Afghanistan Dilemma.?" *CQ Researcher* August 7, 2009. Volume 19, Issue 28.

Should the US institute a Cap and Trade system to deal with climate change?

Debate date: December 7.

Read: CQ Research Report: "Confronting Warming: Can states and localities prevent climate change?" *CQ Researcher* January 9, 2009, Volume 19, Issue 1.

Does the first amendment prohibit Congress from banning videos depicting animal abuse?

Mock trial/debate date: December 9

Read the MERIT BRIEFS submitted to the Supreme Court for the case *United States v. Stevens*, which is currently being considered by the Supreme Court.

Independent research topics will be presented either individually or in debate format on December 11.

Evaluative/Annotated Bibliography

This assignment does not apply to the group doing the Supreme Court cases.

The purpose of this assignment is to draw your attention to the sources of information that we rely on to form our opinions and make political judgments. Each of the MINIMUM OF SIX (including the *CQ Researcher*) sources that you use when researching your debate topic must be a credible, reliable source. If in writing a bibliographic note for a source you come to doubt that it would count as a credible, reliable source, then you're probably right, it won't count. Find another one.

The format for the bibliography is as follows. Using either the Chicago Manual of Style or the MLA handbook as a guide, supply the appropriate bibliographic entry for each of your six or more sources. Any appropriate entry must have the following (even if the manual doesn't specifically say so...)

- Author
- Title
- Journal or periodical title
- Date of publication
- Page numbers (if applicable)
- Publisher (or parent web site)
- Full URL (<http://> etc) (if applicable)

After you make the bibliographic entry, provide a few sentences summarizing the information provided by the source. Make sure you answer the following questions:

- What information did you learn by reading the source?
- What, if any, biases could you detect in the source?
- What do you know about the publisher of the article or book that tells you that the information is reliable and credible?

A NOTE ON WIKIPEDIA: THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA. Before citing a source from Wikipedia, please go to Lexis-Nexis (a link is available on my website) and find and read the article, "Snared in the Web of a Wikipedia Liar", by Katharine Q. Seelye, in *The New York Times* December 4, 2005. You may cite Wikipedia sources, but only if you specifically comment on this article in your annotated bibliography.