

**Foreign Policy Issue Brief for PS 345-- American Foreign Policy  
Elizabethtown College, Spring Semester 2008**

This document is online with links at <http://users.etown.edu/s/selchewa/home/PS345brief.pdf>.

**Purposes**

One of the main objectives of PS 345 is to develop your ability to apply the concepts and principles of American foreign policy to the daily flow of events and to specific foreign policy issues. This foreign policy brief progressive writing assignment will enable you to work over the semester on a current topic of your choice, from three analytical angles and in a broad context. You will bring into play (1) empirical, (2) normative, and (3) policy-oriented perspectives as you gain further knowledge of the substance of the topic. The style of presentation is to condense a great deal of evaluation into a short and carefully reasoned persuasive argument. The sequential nature of the four parts of the project will call on your integrative and critical abilities as you work to produce the polished final draft, which is the only one to be graded. The aim of your essay is to present and defend a course of action on an ongoing international issue to the responsible and specified American target audience of your choice, public or private sector.

The main purpose of this **twelve-page** action-memo assignment is to take you through the stages of a complete reasoning process preparatory to coming to a logical conclusion. I will comment, in turn, on the substance and style of the first three drafts to help you develop a complete yet succinct twelve-page final product that will be a flow of the essence of your conclusions. You are invited to consult with me as often as useful. Conciseness and careful economy of wording are vital at all stages of the process of refinement. Always favor informed evaluative and interpretative analysis over description of details and chronology.

**Assignment**

Select a current issue or problem in American foreign policy. After your topic is approved, start working on it from empirical, normative, and policy-oriented angles, in that sequence. The first draft of each section should be **3-4 pages** long. In each, look for:

Part 1: **Empirical Analysis Draft** -- Your explanation of the actors, nature, significance, causes, effects, dynamics, and trends of the situation. That is, basically, “What’s going on here?”

Part 2: **Normative Analysis Draft**-- Given your empirical analysis, now state your assessment of the ethical issues and group interests at stake, the values and interests that you support (and why), and your preferred outcome (and why). A “pro and con” framework is often helpful here to frame the issues, the interest and value positions, and the alternatives most sharply. Take a clear position at the end of this section after you evaluate the various positions.

Part 3: **Policy Analysis Draft**-- Based on the previous two sections, state your realistic action plan recommendations on specifically what should be done (and by whom) to bring about your preferred outcome. What obstacles or countercurrents stand in the way of these recommendations? Use some conjectural thinking here.

The polished **final version** (the only one to be graded) will succinctly (in **12** pages) synthesize and connect the previous three and provide, in order: (1) your explanation of the nature, causes, and effects of the situation. (2) your assessment of the values and interests at stake, and (3) your recommendations on what should be done (and by whom) to bring about your suggested solution to the problem you have identified. The result should be a coherent and convincing essay that would be useful to a foreign policy decision maker faced with responsibility in that issue.

**Due Dates for the Foreign Policy Brief**

**Task**

1. Selection of a topic
2. Empirical analysis draft (3-4 typed pages)
3. Normative analysis draft (3-4 typed pages)
4. Policy analysis draft (3-4 typed pages)
5. Final version (12 typed pages)

**Due Dates**

- January 24  
February 14  
March 18  
April 3  
May 1

**NOTE: Your adherence to this timeline is CRUCIAL in your semester-long writing improvement process, and severe tardiness at the intermediate or final stages will be a negative factor in the final grade for the brief. The common causes of poor performance (Ds and Fs) on this assignment are**

- 1. Not staying on the timeline for both the intermediate and final drafts**
- 2. Ignoring the specific requirements of the assignment**
- 3. Handing in poorly done first drafts just to meet the due date, hoping to do well on the final draft**
- 4. When you prepare your final draft, ignoring my comments and suggestions on your intermediate drafts and those I give to the class as a whole.**

### **Standards for the Brief**

The term paper is to be at least **12** succinctly worded double-spaced typed pages in length. All source material must be cited in a proper standard citation form in endnotes **starting with the first draft**. Use the standard form you are familiar or comfortable with, perhaps from your major. All reference materials used must be included in a bibliography at the end of the paper, **starting with the first draft**.

1. Internet sources are easily available, but must be carefully evaluated for their worth. Look at the Online! A Reference Guide to Using Internet Sources, the Web site for the Bedford/St. Martin's text of that name, at <http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/index.html>. Also see the top part of my web page "Starter Tips for Internet Research" at <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/starter.html>. Many sources for online research can be found through my WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/>.
2. Type double-space with one-inch margins all around, **starting with the first draft**. Neatness, spelling, and phraseology count in the evaluation of the essay's quality. Therefore, it is important that the final essay be proofread carefully, as it will be graded on style and appearance as well as on content.
3. You are expected to abide by the **Elizabethtown College Pledge of Integrity** in all of your work, in and out of class. It is online at <http://www.etown.edu/web/policies/academicPolicies.html#pledge>.
4. **Plagiarism or copying from any source without quotation marks and citation will not be tolerated**. Be especially cautious about "following your sources too closely," i.e., lifting occasional sentences, long phrases, or even whole paragraphs from your sources and using them as if they were your own, without quotation marks. This amounts to "academic shoplifting." Please consult the booklet "Academic Integrity at Elizabethtown College" for further detailed information on the problems of plagiarism and how to avoid them. This booklet is the standard reference on the use of sources at Elizabethtown College, is used in all First Year Seminars, and is available in the Office of the Dean of College Life.

### **Grading Standards for the Brief (and the Course)**

**A----** Represents a grade of excellence, showing distinctive evidence of obvious mastery of the material with insight and originality, superior organization and reasoning, comprehensiveness of knowledge in reaching conclusions, skillful writing, and proper attention to all standards of form. Such papers make a smooth flowing argument, demonstrate insights into the subject matter, synthesize ideas, show interrelationships, clearly explain causes and effects, and set out a realistic set of policy recommendations.

**B----** Given to a sound or good presentation, considerably above merely acceptable standards and showing a competent comprehension of the material and assignment. This level of attainment shows above average effort and thought expressed through solid writing skills and observance of the requirements of form.

**C----** Shows a superficial or cursory presentation that is adequate in covering in a sketchy manner the broad outlines of the topic, but fails to be complete in the identification, taking into account, and exploration of important details and

nuances. It may fail to include or to give the appropriate attention to important aspects of the topic, or rely upon weak or superficial sources. Writing and format are still adequate and without major deficiencies.

**D----** Denotes a greatly limited mastery of the subject matter, below acceptable standards and seriously flawed by poor organization, coverage suffering from large gaps and vague notions, few and/or weak sources, and poor writing and form.

**F----** Indicates severely inadequate and unsatisfactory work that does not acceptably fulfill the minimum standards of the assignment.

### **Topics and Citation Standards for the Foreign Policy Brief**

One good way to start a search for a topic is to browse through the websites of the leading U.S. foreign policy research institutes, NGOs, and journals to see which topics they are now debating. They try to be at the forefront of the new ideas in foreign policy. Look first at the sites of the organizations annotated on the Research Institutes, Nongovernmental Organizations, International Relations Journals and Magazines, and American Foreign Policy pages (among others) of the WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources <http://www2.etoyn.edu/vl/>. Of greatest initial interest may be the broad-scope websites of the Foreign Policy Association, [Foreign Affairs](#), [Foreign Policy](#), Council on Foreign Relations, Carnegie Endowment, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Policy Library, with much analytical material online. When you have defined your more specific interests, pages such as U.S. Government, Peace, Conflict Resolution, and International Security, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Global Environment, International Development, and the Regions and Countries section, among others, will also be of great help to you.

#### **Some suggested topics would include:**

1. "Nation-building" and the promotion of democracy in U.S. foreign policy
2. Tactical or "bunker buster" nuclear weapons: how advisable?
3. Humanitarian intervention by the U.S. military in civil wars
4. Should NATO be redesigned or abolished?
5. Unilateral versus multilateral approaches in U.S. foreign policy: circumstances and interests
6. Wither foreign (or military) aid?: how much, to where, for what purposes?
7. How to achieve the best nuclear nonproliferation policy: stemming the leakage of nuclear materials
8. The domestic side of anti-terrorism: U.S. homeland defense
9. Iraq: what do we do now?
10. What about the others?: effects of U.S. foreign policy on other states
11. What to do with American primacy in the world?
12. Anti-Americanism in the world: how much of a hindrance, can or should it be reduced?
13. Broad U.S. relationship with key countries or areas, such as Western Europe, Russia, China, Japan, France, Germany, United Kingdom, India, Islamic world, Global South, South/North Korea, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Colombia
14. A new global strategy for the United States?
15. Issues of coordination in foreign and security policy among U.S. government agencies
16. Environmental protection and sustainable development: still a place in U.S. foreign policy?
17. America's internal "culture wars" and their effects on U.S. foreign policy
18. China's desire to reintegrate Taiwan: how great a threat to peace?
19. What place for international public health issues (or AIDS) in American foreign policy?
20. What role for the United Nations in U.S. foreign policy?
21. Domestic effects of national security policy in the war on terrorism
22. Improving the effectiveness of the Department of State (Pentagon) (Office of Homeland Security) (CIA)
23. Are economic sanctions/rewards an effective foreign policy tool?
24. The intelligence community: "darn good"?
25. The Patriot Act: the proper remedy?
26. How goes Afghanistan?
27. Free trade: a good idea?
28. What sort of United Nations reform?

29. Iranian (North Korean) nuclear weapons: what to do?
30. Saudi Arabia (Pakistan): a reliable ally?
31. How to deal with the long-term rise of China as a major global actor
32. The Kurdish wild card in Iraq
33. Is Israel/Palestinian peace possible?
34. American policies toward the development of WMD
35. Terrorists in our midst: what to do?
36. US immigration policy
37. Global warming: what to do?

### **Some major online sources on citation styles and writing tips**

1. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
2. Research and Documentation Online, by Diana Hacker: <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>.
3. Columbia Guide to Online Style: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos2006/basic.html>
4. Citation guides from the Libraries of the University of California at Riverside:  
<http://library.ucr.edu/?view=help/citing.html>