

POLI 203  
Spring 2016  
What makes a good paper?

We will be looking at these and other elements in assessing the quality of your papers. Keep these in mind:

- Make sure to answer **ALL** portions of the prompt. Failure to address any portion of the prompt will affect your grade. (That is, answer the whole question, don't just pick one part and focus on it.)
- Craft a quality argument that combines the answers to the questions in the prompt into a coherent essay. (That is, don't be disjointed; take the different elements of your essay and turn them into a coherent whole.)
- Include a strong thesis statement that conveys your main argument to the reader and provides an effective overview of the topic you will cover in the paper.
- Include topic sentences that connect each paragraph back to your thesis statement and enhance the organization of your paper. Never let the reader wonder why you wrote a given paragraph; provide a road map.
- Select quality sources, including academic sources not just journalistic ones. Make sure to review the technical requirements on the assignment if you have questions regarding what constitutes an academic source.
- This means you will likely have a mixture of news or non-academic sources (for example for the case material about individual exonerations or other cases), and that you will then link those with theoretical concepts from the academic work you cite.
- Offer original analysis of the academic sources you select; do not merely summarize what you have read. Go beyond what is discussed in class.
- Write in a clear, concise manner in order to enhance the clarity of your argument. Avoid passive voice, awkward and wordy phrasing, as well as vague pronoun references. Whenever you have the choice between vague / ambiguous and specific /detailed, always go for precision.
- Use proper punctuation, spelling, and grammar throughout the paper. Write in a formal style, not an informal one. Use page numbers. Use 12-point font, 1 inch margins, double-spacing, include a bibliography.
- Include at the top of your paper the following: Title (which explains or highlights your main point), Your name, POLI 203, Date.
- Choose a citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) and make sure to include in-text citations or footnotes, as well as a list of references. Only include references you use. If you read things and then don't use them, don't include. If they were helpful for the paper, find a way to refer to them in the paper. Otherwise, don't include them.