

Position Papers

Background and Goals

Your position papers are opportunities for you to explore debates about that human-environment dynamic. They require you to look at both sides of an argument about an environmental issue, advocate for a position using quality data and evidence, and defend your position against counter-arguments.

The goals of this activity are for you to:

- 1) Produce an in-depth yet concise analysis of a contemporary environmental issue facing society.
- 2) Develop awareness of the competing perspectives associated with most such issues.
- 3) Craft and defend a well-researched argument concerning a current environmental debate.
- 4) Improve your writing skills.

You will be given the topic roughly two weeks prior to the due date for the paper. The topic will relate to issues recently covered in class. We will discuss the topic in class the day it is assigned. You can ask questions about the topic at that time, in office hours, or via email.

Instructions

Your paper should use the following structure:¹

I. Introduction (1 paragraph)

A) Concisely explain the problem or issue, previewing the more detailed explication that you will soon provide.

1) Explain why your reader, whom you should assume is a member of the general public, should care about this problem or issue.

B) Present your thesis statement which lays out your argument.

C) Preview the structure of your paper.

II. Background information (2–4 paragraphs)

A) Use facts, statistics, and data to provide your reader with a solid, working understanding of the issue you are exploring.

¹ If you have a creative idea about an alternate yet effective way of structuring your paper, please consult with me.

III. Argument (3 or more paragraphs)

A) Present your argument.

- 1) Explain one reason why your argument is correct, using facts, statistics, and data.
- 2) Explain a second reason why your argument is correct, using facts, statistics, and data.
- 3) Explain a third reason why your argument is correct, using facts, statistics, and data.²

IV. Counter-argument (3 or more paragraphs)

A) Present your counter-argument.

- 1) Explain one reason why your counter-argument is correct, using facts, statistics, and data.
- 2) Explain a second reason why your counter-argument is correct, using facts, statistics, and data.
- 3) Explain a third reason why your counter-argument is correct, using facts, statistics, and data.³

V. Rebuttal (1–3 paragraphs)

A) Articulate why your argument is still valid in the face of the counter-arguments.

- 1) Explain one reason why your original argument is still superior, using facts, statistics, and data.
- 2) Explain a second reason why your original argument is still superior, using facts, statistics, and data.⁴

V. Conclusion (1 paragraph)

A) Concisely summarize the main points of your paper.

² You may have more than three lines of support for your argument. Three is a minimum.

³ You may have more than three lines of support for your counter-argument. Three is a minimum.

⁴ You may have more than two lines of support for your rebuttal. Two is a minimum.

Tone and Style

The piece by Behn (2005) describes the style and tone of the ideal policy memo: concise, compelling, and well written. Your position papers should have the same qualities. Grammar, spelling, organization, directness, cohesiveness, clarity, and completeness will all affect your grade. An otherwise strong argument is undercut when a writer diminishes his or her credibility through sloppy writing.

If you know that you need help improving your writing, please contact the staff at Writing Tutorial Services (<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/>). I will provide you critiques of your papers so that you can improve your writing during the semester, and you can always come talk to me during office hours.

Formatting

Use 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Double-space your paper. Do not double-space the references; begin them on a separate page following the end of your paper and use Chicago style for their formatting. Number the pages in the upper right-hand corner using both your last name and the page number (e.g., Arnold 1). Do not create a title page; instead, include the following information on the first page of your paper:

[Your name]
E162 2009 Section 9564
Position Paper [insert number here: 1, 2, or 3]: [Paper title]
[Date submitted]

Your paper should be 4–5 pages excluding your reference page(s).

Citation

Please follow *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines for citation format. Those guidelines can be found at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. A handout full of examples and explanations (from my E162 Fall 2009 course) is posted on Oncourse and will be distributed in class. These examples correspond to the examples marked [T] and [R] in the online Chicago guide.

As you will see from the handout, the variant of Chicago style we will use relies on in-text parenthetical citations in the format (Author date) or (Author data, page number) and a full reference list at the end of the document. To be clear: You need to have both in-text citations and an accompanying reference list. Having only one or the other is not sufficient.

You must cite information that you obtained from a source that was not your own brain. If you are providing information that is very common knowledge shared by most any reader, such as $2+2 = 4$, you do not need to cite a source. However, whenever you cite information that is not common knowledge—even if you knew this information already for one reason or another—you must provide a citation. Your in-text author-date citation must include a page number when you are directly quoting from a source. When you are paraphrasing, you do not need to provide the page number, just (Author date).

When you prepare your reference list, please remember to indent the second and subsequent lines of the entry. The reference list entries should be single spaced, but leave one line between entries.

Submission

Submit your papers to Turnitin in Word, WordPerfect, or PDF format. Email me a back-up copy. Save the receipt that Turnitin sends to you via email so that, if Turnitin did not save your paper, you can prove to me that you submitted it on time.

Instructions for submitting to Turnitin are on Oncourse under the Resources/Other folder.

Grading Rubric

The first paper is worth 65 points, the second 85, and the third 100.

Position Paper 1: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The paper has a concise introduction.	0–1	
The paper highlights the implications of the topic for the reader.	0–1	
The thesis stating the author's position is appropriately placed and well written.	0–2	
The introduction previews the rest of the paper for the reader.	0–1	
Sufficient background information is presented to allow the reader to understand the issue and arguments.	0–2	
The background information is scientifically sound.	0–2	
The background information comes from reputable sources.	0–2	
The author provides an argument.	0–1	
The author provides at least three lines of support for his/her argument.	0–3	
The argument and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0–2	
The argument and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0–3	
The argument and lines of support are well written.	0–3	
The author provides a counter-argument.	0–1	
The author provides at least three lines of support for his/her counter-argument.	0–3	

The counter-argument and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0–2	
The counter-argument and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0–3	
The counter-argument and lines of support are well written.	0–3	
The author provides a rebuttal.	0–1	
The author provides at least two lines of support for his/her rebuttal.	0–2	
The rebuttal and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0–2	
The rebuttal and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0–3	
The rebuttal and lines of support are well written.	0–3	
The information used to support the argument, counter-argument, and rebuttal comes from quality sources.	0–3	
The paper has a conclusion.	0–1	
The conclusion concisely summarizes the paper’s main points.	0–1	
The overall analysis and argumentation is compelling, with few logical holes. The paper shows significant evidence of critical thinking.	0–4	
Correct grammar and proper sentence structure and mechanics are used throughout the paper.	0–3	
All statements that appear to require citation have it.	0–3	
Formatting guidelines were followed throughout the paper.	0–2	
The paper is coherently organized.	0–2	
Total	65	

Position Paper 2: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The paper has a concise introduction.	0–1	
The paper highlights the implications of the topic for the reader.	0–1	
The thesis stating the author’s position is appropriately placed and well written.	0–3	

The introduction previews the rest of the paper for the reader.	0-1	
Sufficient background information is presented to allow the reader to understand the issue and arguments.	0-3	
The background information is scientifically sound.	0-3	
The background information comes from reputable sources.	0-3	
The author provides an argument.	0-1	
The author provides at least three lines of support for his/her argument.	0-4	
The argument and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0-3	
The argument and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0-4	
The argument and lines of support are well written.	0-4	
The author provides a counter-argument.	0-1	
The author provides at least three lines of support for his/her counter-argument.	0-3	
The counter-argument and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0-3	
The counter-argument and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0-4	
The counter-argument and lines of support are well written.	0-4	
The author provides a rebuttal.	0-1	
The author provides at least two lines of support for his/her rebuttal.	0-3	
The rebuttal and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0-3	
The rebuttal and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0-4	
The rebuttal and lines of support are well written.	0-4	
The information used to support the argument, counter-argument, and rebuttal comes from quality sources.	0-4	
The paper has a conclusion.	0-1	
The conclusion concisely summarizes the paper's main points.	0-1	

The overall analysis and argumentation is compelling, with few logical holes. The paper shows significant evidence of critical thinking.	0–4	
Correct grammar and proper sentence structure and mechanics are used throughout the paper.	0–4	
All statements that appear to require citation have it.	0–4	
Formatting guidelines were followed throughout the paper.	0–4	
The paper is coherently organized.	0–2	
Total	85	

Position Paper 3: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The paper has a concise introduction.	0–1	
The paper highlights the implications of the topic for the reader.	0–1	
The thesis stating the author's position is appropriately placed and well written.	0–3	
The introduction previews the rest of the paper for the reader.	0–1	
Sufficient background information is presented to allow the reader to understand the issue and arguments.	0–4	
The background information is scientifically sound.	0–4	
The background information comes from reputable sources.	0–4	
The author provides an argument.	0–1	
The author provides at least three lines of support for his/her argument.	0–5	
The argument and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0–4	
The argument and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0–5	
The argument and lines of support are well written.	0–5	
The author provides a counter-argument.	0–1	

The author provides at least three lines of support for his/her counter-argument.	0–4	
The counter-argument and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0–4	
The counter-argument and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0–5	
The counter-argument and lines of support are well written.	0–5	
The author provides a rebuttal.	0–1	
The author provides at least two lines of support for his/her rebuttal.	0–4	
The rebuttal and lines of support rely on sufficient data and evidence.	0–4	
The rebuttal and lines of support are scientifically sound.	0–5	
The rebuttal and lines of support are well written.	0–5	
The information used to support the argument, counter-argument, and rebuttal comes from quality sources.	0–4	
The paper has a conclusion.	0–1	
The conclusion concisely summarizes the paper's main points.	0–1	
The overall analysis and argumentation is compelling, with few logical holes. The paper shows significant evidence of critical thinking.	0–4	
Correct grammar and proper sentence structure and mechanics are used throughout the paper.	0–4	
All statements that appear to require citation have it.	0–4	
Formatting guidelines were followed throughout the paper.	0–4	
The paper is coherently organized.	0–2	
Total	100	