

Pols 101 Term Paper

General Instructions:

You are required to write a term paper on the ideology. The objective of this assignment is for you to think-through the problem of ideology in contemporary politics and to articulate an argument that attempts to explain what ideology is, what might be wrong with it, and how we might engage in non-ideological politics, and avoid dogmatic positions?

Specific Instructions:

1. Begin by reading the following essay on ideology and moderation. Make sure you understand the critique of ideology, and the outline of moderation it defends. This is written by a libertarian in defense of moderation. Libertarianism is normally viewed as a version of liberalism that prioritizes liberty over equality, and in this sense is opposed to both reform liberalism and social democracy. The defense of moderation, on the other hand, is usually understood as a “conservative” or “social” value, often in conflict with liberty. It was written in 2018, consider how recent events reflect on those ideas.
 - a. <https://www.niskanencenter.org/the-alternative-to-ideology/>
2. Read this essay on religion and social democracy. Social democracy is a progressive ideology, usually articulated against religious arguments. Consider how the authors suggest that this understanding of ideology is counter to progressive goals.
 - a. <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/here-utopia>
3. Having read these essays which challenge the conventional way of categorizing ideologies, choose an ideology, preferably one with which you generally agree. You are not limited to the ideologies identified in the textbook though, of course, that is a reasonable place to start. It can be expressed in a general way (liberalism), or a narrow version of the general (classical liberalism). You are free to define or otherwise name the ideology in any way you like so long as it has identifiable principles, and these principles are organized systematically in order to explain politics and guide political action. It doesn't have to be a mainstream ideology, but it should be held by at least some people. Be sure to define the ideology, and the way in which you are using it, precisely.

4. Write an essay that a) identifies the principles and goals of the ideology, and b) criticizes the ideological nature of those principles and goals. Remember, you've chosen an ideology with which you agree. I am not asking you to disagree with yourself, rather I am asking you to reflect on the nature of ideology. You are being forced into a position here, you should not argue with the proposition of the paper and defend ideology. Remember this is a formative exercise, when the course is over you will still be in control of what you think. It can be a very valuable intellectual exercise to articulate as best you can a view you do not ultimately hold.
5. Your paper should be defined by an argument. This does not mean that you will argue with, or otherwise debate, an imagined opponent. Rather, the paper is organized by an argument: a specific proposition that is articulated in terms of reasons and/or evidence. An argument doesn't necessarily argue for something, it can just as easily attempt to explain. This is distinct from an opinion, which may not be supported by reasons. An argument may be wrong, but so long as it is supported by reasons it remains an argument. Likewise, an opinion may turn out to be right, but it is still just an opinion. An assertion without accompanying reasons is not an argument. Your paper should have a thesis statement but remember, thesis statement is just a fancy word for argument.
6. Your paper should be articulated. What this means is that the parts of the argument are pulled apart and developed while remaining part of a coherent whole (imagine an articulated bus). Cohere means stick together, so that the parts only have meaning insofar as they are part of larger whole, while the whole cannot be understood, except in terms of its parts. Usually this is expressed in terms of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.
 - a. The introduction puts forth the issue and your thesis statement. It is where you express the argument as a whole in one or two sentences. Be aware of the distinction between your topic and your argument. The topic is what your paper is about, but it isn't an argument.
 - b. The body of the paper is where you articulate the argument, where you develop the parts. This is where you identify, explain, and link together the main points you are trying to make. This will include a number of "because" clauses. The body of your paper should be organized logically, so that one reason leads to the next and your paragraphs mutually inform each other. You may have been taught that you should have three points in the body of your paper. This is nonsense, there is nothing magical about the number three. You may have also been taught that you should

lead with your best reason. This is also nonsense, what if your “best” reason” requires prior reasons?

- i. In this particular assignment your body should do at least two things. First, it should identify and explain the fundamental principles of the ideology you have chosen. Second, you should say something about this ideology (this is your argument).
 - c. The conclusion is mostly unnecessary. It should re-articulate your argument and should contain nothing new (though it can be sometimes effective to express the same idea in an artistic way for effect). If you put something new in your conclusion consider whether it is important? If it is important, why have you not discussed it earlier and in more detail? If it is not important . . .
 - i. A well written conclusion would often make a good introduction. You may even consider using your conclusion as your introduction. Remember when you wrote your introduction you didn’t fully know what your paper was going to be. This is why the conclusion is often better than the introduction.
7. You should use sources. Don’t use important conceptual terms loosely or vaguely, use them with precision. You shouldn’t fabricate out of whole cloth the meaning of terms or their implications. There are countless sources, both scholarly and non-scholarly, on both the general subject of ideology, as well as any specific ideology. Read about your topic, if you read something useful, insightful, or interesting, write it down. You can use any sources you like; however, you should be aware that popular sources often do not contain sufficient precision to be analytically useful. Any source you use should be cited, with footnotes, Chicago style.
 - a. https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html
8. Your essay should be about 2,000 words.
9. You don’t need a title page; however your paper should have a title, and include your name, student number, the course name and number, and the date submitted. Your paper should also have numbered pages.
10. Submit an electronic copy of the Term Paper on the designated deadline or earlier as indicated in your Course Outline. Late papers will be penalized 10 per cent deduction per day.

How will your Term Paper be evaluated?

In grading your paper, I will be looking for the following things.

- A clear argument in the introduction. Remember a topic sentence is not an argument. There is a difference between saying what your paper is about, and saying something about this topic. “In this paper I will discuss the relationship between liberalism and the charter . . .”, is not an argument. Identifying (or naming) the relationship, providing a justification (or reason) that this is the relationship (and not something else), and providing some kind of account of the implications of this, would be an argument.
- The articulation of the argument in the body of the paper in a well-organized and developed fashion in which one paragraph leads to the next and the paragraphs mutually inform each other.
- Clear identification and explanation of the principles of your chosen ideology.
- The support of claims with reasons and evidence. This requires more than simply citations. That something has been cited does not necessarily give the reasons or explain the evidence. A citation by itself does not explain the evidence, it provides a paper trail to the evidence.
- Nonetheless, citations are required for sources.
- Cogent use of language and general quality of writing.
- Thoughtfulness and insight

There is no set rubric for how these criteria will be divided. Indeed, any such rubric would be arbitrary (your insight is worth 10%, no more!). Moreover, these criteria are linked, clarity of argument leads to insight (and vice versa), quality of writing aids organization, etc. Your grade will be the result of a cumulative judgement on my part.