

CAPSTONE SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

PISc 470

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TTh 8-10:40 a.m.
B114 JFSB

This seminar will explore the causes of international conflict, specifically modern war. Some of the major theories of war will be discussed and assessed during the course. Required readings cover theoretical topics, methodologies and case studies.

Course requirements

Your major task this term is to write a research paper using a case study of a specific war or analyzing some aspect of international conflict. You are not allowed to write a paper on a specific theory related to international conflict, but must theoretically analyze your case study or cause of conflict. Your paper must meet the following criteria:

1. Paper is approximately 6-7,000 words and incorporates:
 - A. Clear, concise thesis statement
 - B. Causality (independent and dependent variables) is clearly identified.
 - C. Argument is logically coherent and clearly illustrated.
2. Title Page, Abstract, and Works Cited pages
3. Subheadings
4. Turabian (*Chicago Manual of Style*) style used:
 - a. Quotations appropriately cited
 - b. Sources properly and correctly cited.

You are required to read two books:

Greg Cashman, *What Causes War? An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict*
Greg Cashman & Leonard C. Robinson, *An Introduction to the Causes of War*

Other requirements include: One “personal reflection” (1 page, due May 3) based on the “Fog of War” documentary; summary of assigned readings (1 page) each class period; discussion leader of assigned chapters; peer review of another student’s paper; oral presentation of your paper.

Grading

Because this is a capstone course, your research paper must meet an established standard (C-) to receive a final grade for the course and fulfill the University’s Core Advanced Written and Oral Communication requirement. If you have not met this standard at the end of the term, you will receive a “T” grade. The Final Grade breakdown is: Capstone paper, 200 points; Personal Reflections paper, 10 points; Paper Proposal, 15 points; Peer Review, 25 points; One-page Reading Summaries, 25 points; Oral Presentation/participation, 25 points.

Due Dates

June 25, Personal Reflections (2 pages double spaced); **June 30**, Paper Proposal (1 page + bibliography); **July 28**, First Draft; **Aug. 4**, Peer Review; **Aug. 14**, Final Paper. Reading Summaries are due at the beginning of class the day we discuss that assigned reading.

Reading and Discussion Schedule

23 June—Introduction; “Fog of War” documentary (strong language and graphic scenes of violence. If this is an issue for you, speak with me before class.)

25 June— Personal Reflection paper due (see below); discuss Cashman & Robinson, ch 1; Cashman, chs. 1-3.

30 June—Paper proposal due (one page + bibliography); discuss Cashman, chs. 4-5.

2 July—Discuss Cashman, chs. 6-7; Cashman & Robinson, ch. 2

7 July—Discuss Cashman, chs. 8-10; Cashman & Robinson, ch. 3

9 July—Discuss Cashman, chs. 8-10; Cashman & Robinson, ch. 4

14 July—Discuss Cashman & Robinson, chs. 5-6

16 July—Discuss Cashman & Robinson, chs. 6-7

21 July—Discuss Cashman & Robinson, ch. 8; Discuss research progress and preliminary analysis of student papers.

23 July—NO CLASS

28 July—First Draft due; view “To End War” video (strong language and graphic scenes of violence. If this is an issue for you, speak with me before class.)

30 July—NO CLASS

4 Aug— Peer Review due; Student Presentations.

6 Aug—Student Presentations.

14 Aug—Final Draft due.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Writing is important. One major objective of this course is to help students improve their writing. Your writing will make a difference in your grade for this course, but more important, it will affect your career after graduation more than you may now imagine.

Commenting on Maya Angelo's poetry someone once said, "That is good reading!" She responded, "Good reading is hard writing!" Writing well is not easy for most of us, but by being conscientious we can nurture "good writing" if we follow some basic principles. Good writing is not a "product," it is a "process" that is painful for most people. However, if we follow some basic guidelines, we can ease the pain and learn to be better writers, and to enjoy it.

Suggested Writing Strategy

Following a four-stage process of Plan, Draft, Revise, and Edit will help you write better. Too often, students adopt a two-step process: draft and proofread (if they have time). On the other hand, good writers focus their energy on planning and revising, but go through the other steps of drafting and editing.

You should begin with the end in mind. Such an approach will help you shift from a draft/proofread mode to a plan/revise mode. Orientation and perspective are keys to good writing. Clearly identifying your orientation and perspective in the planning stage will help you think in an orderly way that will be reflected in your writing. I recommend you follow the SOAP formula: identify the Subject, the Occasion, the Audience, and determine the Purpose. This will set your rhetorical stance. Getting this right will make a big difference as you write, moving you from "writer-based writing" to "reader-based writing."

Students who are the best writers generally share some common traits. All of them relied heavily on peer critiques, revised their papers several times, and, let the paper "sit" for a significant period before revising each draft.

Style and Grammar

A well written thesis statement is probably the most common problem for students. A thesis should explain the central purpose of the paper and indicate the line of argument the writer will follow. Do not leave the reader to discover your argument as she reads through the entire essay.

Good grammar is a very important part of writing. Grammar and writing were a major focus of PISc 200. This focus will continue during this course.

Good grammar helps establish a writer's credibility. Poor grammar not only is distracting, but it reduces the writer's credibility in the eyes of the reader. At the university level we assume that everybody has mastered the fundamentals of grammar. This is frequently not so. Often, if writers are conscientious about the most common problems, they can avoid errors. Following is a list of the twenty most common errors: missing comma after an introductory element; missing comma in a compound sentence; missing comma(s) with a nonrestrictive element; unnecessary comma(s) with a restrictive element; comma splice; missing comma in a series; vague pronoun reference; dangling or misplaced modifier; wrong word; wrong or missing verb ending; wrong or missing preposition; missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe (e.g. its/it's confusion); unnecessary shift in tense; wrong tense or verb form; lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent; unnecessary shift in pronoun; sentence fragment; and fused sentence. Watch carefully for grammatical errors as you edit your work.

Punctuation is the single most important thing in making things easier to read. The correct punctuation helps the reader follow your argument and not have to go back and reread a sentence to find out what you mean. Correct use of commas is one of the most common problems. For example, can you make sense of the following sentence with misplaced commas?

“The Panda, a large black and white mammal native to China, eats, shoots, and leaves.” (see Lynn Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*) Following are six comma rules: put a comma before and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so, when they connect two independent clauses; put a comma between items in a series; put a comma after an introductory expression or afterthought that does not flow smoothly into the sentence; put commas around the name of a person spoken to; put commas around an interrupter, like however, moreover, etc.; put commas around nonessential material. The apostrophe is also a common problem. What do you make of this sentence? “Those things over there are my husbands.” (see Lynn Truss) Be careful to distinguish between the possessive “its” and the contraction “it’s”.

Finally, as you draft, revise, and edit your papers, keep the following advice in mind: “One should always choose the common, familiar word, unless the ‘big’ word clearly is more precise in meaning” because “the best writing is simple, concise, and direct.” Another writer argues that “clear simple writing is a reflection of depth of thought.” (Don Norton, BYU English faculty) “People expend mental energy reading things and you need to write to minimize their effort to understand or they will not read what you write. As you edit your drafts you may discover that some words or phrases you used do not really say anything and the meaning is unchanged by just deleting them.” (Donald R. Snow, BYU Math faculty)

(Little in this short essay on writing represents my original thinking. I am indebted to Gary Hatch, English Composition Coordinator, Deirdre Paulsen, Writing Fellows Director, and all of the participants in the summer 1997 Advanced Writing Seminar for faculty.)

Errol Morris’s Eleven Lessons from the “Fog of War”

1. Empathize with your enemy.
2. Rationality will not save you.
3. There’s something beyond one’s self.
4. Maximize efficiency
5. Proportionality should be a guideline in war.
6. Get the data.
7. Belief and seeing are both often wrong.
8. Be prepared to reexamine your reasoning.
9. In order to do good, you may have to engage in evil.
10. Never say never.
11. You can’t change human nature.

Your Personal Reflections paper should take up one of these points and: agree or disagree and explain why; both agree and disagree and explain why; or use the idea to launch a discussion of a related issue not considered in the documentary.