

POL S 201 AD/AG/AI: ASSIGNMENT 1 GRADE SHEET

I. GRADE SUMMARY

Factor	Total	
Style		
Structure		
Content Mastery		
Analysis		
First Assignment Grade		

— **Congratulations!** Your major problems are all at the level of synthesis and analysis! This is exactly where you want to be!

— The instructor believes that you would benefit from the following changes in strategy:

II. SUGGESTED STANDARD STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE FOR THE NEXT ASSIGNMENT

A. Study and Discipline Strategies

— Strategy 1: **Increase study time/effort.** The essay suggests that preparation is inadequate. Study longer and harder

— Strategy 2: **Incorporate causality/break with bullet-point thinking.** Student tends to recite facts that the instructor has indicated are important without really understanding *why the facts are important* beyond the fact that the teacher has highlighted them. Student should focus on understanding relationships of causality in both the historical and theoretical materials in the course.

— Strategy 3: **Avoid tautology,** especially when the paper asks for your opinion. This is the sort of argument that simply goes something along the lines of “I like my preference because I like it.” This is called a *tautology*, i.e. the repeating of a statement as if it were an argument. This may work for chocolate or vanilla ice cream, but in the social sciences, we look for a deeper insight into the causes of things. Recall, the instructors of the course are less interested in your actual opinion than how well you *justify that opinion*.

— Strategy 4: **Remember that persuading the reader is all that matters.** Even in questions where you are asked for your opinion, don’t just share what you think. The reader really could care less. Rather, *give the reader compelling reasons to change what he or she thinks*. It’s all about the reader. It’s never about the author.

— Strategy 5: **Analyze both sides of the issue.** Thoroughness is a critical attribute of analysis in the social sciences. In making your choice, you must show that you understand the strengths and weaknesses of both options and why, despite the

strengths of the opposite choice and the weaknesses of your own choice, you still choose the way you do.

— Strategy 6: **Avoid “straw man” arguments.** This is essentially the perversion of Strategy 3. A man made of straw cannot stand on his own. A “straw man” argument is an argument that you deliberately set up just because it cannot stand its own. This way, you can knock it down effortlessly and make your own argument look good by comparison. Choose rather to attack the *most damning position that other side could make*. If you make a credible bid to defeat that, then you and your reader know that your position is sound.

— Strategy 7: **Make the decision of Solomon.** A dichotomizing question forces you to choose one side or another. The choice at hand is almost always uncomfortable. Always choose one-side or another. Recall that comfort is for the weak-minded. We leave them the choice of chocolate or vanilla. Take pride in your ability to work through a difficult position in a high stress situation, take the best of bad choices and defend it. Recall that this need not be your final position on the matter. No one will produce this paper as evidence during your congressional campaign. If it helps, think of yourself as a lawyer. Just pick the client you want and *win*. If it helps, recall that we really don’t care what you think. We care only how well you defend your thoughts.

— Strategy 8: **Analyze the material as you report it.** This makes for a more unified essay in which each paragraph plays a key part in advancing the argument that you have laid out in the plan of attack. Think of yourself as a tour guide at the White House. A tour guide doesn’t walk you through all the rooms and then sit you down and say, “Hey, remember the Lincoln Bedroom? Let me tell you the dish about happened there...” That makes too many

demands on the tourists' memory. *Tell them while you're in the room*

B. Strategies for Empirical Papers

___ Strategy 9: **Increase precision.** The student is disbalanced toward "big picture thinking" but is losing touch with the details, whether historical facts, causal sequences or theoretical relationships. This is leading to sloppy or vague work. Increase attention to detail to compensate.

___ Strategy 10: **Increase scope of vision.** The student treats each fact as equally important and, as a result, cannot see the "forest for the trees." The student needs to become more aware of causes of action so as to determine which details to highlight and which to omit from presentation.

C. Strategies for Theory Papers

___ Strategy 11: **In any theory paper, use your analysis of the theory as your primary evidence.** Any empirical evidence or personal feelings can serve *only* as secondary, back-up evidence.

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I. STYLE —

A. Usage Problems

___ 1. Grammatical errors, especially

___ 2. Spelling errors, especially

___ 3. Punctuation errors, especially

___ 4. Capitalization errors, especially

B. Sentence Structure Problems

___ 5. Run-on/overburdened sentences

___ 6. Sentence fragments

___ 7. Sentences or phrases with unclear meanings

___ 8. Awkward phrasing

C. Tone and Diction Problems

___ 9. Rhetorical use of unsupportable generalizations (e.g. "throughout history")

___ 10. Use of rhetorical questions

___ 11. Incorrect use of vocabulary. Look up word.

___ 12. Excessive use of direct quotation

___ 13. Excessively colloquial language

___ 14. Overly wordy sentences

II. STRUCTURE —

A. Intro Paragraph

___ 15. **No thesis statement.** There is no single statement that the essay is clearly designed to prove.

___ 16. **Weak thesis statement.** The thesis statement is not a direct answer to that question set's questions.

___ 17. **No plan of attack.** The intro paragraph does not explain how it will prove the thesis statement.

___ 18. **Weak plan of attack.** The plan of attack does not achieve one of the following things:

___ 19. The plan of attack does not explain how the essay will use the non-negotiable requirements to prove the thesis statement.

___ 20. The plan of attack does not explain how the essay will take into account the rhetorical strengths and weaknesses inherent in defending the given thesis.

___ 21. **The intro contains unnecessary, distracting material that can be cut.**

___ 22. The intro contains an "attention getter" which is either too long or boring.

___ 23. The intro contains something other than a thesis statement, a plan of attack and a *good* attention-getter.

B. Body Paragraphs

___ 24. Paragraphs tend to lack a clear thesis

___ 25. Paragraphs tend to contain information not needed to support the thesis statement.

___ 26. The order of sentences in the paragraph seems random, rendering it difficult to understand/other internal transition problems.

- ___ 27. The function of the paragraph does not seem to support the plan of attack
- ___ 28. Transitions between paragraphs are choppy or vague.
- ___ 29. Paragraph is too long and needs to be broken up and restructured.

C. Conclusion

- ___ 30. Conclusion does not review plan of attack, illustrating how the essay has proven the thesis.
- ___ 31. Conclusion does not provide closure by explaining lessons learned or establishing future directions for action, learning or growth.

III CONTENT MASTERY —

- ___ 32. The essay does not **document its sources** as thoroughly and accurately as required.
- ___ 33. The essay does not provide an **accurate summary of Hobbes’ empirical account of human nature causing anarchy** (Hobbes builds from three assumptions: Human beings are all roughly equal in power, resources are scarce and in high demand and a significant number of human beings are glory seeking. He argues that anarchy results from these facts because (1) our moral equality makes us jealous of others’ resources because we believe that we are as good as they, (2) we believe that empirically that we are not overmatched because we are all roughly equal in power, (3) as a result we can expect violence from others for our possessions and because we expect them to revel in the glory of conquest. We are naturally (4) defensive in response to this reality and will act preemptively in our self-defense).
- ___ 34. The essay does not provide an **accurate summary of Hobbes’ normative account of natural law requiring us to seek peace where possible and otherwise defend ourselves** (Hobbes argues that we are obliged to preserve our lives and may go to any lengths to do so. That said, our understanding of anarchy must lead us to realize that our best chance of preserving our lives is to seek a realistic peace. Therefore, while we all may have differing views of the good, all rational human beings believe that those civic values that preserve peace are universally good and those values that promote war are bad. Beyond this, justice is simply keeping our contracts. Justice is impossible in the state of nature)

- ___ 35. The essay does not or does not accurately portray **Hobbes’ policy prescription for solving the problem of anarchy** (Hobbes’ argues that equality is the fundamental cause of anarchy. Ending equality by creating a single individual who is dramatically more powerful than all of society is the only way to create peace, which is the universal good. Moreover, with a sovereign to enforce contracts, justice becomes possible. While Hobbes’ makes clear that it is in the sovereign’s self-interest to be munificent, he argues against checking his or her power in order to avoid damaging peace. Hobbes argues that peace and the freedom to live a private life is worth far more than any form of political participation).

IV. ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS —

A. Analysis

- ___ 36. Writer must balance **the strengths of Hobbes’ theory** in defending his or her thesis (That anarchy is undesirable and that some for of government is needed if we are to live peaceably.) with **the weaknesses of Hobbes’ theory** in defending his or her thesis (Political participation in the practice of contemporary democracies does not seem as irreconcilable with political stability as Hobbes claims. Moreover, Hobbes’ definitions of justice, good and evil are not particularly satisfying, even if they do allow for individual opinions of these concepts).

B. Synthesis: Constructing a prima facie argument for the intelligent, but uninformed reader.

- ___ 37. Writer does not present prima facie case—essay does not draw on reason to advance its thesis.
- ___ 38. Writer does not present prima facie case—presents axioms that are unlikely to be acceptable to the general reader
- ___ 39. Writer does not present prima facie case—presents axioms that should be developed as proven conclusions, by drawing on logic.
- ___ 40. Writer does not present prima facie case—conclusions do not follow from given premises.
- ___ 41. Writer does not present prima facie case—author uses “spot logic” to prove smaller points, but does not build on these basic propositions to create a greater, more cohesive argument.

C. Synthesis: Preempting the rebuttal of the knowledgeable reader

- ___ 42. Writer must develop and defend a criterion that determines **whether Hobbes is correct in his assertion that there can be neither peace nor justice unless we are ruled by an absolute sovereign possessing unchecked power.**
- ___ 43. Writer must develop and defend a criterion that determines **whether Hobbes's theory gives us a reason to create a world sovereign.**
- ___ 44. **Essay does not answer the questions in the question set**

COMMENTS: