

The paper and presentation

Basics

Each group of three (3)—or occasionally two (2), or maybe even some with four (4)—will choose a topic, write a paper on that topic, and prepare a presentation of the key parts of the paper.

Task

Write a paper that provides an analysis of a topic in the economics of conflict. Then prepare a 20-minute presentation that your group will give to the class. The paper should present a "sound" *argument* ("the giving of reasons," "one or more statements that are used to provide support for a conclusion") about a topic concerning conflict economics. A topic that has an "argumentative edge" has the advantage that a good argument will make you address potential counterarguments.

Audience

Address an audience of other undergraduate economics majors who have not had this course. (your rhetorical position should be one of relative power vis a vis your audience).

Format

There is no set length, but most good papers are between 15 and 20 double-spaced normally-formatted pages. In past years, some good ones have been significantly shorter, and some good ones have been longer.

I do not care about a particular style, e.g., Chicago Manual of Style. I care about clarity and the quality of the argument, and consistency in citation. An important feature is that all references can be validated.

Process

Topic choice, outline/graphic organizer, rough draft, final draft

Sources

Our library has specialized resources for a class like ours. These can help you find information, data, and evidence that bears on your problem. Some of these sources will be primary, e.g., data, scholarly journal articles, and some will be secondary—what other authors have written about primary source evidence. Attempts to use judiciously primary sources are always appreciated, but not required. Secondary sources are important as they help you position yourself in the "conversation" surrounding the problem.

Criteria for evaluation

We the graders ask ourselves a sequence of questions:

1. Does the paper/presentation have a thesis that addresses an appropriate question or topic?
2. Is the paper/presentation free from long stretches of quotations and summaries that remain unanalyzed?
3. Have the writers produced complete sentences?
4. Is the paper/presentation free from egregious grammatical errors?

If the answer to any one of these questions is "no," we will give the paper/presentation some variant of C. The more "no's" the lower the grade we will give, e.g., D,F.

After this first pass, we ask the following questions:

1. Is it thoughtful? What is the range and depth of the argument? That is, is it logical, is the quality of the research good, is there an appropriate sense of complexity, and is there awareness of opposing views?
2. Is it well organized? That is, is there an effective title, is the thesis statement clear, is there a logical arrangement of ideas, with an effective use of transitions, with unity and coherence of paragraphs, and with good development of ideas through supporting evidence.
3. Does it have a real conclusion and not simply a stopping place?
4. Above all, do we hear a lively, intelligent human voice speaking to the audience (and to us the graders) as we read/listen to the paper/presentation?

Based on our answers to these questions, we give the paper some type of A or B.