

Steps to War Paper Rubric

POSC 3610 - International Conflict

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The following document will provide information about how I will evaluate your end-of-the-semester Steps to War papers. Each section is worth four points, but is weighted by the percentage you see in the section title. The set of scores include poor (1), subpar (2), adequate (3), and excellent (4). Where appropriate, I elaborate on what these scores mean for the particular section.

Section	Percentage Weight
Writing	15%
Formatting	5%
Depth/Quality	10%
Introduction	10%
<i>The War Puzzle</i> Summary	25%
Case Study	25%
Conclusion	10%
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>100%</i>

Writing (15%)

This section is unique. The first thing I do when I start reading your papers is scan for spelling/grammatical errors. These include everything from obvious spelling errors to even the little things, like using contractions, ending sentences in a preposition, or using prepositions in consecutive words (e.g. “turn away from”). If nothing else, you should hope to leave Clemson University with an ability to write proficiently. This *definitely* means you should avoid writing major assignments in the 11th hour. It’ll show; trust me. My “[Dos and Don’ts of Writing](#)” will capture most of these things to avoid in addition to the items just mentioned.

I will also attach citation errors to this rubric. Recall: I want [American Political Science Association \(2006\)](#) citation format. Each citation error, including footnote/endnote citations, will count as an “error” here.

My threat here is basically nuclear. Two writing mistakes will drop you from a 4 to 3. The fifth one will drop you from a 3 to a 1. There is no 2. *Proofread.*

1. *Poor.* More than four spelling/grammatical errors.
- 2.
3. *Adequate.* Two-to-four spelling/grammatical errors.
4. *Excellent.* Zero-to-two spelling/grammatical errors.

Formatting (5%)

1. *Poor*. The student followed none of the formatting instructions.
2. *Subpar*. The student took liberties with the formatting of the paper and I have reason to believe did so in order to pad the paper's length.
3. *Adequate*. The student mostly followed instructions on formatting, but got one obvious thing wrong (e.g. in-text citations).
4. *Excellent*. The student followed all formatting instructions.

Depth/Quality (10%)

This is an overall assessment of the paper. Think of any deduction here as a weight on what would otherwise be an overall grade from the paper's individual components.

1. *Poor*. Overall, this paper was poor in almost every respect.
2. *Subpar*. Overall, this paper was lacking in major respects. The student may have done two sections poorly.
3. *Adequate*. Overall, this paper was good, but my comments included a litany of little things or one big comment on something the student failed to do.
4. *Excellent*. Overall, this paper showed considerable depth and insight.

Introduction (10%)

1. *Poor*. The introduction is random and/or completely uninformative. This score may also be reserved for when the professor can tell this section was written last and without any regard for how well it fits with the other sections.
2. *Subpar*. The introduction section is informative enough but might have benefited from some additional context or demonstrates some major confusion in what the paper proposes to do.
3. *Adequate*. The introduction section is informative enough but might drag on too long or might demonstrate some minor confusion about what the paper proposes to do.
4. *Excellent*. The introduction section is informative and says what it needs to say in as few words. The introduction is neither too short (i.e. leaving off important details) nor too long (i.e. meanders on too long for which redundancy is a device to pad the word count).

The War Puzzle Summary (25%)

1. *Poor*. The introduction is random and/or completely uninformative.
2. *Subpar*. The summary of Vasquez' core argument meanders and is replete with some major omissions or misinterpretations.
3. *Adequate*. The summary of Vasquez' core argument is good enough but a slew of minor misgivings or misinterpretations, or even one big misinterpretation, belies total confidence in the material.

4. *Excellent*. The section of the paper does well to summarize Vasquez' core argument cover to cover.

Case Study (25%)

1. *Poor*. The introduction is random and/or completely uninformative.
2. *Subpar*. The case study meanders and the application of *The War Puzzle* to the case is rambling and unfocused. The argument of its application is incomplete and/or makes major omissions.
3. *Adequate*. The case study is done well enough but may have whiffed on one particular argument or made a major omission (e.g. student has to demonstrate how the MID escalated to war).
4. *Excellent*. The section of the paper does well to relate Vasquez' argument to the case the student chose. Each point is plainly communicated.

Conclusion (10%)

1. *Poor*. The conclusion is random and/or completely uninformative. This score may also be reserved for when the professor can tell this section was written last and without any regard for how well it fits with the other sections.
2. *Subpar*. The conclusion is informative enough but might have benefited from some additional context or demonstrates some major confusion in what the paper proposes to do.
3. *Adequate*. The conclusion section is informative enough but might omit some important insights from the previous section.
4. *Excellent*. The conclusion section is informative and says what it needs to say in as few words. The author took care to drive home what exactly we gained from this project.

References

American Political Science Association. 2006. *APSA Style Manual for Political Science*. American Political Science Association Committee on Publications.

URL: <http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSASyleManual2006.pdf>