If you’re reading this, you have been assigned to write a paper or papers for one of my classes. **Your paper will be graded on four different levels: substance, research, composition, and grammatical/technical correctness/proofreading.** Papers will normally be worth either 100 points (7-10 pages) or 200 points (longer than 10 pages). The points the paper receives, or doesn’t, will be determined by the overall quality of the paper based on the four graded levels.

To aid you in writing a quality paper, you will also receive other guidance in addition to this: specific, tailored directions for each individual assignment, general directions for writing all papers assigned, and guidance for proofreading your paper. Do not delude yourself into thinking that you’re already a strong writer and thus can ignore these directives: some students are, but most are not. Odds are, you are not.

You are being held responsible for writing a term paper that is of the quality expected of university juniors, senior, and particularly graduate students. It is possible to meet, more or less, most of the minimum requirements for any paper, but you should understand that the minimum passing grade is what you’ll receive. The following lists penalties for particular deficiencies. Other guidance, as well as common sense (as in, doing the opposite of what is forbidden), will direct you as to how to write a paper that will receive a higher grade.

**The below listed deficiencies will incur a deduction of points, from one up to the maximum number noted**

**Substance:**

1. Papers are expected to be written on the assigned topic or, if a more general assignment, the paper should at least follow the subject matter of the course title. If not, **penalty: FAILING GRADE.**

2. The paper must cover adequately the specific chosen topic, which means also addressing relevant secondary or collateral issues necessary to impart a full understanding of the primary topic and to adequately inform the reader. If not, **Maximum penalty: up to MINUS 20 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper (e.g., one letter grade).**

3. Sometimes the student will need to rely on sources that are not easily understood (e.g., law review articles). In those instances, the student must take the time to gain an understanding of that material and the paper must reflect that understanding. Failure to
do so will be obvious to the reader.  \textbf{Penalty: up to MINUS 10 points in a short paper and 20 points in a longer paper.}

4. The easier the topic is to research, comprehend, write about – e.g., the less challenging the paper is to the student – the better it must be.  \textit{A poorly paper written on an obvious topic that easily researched may be rejected and given a grade of F}.  \textbf{Otherwise: Penalty: up to MINUS 20 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper.}

5. The paper \textit{must not repeat} material discussed in detail in class.  If the student chooses to write about such a topic, then core of the paper must well beyond that material.  Simply repeating back in a paper that which was presented to the class in lecture is not acceptable.  \textbf{up to MINUS 30 points in a short paper and 60 points in a longer paper.}

\textbf{Research:}

1. The more obscure or less obvious the topic, and the more difficult it is to locate research material, the more favorable the grade.  Conversely, topics that are well known, especially those at the level of “general knowledge,” and/or topics for which information or materials are readily and easily available are to be avoided.  \textbf{Penalty: up to MINUS 10 points in a short paper and 20 points in a longer paper.  But: in egregious cases, the paper will be assigned an F.}

2. Short papers that do not have the required minimum of at least FIVE credible academic sources or TEN credible sources in longer papers will be penalized.  \textit{“Credible academic sources” in general are books and peer-reviewed academic and professional journals; they do NOT include newspaper or news magazine articles, or similar material}.  \textbf{Penalty: up to MINUS 10 points in a short paper and 20 points in a longer paper. (N.B.: this is not to say that other sources are not appropriate at times as supporting sources, depending on the topic; check with me beforehand to be sure.)}

3. Beginning 1 January 2009, any sources from the Internet \textit{must be in addition to the requisite Five or Ten credible academic sources}.  \textit{(Valid exceptions must be approved by me in advance on a case-by-case basis.)  Fewer than five, or ten, credible sources will result in a lowered grade.  \textbf{Penalty: up to MINUS 20 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper.}}

4. Wikipedia is absolutely forbidden.  \textbf{Penalty: MINUS 50 points in a short paper and 100 points in a longer paper.}

\textbf{Composition:}

1. Everything you write should be considered to be a formal English composition.  Simply because the paper is for a political science class vice an English class does not relieve you of the responsibility to produce a quality written product.  The rules of
composition – e.g., an introduction, body, and conclusion; paragraphs that flow into the next; insuring the chronology of events is clearly laid out; clear expression of the issues, conclusions that are sustained by the argument – are to be followed. It means good writing, and good writing is hard work; if you don’t want to work at the paper, don’t take the course. **Penalty:** **up to MINUS 0 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper. Egregiously poor papers will receive an F.**

4. The format for the paper is precise. The paper **MUST:** be in MS WORD, have a cover page with title and your name, be of the minimum length – seven pages means a full seven pages, not six-and-a-half, or even six-and-nine/tenths – an end note section, and a bibliography, both properly formatted. Font should be either Arial or Times New Roman, 12 point. Deviation from this format will not be accepted. **Penalty:** **depends on the infraction, but will range from MINUS 5 points to half the value of the paper. Omission of either endnote or a bibliography will result in an F.**

5. The paper’s margins are to be one inch on the top and sides, and no more than 1.5 inches on the bottom. Page numbers are to be centered within the bottom margin. **DO NOT put your name or other information at the top of the pages.** Deviations are not acceptable. **Penalty:** **MINUS 10 points in a short paper and 20 points in a longer paper**

6. Sources used in the paper **MUST** be identified in the text by the use of endnotes (not footnotes). Inserting endnotes is very simple in MSWORD; learn how to do it. Formats for both endnotes and bibliography are in the Chicago Manual of Style, found at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html). **Penalty:** **misuse of endnotes, up to MINUS 20 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper. Absence of endnotes automatically earns an F.**

**NOTE:** **DO NOT NOT NOT USE THE APA SYTLE OF PLACING THE SOURCE WITHIN PARENTHESES IN THE TEXT. DO NOT. PERIOD.**

**Grammar and Proofreading:**

1. The rules of grammar are to be followed. Other handouts provide you with suggestions for books on style, composition, and grammar usage. Many complete dictionaries also have a section on grammar. Consistent grammatical abuse will not be acceptable. **Penalty:** **up to MINUS 20 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper.**

2. Failure to proofread adequately. **Penalty:** **up to MINUS 20 points in a short paper and 40 points in a longer paper.**

3. Failure to proofread at all: **Penalty:** **MINUS 50 points in a short paper and 100 points in a longer paper.**
4. Here are a few things you can do to improve your paper (if you don’t understand what the problem is, you should look it up in a style/writing guide/manual). **Penalty for too many of these technical errors: up to minus five points for each.**

   a. learn how to use commas and semi-colons; learn when nouns are capitalized and when they aren’t – especially if there is a person’s name and/or titles are involved
   b. don’t split infinitives unless doing so would make the sentence unreadable; the adverb goes either before the preposition “to” or after the verb – or just construct the sentence differently
   c. don’t end the sentence with a preposition unless doing so makes the sentence awkward
   d. don’t use “that” when the reference is to a person, use “who” (the “person who…” as opposed to “the thing that…”)
   e. don’t use “firstly” and “secondly” etc when enumerating points or paragraphs – use first, second, etc. (it’s not technically wrong, but good writers don’t do it)
   f. don’t be repetitious, using the same word/phrase over and over, particularly in the same paragraph or you’ll bore your reader (me…). Get a thesaurus, expand your vocabulary, and interest me in your work
   g. don’t use trite phrases or clichés, especially repetitively. (See f above)
   h. don’t waste space on filler or BS phrases or words – make every word matter. If the word/phrase is not important to the paper, don’t use it. Students like to pad their paper with phrases like, “I will now proceed to discuss blah blah blah” – don’t waste space telling me what you’re going to say or do, just do it
   i. don’t write any portion of the paper in present tense: (a) you’re writing history, defined as any event older than a month, not current news; (b) mixing past and present tense is a rhetorical device used successfully only by writers better than you.

**SUMMARY:** Work hard on your paper and you’ll be rewarded. I don’t expect any student to be Shakespeare or Hemmingway, but I do expect that the appropriate effort be expended in writing papers.