

Student's Guide to Position Papers

Assignment II, Part A

Social 30-1

Part A Diploma Exam: January 15th, 2013

Position Papers

- If you like to argue, you will enjoy writing position papers and argument essays. The purpose of a position paper or argument essay is to explain both sides of a controversy and then argue for one side over the other. This two-sided approach is what makes position papers and argument essays different from a commentary. A commentary usually only expresses the author's personal opinion about a current issue or event.
- A position paper or argument essay explains both sides and discusses why one is stronger or better than the other. Your goal is to fairly explain your side and your opponents' side of the issue, while highlighting the differences between these opposing views. You need to use solid reasoning and factual evidence to persuade your readers that your view is more valid or advantageous than your opponents' view.

Position Paper Requirements

- In this assignment, students are provided with one source in the format of a short quote.
- Students must respond in a formal essay (minimum 5Ps) by answering the question: “To what extent should we embrace the ideological perspective(s) reflect in the source?”
- Note: the source will change from year-to-year but the question above will always remain the same.
- In this position paper, you are being ask to
 1. **Analyze** the source and **demonstrate** your understanding of the ideological perspective (s) reflected.
 2. **Establish** and **argue** a position in response to the question above
 3. **Support** your **position** and **arguments** by providing evidence from your knowledge and understandings of social studies.

Source

Rights and freedoms are essential to a democracy; however, there may be times when a temporary suspension of rights and freedoms is necessary to guarantee the preservation of democracy.

Assignment

To what extent should we embrace the ideological perspective(s) reflected in the source?

Write an essay in which you must:

- **analyze** the source and **demonstrate** an understanding of the ideological perspective(s) reflected in the source
- **establish** and **argue** a position in response to the question presented
- **support** your position and arguments by using evidence from your knowledge and understanding of social studies

Source

No country should seek to extend its policy over any other country or people; rather, every country should be left free to pursue its own goals. Every country should be unrestricted, secure, and confident in pursuing these goals, regardless of the country's size or strength.

Assignment

To what extent should we embrace the ideological perspective(s) reflected in the source?

Write an essay in which you must:

- **analyze** the source and **demonstrate** an understanding of the ideological perspective(s) reflected in the source
- **establish** and **argue** a position in response to the question presented
- **support** your position and arguments by using evidence from your knowledge and understanding of social studies

Evaluation of Position Paper

- Three scoring categories are used to mark the **content** of Assignment II:
 1. Analysis of Source – 6 marks
 2. Quality of Arguments – 8 marks
 3. Quality of Evidence – 8 marks
- One scoring category is used to mark the **language and communication** of Assignment II:
 1. Communication – 8 marks

A more detailed rubric has been provided for you. This is a standardized rubric for all social -1 courses created by Alberta Education.

Planning Stages

- You are not technically awarded a mark for the planning process however, the time you spend planning will reflect in the categories of Argumentation, Evidence and Communication.
- Recommendation for planning is a web or outline as seen below. However, this is just a recommendation – the choice is yours.

Five Paragraph Essay Outline

I. Introductory Paragraph

- A. Create a topic sentence that will draw in the audience.
 - 1. Note subtopic 1 (this will be topic of 2nd paragraph)
 - 2. Note subtopic 2 (this will be topic of 3rd paragraph)
 - 3. Note subtopic 3 (this will be topic of 4th paragraph)

B. Create a strong transition

II. First Supporting Paragraph

- A. Restate what subtopic 1 is.
 - 1. Supporting detail or example
 - 2. Supporting detail or example
- B. Transition

III. Second Supporting Paragraph

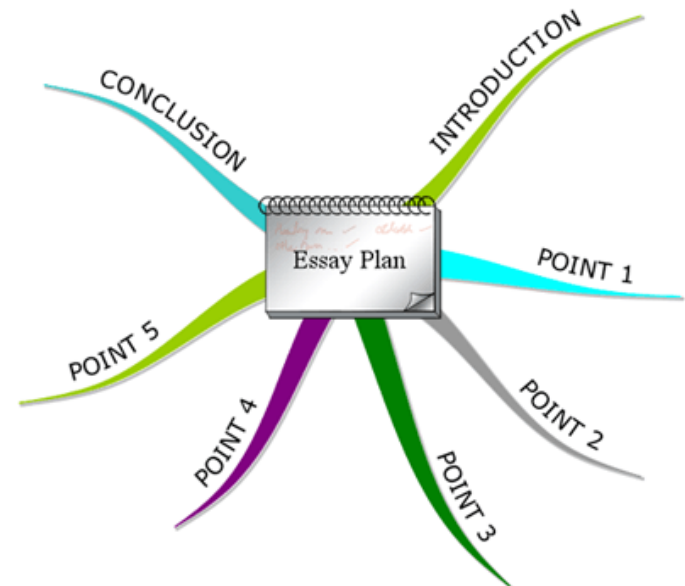
- A. Restate what subtopic 2 is.
 - 1. Supporting detail or example
 - 2. Supporting detail or example
- B. Transition

IV. Third Supporting Paragraph

- A. Restate what subtopic 3 is.
 - 1. Supporting detail or example
 - 2. Supporting detail or example
- B. Transition

V. Conclusion or closing summary

- A. Synthesis and or conclusion of thesis
- B. Restate main topic and subtopics



P1 – Introduction

- In 10 to 12 sentences, you will:
 1. Analyze the source: pull it apart sentence by sentence and explain the meaning of the source both in general terms and more specifically.
 2. Identify the perspective the source reflects. Your options will be: **classical liberalism, modern liberalism, socialist, communist, fascist, neo-conservative**
 3. Explain your understanding of that ideology. Discuss key underlying beliefs or political principles or economic principles.
 4. State your position as to whether or not you agree or disagree with this ideological perspective. This will become your **thesis statement**.

Thesis Statement

- A 1-2 sentence that states a clear position on the topic and identifies the reasons why you are choosing this position. (you will further expand these reasons in the body of your essay)
- **Deciding on a thesis does not come first.** Before you can come up with an argument on any topic, you have to:
 - collect and organize evidence
 - look for possible relationships between known facts (such as surprising contrasts or similarities)
 - think about the beneath-the-surface significance of these relationships.
- After this initial exploration of the question at hand, you can formulate a "working thesis," an argument that you think will make sense of the evidence but that may need adjustment along the way.

P2, P3, & P4 – The Body

- The body of your position paper is reserved for presenting your arguments and supporting them with evidence.
- **P2** – Reason 1 to support your position + factual, relevant, and accurate evidence to prove reason 1
- **P3** – Reason 2 to support your position + factual, relevant, and accurate evidence to prove reason 2.
- **P4** – Reason 3 to support your position + factual, relevant, and accurate evidence to prove reason 3.
- Strongest first or last but never in the middle.

P4 – Conclusion

- Here you will summarize and restate in a forceful matter, your position of the source by:
 - Restating your thesis statement
 - Restating the ideological perspective that the source reflects.
 - Referring back to the source and pulling quotes when necessary
- Please, please, please do not start this paragraph with “in conclusion.” 😊



Analysis of the Source (6 marks)

- You must address the source by saying, “in the source....”
- You must identify the ideological perspective of the source as one of the following: **classical liberalism, modern liberalism, socialist, communist, fascist, neo-conservative.**
- You must extract the words or phrases from the source that confirms your perspective.
- You must explain your understanding of that ideology
- You must state your position on the ideology in a clear thesis statement.
- You must refer back to the source throughout your essay!

How do I explain my understanding?

- List the features or characteristics and then dive deeper into the each of these features and explain how they are connected to each other.
- Describe what ideologies/individuals oppose their ideological perspective and why
- Describe a current or historical event that relates to the key ideas behind the source.
- Remember – Explaining your understanding in P1 will consist of 3 to 4 sentences so be concise.

Argumentation and Evidence (16 marks)

- This is P2, P3, & P4
- Start with a clear topic sentence that relates back to the source.
 - i.e. *The source clearly acknowledges the benefits of greed as a guiding philosophy in any society. Greed has numerous economic benefits for all groups in society; consumers, producers and society at large. Consumers benefit....*
- Explain your argument. Try to relate back to the underlying foundations for all arguments:
 - Economic, moral, effectiveness, feasibility, social acceptance, or environmental.
- Your evidence needs to be relevant, specific and detailed to score either “proficient or excellent.”

Options for Argument Organization

Option 1:

With this approach, you defend your thesis/position by explaining three “pros” or advantages to your chosen position. You do not engage in a discussion of any other position that could be taken.

While this is a good organizational plan, you may not receive any “honour” marks with this response.

Having said that, your response would still relate to the topic and be marked. If this is what you are comfortable with, this is how you will respond. You might want to experiment with this approach the first few times you write a position paper.

Options for Argument Organization

Option 2: argument in support of thesis, argument in support of thesis, counter argument: acknowledge another position & DESTROY IT!!

A **counter-argument** is an argument opposed to your thesis, or part of your thesis. It expresses the view of a person who disagrees with your position. This approach is more sophisticated and demonstrates a high level of critical thinking on your part.

You will:

State the opposing position

Explain the main reason behind this position

Refute the reason by presenting your own information/evidence

Counter Arguments

- When done well, a counter will make the argument stronger. This is because it gives you the chance to respond to your reader's objections before they have finished reading. It also shows that you are a reasonable person who has considered both sides of the debate. Both of these make an essay more persuasive.
- A counter-argument should be expressed thoroughly, fairly and objectively. Do not just write a quick sentence and then immediately rebut it. Give reasons why someone might actually hold that view. A whole paragraph is not an unreasonable amount of space to give to the counter-argument. Again, the point is to show your reader that you have considered all sides of the question, *and to* make it easier to answer the counter-argument. It's easier to respond to a point you have already spelled out—and it's easier for your reader to follow you.

Foundations of Arguments

1. Morality – Is it fair? Just? Right?
2. Effectiveness – Will it work?
3. Social Acceptance – Will citizens accept it?
4. Feasibility – Can it be managed or enforced?
5. Financial Cost – How much will it cost?
6. Environmental Cost – What will be the impact on the environment?
7. Technological Readiness – can this be accomplished using present levels of technology?
8. Others?? Is it healthy? Safe? Wise? Advisable?