

**Research Paper Instructions and Grading Criteria**  
**PLSC 497: Nuclear Weapons in International Relations**  
**Professor Roseanne McManus**

## **Content**

The paper assignment is to take one of the theoretical debates we cover in class and argue which side is correct with respect to a specific case. As one example, the theoretical debate topic could be, “Is nuclear proliferation stabilizing or destabilizing?” applied to the case of India and Pakistan. As another example, the theoretical debate topic could be, “Does the security model, the domestic politics model, or the norms model best explain nuclear proliferation?” applied to the case of France. In building your argument, you should discuss the merits of arguments on each side of the theoretical debate and defend your own position with evidence.

Your paper should have a clear thesis statement, articulated in the first paragraph. Here are some possible examples of what a thesis statement could look like:

- “This paper will show that nuclear weapons had a destabilizing effect in relations between India and Pakistan.”
- “This paper argues that France’s decision to build nuclear weapons is best explained by Sagan’s norms model, although Sagan’s security model also sheds some light on the decision.”

Your paper should be organized around the goal of proving your thesis based on evidence. Papers should generally contain the following sections:

1. Introduction: Should be only one paragraph. Introduce the topic, briefly indicate its importance, give the thesis statement, and outline what the rest of the paper will cover.
2. Background on the theoretical debate: Lay out the key arguments on each side.
3. Background your case: Give a history of key events and relevant information about national leaders, the domestic political environment, and/or the international situation.
4. Analysis of which side of the debate has the strongest support in your case: Discuss what evidence your case study offers for and against each side. Explain which side has the most support and why.
5. Conclusion: One paragraph, summarizing your argument again and possibly discussing implications for the future.

**Submission Instructions:** Submit your papers in *.docx format* at <https://turnitin.psu.edu/> (use class id 23349676 and enrollment key McManus\_S20 to sign up). Make sure that you complete the full submission process and save evidence of your submission. Points will be deducted from papers that are not submitted in the correct manner or file format. If an incorrect or unreadable file is submitted, the assignment will be considered late until the appropriate file is submitted.

**Lateness Penalty:** Papers that are not submitted by the deadline will lose 5 points immediately and another 5 points for every additional 12 hours they are late.

**Length:** Papers should be about 3,000 words long. There will be no automatic penalty for submitting a shorter or longer paper. However, if your paper is much shorter, you should ask yourself if you have included enough detail. Conversely, if your paper is much longer, you should ask yourself if your writing is repetitive or unnecessarily verbose.

**Sourcing Requirements:** Your paper must include in-text citations as well as reference entries at the end. You may use any in-text citation and reference format as long as (1) you are consistent among your citations and references entries and (2) you include all standard information necessary to look up the source. For websites, please include the web address.

**Avoiding Plagiarism:** TurnItIn will automatically check for plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism on your research paper, you must do the following whenever you incorporate someone else's arguments or work or any information that is not common knowledge into your paper:

1. Either use quotation marks around the author's words or rephrase *completely* in your own words. (Rephrasing is generally preferred.)
2. Include an in-text citation.
3. Have an entry in your References section at the end that matches the citation.

The rules above apply to any source material, including all types of websites and work by any type of author (either expert or non-expert).

People often get in trouble for plagiarism when they:

1. Copy and paste text – Instead of copying and pasting (even if you plan to change the words later), it is better to write everything in your own words from the beginning.
2. Rely on someone else's summary of another source – It is hard to summarize a source in your own words if you have not actually read it yourself. It is better to find the original source yourself, read or skim the whole thing, and write your own summary from scratch. If you do end up relying on someone else's summary, you should cite that person also to give them proper credit (and cover yourself if their summary happens to be wrong).

**Outside Help with your Paper:** It is acceptable, and even encouraged, to ask a friend or family member to proofread your paper. However, everything except proofreading should be your own work.

**Other Formatting Requirements:** As long as your paper uses proper English grammar, I do not care about other formatting details. Your paper may be either single or double-spaced. Having a few section headings is encouraged, but not required.

## Grading Criteria

In each of the categories below, the following scores are possible:

- 10 – exceptional, goes above and beyond expectations
- 9 – good
- 8 – acceptable
- 7 – needs considerable improvement
- 6 – needs major improvement
- 0-5 – entirely unacceptable or completely lacking.

Category	% of Total Paper Grade	Grading Criteria
Argumentation	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the paper fully engage with the arguments on both sides of the debate and identify strengths and weaknesses?</li> <li>• Is it clear why the author thinks one side of the debate is right and the other is wrong?</li> <li>• Is it clear how the evidence from the case study supports the author’s argument?</li> <li>• Is the author's argument free of gaps and contradictions?</li> </ul>
Knowledge of course material	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the discussion of each side of the debate reflect solid understanding of the course material?</li> <li>• Are the relevant readings from class cited?</li> </ul>
Level of detail regarding the case study	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is adequate background given to understand the case?</li> <li>• Are there any important details of the case that are left unexplained or explained inaccurately?</li> <li>• Are there too many minor details that are unnecessary to support and understand the author’s argument?</li> </ul>
Quality of sources	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many sources are there? (The minimum to write a good paper is probably around eight, although you may need more.)</li> <li>• How many of the sources are high-quality (for example, books and academic articles)?</li> <li>• Are there any problematic sources, such as Wikipedia or non-mainstream news outlets?</li> </ul>

Introduction and conclusion	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the introduction make it immediately clear what the topic of the paper is?</li> <li>• Does the introduction indicate why the topic is important?</li> <li>• Does the introduction contain a clear thesis statement?</li> <li>• Does the introduction describe the organization of the rest of the paper?</li> <li>• Is the introduction brief and to the point? (In general, no more than 200 words.)</li> <li>• Does the paper have a conclusion that summarizes the findings?</li> </ul>
Organization	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the paper avoid tangents? Is it clear how everything in the paper is related to the main topic?</li> <li>• Does the paper move from topic to topic in a logical order?</li> <li>• Does the author avoid jumping back and forth between topics?</li> <li>• Are there transition sentences when the author switches between topics?</li> <li>• Does each paragraph have a single topic, and is this topic clear in the first sentence?</li> <li>• Are the sentences within paragraphs in a logical order?</li> <li>• Are paragraphs of reasonable length? (Generally, avoid paragraphs longer than 200 words.)</li> </ul>
Grammar	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the paper follow standard English grammar and punctuation rules?</li> </ul>
Style	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the sentences clear and professional in tone? The following are tips for achieving this: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be concise. It is good to explain things thoroughly, but do not use more words than are necessary to convey the information.</li> <li>○ Except in the introduction, conclusion, and transition sentences, do not repeat information you have already given.</li> <li>○ Simple language is preferred to “flowery” language. Read your sentences aloud to see if they sound clear or awkward.</li> <li>○ Do not rely too heavily on quotations. It is generally preferred to paraphrase from sources so that your own voice comes through.</li> <li>○ Avoid slang and contractions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Analogies and personal anecdotes often come across as too casual.</li> <li>○ Avoid all use of second person (you).</li> <li>○ When giving your own arguments and opinions, avoid using the first person (I).</li> </ul>
Citations and references*	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is other authors' work and all information that is not common knowledge properly cited?</li> <li>● Does every citation have a matching reference entry?</li> <li>● Are quotation marks used when necessary?</li> <li>● Is the paraphrasing sufficiently different from the author's original words?</li> <li>● Are the citation and reference formats consistent?</li> <li>● Is adequate information included in the reference entries?</li> </ul>

\* Minor shortcomings in this category will result in lost points in this category alone. However, serious shortcomings in this category constitute plagiarism and will be penalized with a reduction in your grade for the entire assignment and reporting to the appropriate authorities in the College of Liberal Arts.