POLA01H
Critical Issues in Politics: Politics in a Changing Climate

Fall 2018 Argumentative Essay Assignment
Proposal Due October 15 by 5pm on Blackboard
Final Essay Due December 3 by 5pm on Blackboard

Canada faces unique challenges in addressing climate change. It is a large, sparsely populated country with a relatively cold climate. It has some provinces that depend on fossil fuel resources for a significant part of their economies. It has fragmented authority (federal, provincial, indigenous) over land and environmental policy. Despite this, there are a number of municipal, provincial, and federal efforts underway to address climate change and Canada has a relatively aggressive commitment as part of the global Paris Agreement on climate change.

In this argumentative essay, you will examine climate change politics from one of 5 perspectives:
• United Nations
• Federal Government
• First Nations
• Provincial Government
• Municipal Government

You will develop an argument around one of the following questions that are top of the agenda in Canada, from the perspective you’ve chosen:

1. Should the Canadian federal government pursue building the Transmountain Pipeline Expansion?
2. Should the Canadian federal government impose a national carbon tax?
3. Should Canadian cities pursue aggressive climate action?
4. Should Canadian provinces develop their own carbon pricing policies?

In other words, you will answer one of these questions and develop arguments from your perspective: e.g. The United Nations would argue that no, Canada should not pursue building the Transmountain Pipeline.

In the research and writing process you will:

1. Investigate and summarize the current state of the question you are examining (Transmountain, national carbon tax, municipal action (pick a city), provincial carbon pricing (pick a province). For this descriptive part of the research, you need to answer the ‘what’ question: What is going on?
   o This will require that you do research with media sources and government documents/websites that describe what is happening for your issue.

2. You will formulate an argument that answers the one of the questions, but goes beyond a simple yes or no to develop the answer to the more important why question: Why should/not the federal government pursue building the Transmountain Pipeline Expansion? In other words, you will identify the reasons why your answer to the question is valid.
You will need to do research with course material and academic sources that explore the general politics of climate change at the international, national, provincial, or municipal level. In other words you need to read and investigate what scholars have said about who is responsible for climate policy, the role that different actors play, and why different actors pursue the policies that they do.

You will develop your argument from the perspective of one of the actors mentioned above, but you need to include arguments that explore how at least one other actor also considers the issue. E.g. If your argument is that the United Nations would say no, Canada should not pursue building the Transmountain Pipeline, your arguments for why must consider why at least one other actor would agree or disagree with that position.

Practically the steps for this project include:

1. Preliminary research on the issue you choose in media, government, and academic sources and consultation of academic sources that discuss your chosen actor’s role in climate politics more generally.

2. Write a proposal for the paper that provides:
   a. 1 paragraph of background on your issue (summary of the answer to the descriptive ‘what’ question from above).
   b. 1 paragraph that develops your preliminary thesis statement and supporting arguments.
   c. An outline of your plan for the entire paper.
   d. Bibliography of the sources you have consulted in your research. For the proposal, you should have a minimum of 8 sources and at least four of the sources must be academic.

3. Do a peer review session in your tutorial. On October 17th you will bring a HARD COPY of your proposal to tutorial and you will exchange it with a classmate. You will read each other’s proposals and provide feedback. Your TA will also provide feedback on your proposal.

4. Write the final paper (maximum of 2000 words, minimum of 1250 words, not including bibliography) from the proposal and feedback.

Criteria for Grading:
The following questions will be used to assess your proposal:

- Is it clearly written, easy to read, and free of spelling and grammatical errors?
- Does it provide a clear summary of your issue?
- Does it present a clear argument (thesis) in response to the ‘why’ question, based on the research you have conducted to date?
- Does your bibliography include enough scholarly sources? Is it correctly formatted?

The following questions will be used to assess your final paper:

- Does the thesis answer the question?
- Does the essay provide clear arguments in favor of the thesis?
- Does the essay provide supporting evidence for the arguments from the academic literature and/or empirical information?
- Is it clearly written, easy to read and free of spelling and grammatical errors?
- Does the essay follow proper citation procedure and include a proper bibliography?

Citations and Bibliography

For the proposal and final essay, please use in-line citations (author, date: page number) and use the following format for the bibliography:

Articles:

Books:

Edited Volumes:

Newspaper:
Author last name, Author first name. Year. Article Title. Newspaper Name. Month, Day. (If no author listed, put the article title first).