

Political Science 17.504: Requirements and Assignments

The major requirement is a research paper approximately 30 double spaced pages in length. Each paper should be accompanied by a 100 word abstract summarizing the main argument. The form and style of the paper may vary but several possibilities are allowed:

- 1) First-year students may use the exercise of writing this paper to explore substantial research questions related to possible future research projects such as the second year paper (required for all MIT Ph.D. students) or dissertation. Such papers will address a major theoretical question (for example, the role of social status in ethnic voting) or examine ethnic politics in a region where the student anticipates doing field research.
- 2) More advanced students may wish to write an article-length paper suitable for submission to an academic journal. In this case, the format should conform to the style and length of the targeted journal (for example, *International Security* or the *American Political Science Review*).
- 3) Students can write a draft of a review essay eventually intended for publication. A review article is not simply a summary but compares and contrasts how the literature addresses an issue in terms of hypotheses, operationalization of variables, data, and conclusions.
- 4) More advanced graduate students may want to treat the paper as a way to develop a dissertation prospectus, chapter, or grant proposal.

In addition to the research paper, students must write six two page papers. These papers are not summaries. Students should use them to identify flaws and raise specific questions to bring up during class discussion. These papers are intended as an outlet for student opinion, intuitions, and questions. The first two page paper is due on the second day of class. You may choose when to turn in the remaining five papers but you must write at least two of these remaining papers in each section of the course.

Grading is as follows:

Research Paper: 50%

Short Papers: 30%

Class Discussion: 20%

Incompletes are strongly discouraged.