

Assignments

The document contains instructions and materials for seven Global Politics Assignments.

1. Critical News Analysis

This assignment builds on traditional news analysis assignments that encourage students to read the news, summarize what they read, and apply it to class ideas. Thus, the core of the assignment stays the same, but you can easily modify the base structure to fit your needs. I have used a variation of this assignment in region specific classes, e.g., European and Asian politics, as well as broad topic classes, e.g., gender, race and human rights.

The core of the assignment prompt always remains the same:

1. For this week, select a news article on the topic of the week which must be:
 - a. Less than a month old [or any other time frame that you find appropriate]
 - b. From a non-American news outlet
2. Summarize the article; and ...

Here you can use different prompts:

3. Explain how the article fits together with the weekly topic.
4. Relates to the overarching theme of the class/module.
5. Represents an example of [a human rights violation etc.]
6. State whether you think the same issue exists in the US and how the issue is similar or different than the one you read about in the news article.

Modifications to instructions:

News outlets: you can be more specific on what type of non-American news outlets students need to consult. You can:

- a) Restrict news outlets to non-Western news which excludes European, Canadian, New Zealand, Australian news outlets; or
- b) Require regional news outlets, e.g. African, Latin American, or Asian news outlets.

Comparative angle: This modification is particularly useful if you are teaching a comparative politics class or want students to increase their awareness and understanding of intercultural differences.

Instruction: Select two news articles on the same topic from the same week. One article must be from an American news outlet and one from a non-American outlet.

Assignment prompt: How does the reporting across your selected articles differ in terms of perspectives, narrative, arguments, etc.? Why do you think these differences exist?

Intercultural awareness: this modification is specifically designed to raise students' awareness how the US and its action is perceived in other parts of the world. This modification can easily be used in a US politics class where students are encouraged to explore how non-American news report on domestic US matters such as gun violence, climate policies, or American elections.

Instruction: Pick an article from a non-American news outlet that discusses a major American foreign policy decision or event.

Assignment prompt: How does the news outlet evaluate the US decision/behavior/event? Is it critical or positive of the decision/behavior/event? What does the evaluation tell us about how the US is perceived globally?

Here is an example of a specific prompt that I have used in my Asia politics class.

Find a recent article from a Chinese newspaper discussing how the U.S. has handled the pandemic or vaccine development/distribution. To pass this assignment, you need to do the following:

1. Summarize the article, which must be from a Chinese news outlet and cannot be older than one month.
2. Analyze how the article either supports or contradicts what you have learned so far in class.
3. Reference weekly readings.
4. Write 200 words.
5. Provide full citation of sources.

2. Discussion board-based news analysis

While the traditional news analysis assignment encourages students to build research skills and media literacy skills by making students find their own news sources, you can also do a mini version of this assignment in the form of a discussion board.

Suggested prompt:

I will post a news article on the topic of the week from a [non-American] news outlet. To pass this assignment, you need to do the following:

1. Post a comment which must include the following elements:
 - a. Determine whether the United States is portrayed in a negative or positive light.

- b. Explain why the US is portrayed in such a light.
 - c. State your disagreement or agreement with the assessment of the US role in the event.
 - d. Give at least one reason on why you agree or disagree with the article's assessment.
2. Post a thoughtful, respectful comment on a classmate's post that shows that you reflected on the different perspectives that your fellow classmate offered.

For a list of possible news outlets, please refer to the [Media Resources document](#).

3. Icebreaker Assignment for Online Class

In online classes, it is particularly hard to generate excitement for the upcoming semester or the class topic. This assignment is the first one that I required in my *Introduction to Global Issue* class to (a) set the tone for the class, (b) get students excited about learning about the world, and (c) provide students with a fun way to master the way I grade/evaluate discussion boards. Students consistently have listed this assignment as one of their favorites in the class.

The goal is to introduce students to a variety of different cultures through engaging, not too serious, videos that explore intercultural differences around topics everyone is familiar with.

Assignment prompt:

1. Watch one video of your choice.
2. Identify one intercultural difference in that video (some videos include multiple intercultural differences).
3. Describe the intercultural difference.
4. Explain how this differ from the American tradition/culture.
5. Share your thoughts why you think this difference exists.

You can visit my [YouTube channel](#) for a collection of videos I have used in the past. In addition, here are several YouTube pages that have wonderful and accessible intercultural content:

1. [Food Wars](#). One of my favorite shows that compare fast food offerings between the US and other countries (including: Italy, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, and China)
2. [Life Where I'm from](#) is great for intercultural difference in the Japanese and Asian context.
3. [BuzzFeed videos](#) also has light heartened intercultural content in their playlists.
4. [Growing Up in Europe](#) by France24

4. Student Choice: Country Experts

In my comparative classes or region-specific classes, I require students to become experts in one country of their choice. This allows students to deepen their understanding of a particular country while also creating a situation where students can bring multiple perspective to class discussion based on their own country expertise.

To facilitate building their country expertise, I create a series of mini assignments that students must complete with country-specific information. Below, I provide the assignment prompts and instructions for my Introduction to Policymaking in Comparative Politics class.

You will write short country reports (CRs) about a democracy of your own choosing. Consider choosing a democracy where you plan to study abroad and/or whose language you are learning to build your country-specific expertise. The country selection must be cleared with me and cannot be changed once selected.

During Module 2 and 3, you will need to submit a country report on your selected democracy before our Friday class. During our Friday class, we will discuss how to assess the democratic quality for various aspects and how to assess the quality of democracy in your specific country.

Each country report consists of two elements:

1. **Factsheet:** information about your specific democracy on the weekly topic. For example, when we learn about elections, you will determine the electoral system of your democracy, how often elections take place, the results of the last elections etc.
2. **Quality of democracy assessment:** you report the score or classification of your selected democracy and provide two other indices that could be used to measure the same element. For example, when we discuss elections, you will find two indices that measure whether countries have free and fair elections.

Each CR is graded as follows:

1. You provided answers to the question prompts for the fact sheet portion and your answers are accurate and complete (3 points)
2. You uploaded the factsheet portion before Friday's class (1 point)
3. You reported the score or classification of your democracy after class on Friday and provide two more indices that measure the same idea (2 points)
4. You provided sources using Chicago Author-Date Style as a reference list (1 point)

5. Looking beyond the US

Sometimes, social movements that start in the United States expand globally. Examples are #metoo, #blacklivesmatters, or the women's march. In these instances, I use these examples to illustrate how the same issue – police violence, sexual harassment, gender equality – resonates around the globe but that different countries bring their own perspectives to the same struggle. Below is an example I have used in the past on Black Lives Matter.

First, answer the following question: According to the [podcast](#), how have social justice advocates in other parts of the world applied BLM to their own unique racial struggles? Please discuss one specific example.

Next, find a news article about the specific example you discussed (provide citation with link). Then:

1. Summarize the news article (who, where, when, what, why); and
2. Relate it back to the podcast and any of the weekly course materials.

6. Google Image Search

Another mini assignment utilizes the power of images to bring non-US perspectives to the classroom. I use the assignment below to teach about the continued presence of colonial legacy in the Majority World.

1. Go to google image search and type into search box "white savior complex".
2. Select a photo that depicts the idea of the white savior complex and include photo in your assignment.
3. Describe the photo (who is in it, what are they doing etc.)
4. Discuss how the photo depicts the idea of the white savior complex and what it tells about colonial legacies still in existence today.

The same assignment can be modified to ask students to find images from BLM protests, #MeToo, or Women's Marches in other parts of the world (see Looking Beyond the US assignment above).

7. Media Artifact

This assignment takes the form of a mini presentation that taps into students' use of media. You can easily adjust this assignment to the needs of your class by using the instruction template below. The presentation including discussion is no longer than 10 min.

Select a media artifact (meme, YouTube video, social media post, TikTok video, scene from a movie, tv series, art piece, poem etc.) that relates to the week's readings.

The presentation should:

1. Introduce and summarize the media artifact.
2. Introduce course concept that it relates to.
3. Explain how it extends/builds on course readings.
4. Q&A session (answer questions from classmates).