Writing for POLS and DWA Classes

Research Papers
- Basic Outline
  - Introduce your research topic and your thesis
  - Discuss your research methodology
  - Discuss the academic literature related to the topic
  - Explain and analyze your research
  - Conclude your paper and demonstrate the significance of your argument
- Use a variety of scholarly sources and cite them appropriately (books, journal articles, newspaper articles, government documents, lectures, etc.)

Theory Papers
- Basic Outline
  - Introduce your topic and thesis
  - Discuss the political theories upon which you are relying
  - Synthesize the ideas of the political theorists into your own argument
  - Conclude your paper and demonstrate the significance of your argument
- Be sure to read the theoretical works closely to ensure that your argument has both depth and complexity

Briefs
- Keep briefs concise
- Write a short introduction that succinctly establishes your thesis
- Avoid repetition
- Do not include large quotes
- Bullet points are often acceptable

General Advice
- Write several drafts
- Make your introduction a road map for the reader
- Craft topic sentences that clearly indicate the subject of the paragraphs they begin
- Write concluding sentences that reveal the significance of the paragraphs they complete
- Ensure that each paragraph moves your argument forward
- Create transitions between paragraphs
- Subheadings are a useful organization tool for longer papers
- Include thoughtful commentary on the quotes and evidence that you present
- Tie all of your evidence and analysis to your thesis
The Little Things

- Avoid the use of the passive voice: “She was killed.” Instead, try to use a more active voice: “Jason murdered Julie with an ice pick.”
- Refrain from the use of contractions in academic papers: don’t, can’t, won’t, etc.

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