

# Writing Guidelines

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Writing an excellent paper for Political Science courses requires the development of strong substantive arguments (i.e., a thesis, supporting information, and direct references to course material) as well as a clearly formatted and concise set of arguments and illustrations. All papers that you complete for this class should conform to Modern Language Association (MLA) Style guidelines for source citations and references. While other citation styles are accepted in some disciplines at Wooster (such as APA or Chicago Style), MLA is the style that I require for work in my classes, as well as for my Independent Study thesis students.

## Writing and Source Citation Guides

There are many good resources on writing and source citation for college assignments. I recommend the following:

- Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers, Rules for Writers: 2016 MLA Update (New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2016).
- The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL), <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- Lipson, Charles. Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- Turabian, Kate L. A Manual For Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

## Plagiarism

Our ideal image of a writer may be that of a lone individual creating original prose in splendid isolation, but the real world of writing is much more challenging. Unfortunately, plagiarism is a constant concern in any form of writing. To combat this, I have high standards for writing assignments that are consistent with the Code of Academic Integrity at The College of Wooster. Students are expected to read, understand, and comply with College standards for academic integrity and the policy on plagiarism. These issues are fully articulated in the Code of Academic Integrity, as published in the Scot's Key, and they form an essential part of the contract between the student and the College. This is regarded as extremely important for all courses at the College. Violations of the Code may lead to grade penalties including failure of the course.

In addition, the Department of Political Science Handbook for Independent Study, 2017-2018 offers the following guidelines on plagiarism:

“The proper acknowledgment of sources is both an obligation and an art. Plagiarism is a serious breach of the canons of scholarship, and therefore of the College Code of Academic Integrity...Language, ideas, or information taken from others should be acknowledged at an appropriate point within the text. The mere inclusion of a source in the bibliography of a paper is not in itself sufficient... Failure to acknowledge the source of an indirect quotation, or paraphrase, is also a form of plagiarism. The writer of a paraphrase must acknowledge that it is a paraphrase and must identify the source, those phrases must be acknowledged by quotation marks, unless they are commonplace.”

### **Citing Materials from the Internet**

*Caution: Internet vs. Print Sources:* The ‘best’ source materials for most writing at the College level are academic, peer-reviewed publications. Accordingly, one should be discriminating when they find sources through the Internet. Websites are not always careful to make sure that the information is accurate. For one thing, it is much easier to post information on a website than it is to publish a book or academic journal article (that undergoes a rigorous peer review process). The immediacy of the Internet, as well as the seeming anonymity of web posting, also encourages some people to write things quickly, without checking to be sure of their facts or their conclusions. Sometimes, authors who post online actually seek to deceive their audiences. In short, practice caution when drawing information from the Internet.

*Copying Text Without Plagiarizing:* The Internet is a convenient place to find support for your arguments, right? The Internet certainly can allow someone to copy and paste arguments or quotations instead of having to think about, process, and retype them into their papers. Yet, while such an approach is tempting, it can lead the author into danger of *plagiarism*. It may be too easy to copy arguments, facts, or quotations into your own Word document without careful attribution. And if you are gathering or borrowing a lot of material from online sources, it can become difficult to distinguish your own writing from the passages you have copied into a document. The result is a plagiarism danger zone: By pasting in someone else’s words rather than your own, your ‘voice’ will become lost or hidden in the paper. This type of problem—being *driven by* the material that you paste in, rather than *driving, processing, and framing* the presentation of information—represents a tell-tale sign of plagiarism.

*Best Practices:* I recommend that you consider an online source as a supplement to any print source that you might draw from. Take notes or highlight versions of the material and include careful and regular source references. Consider creating separate Word documents, notebook pages, or color-coded pdfs for each source that you summarize. By carefully referencing any facts, arguments, or quotations that you are borrowing from other sources, no matter what their nature, you can better present the information in your own words and in support of your own thesis and illustrations. When in doubt about this, be sure to ask your instructor for guidance.

## Using the MLA Style for Paper Assignments

*The MLA Style requires that you use parenthetical references and a complete works cited/bibliography. The proper format for each of these is slightly different.*

The examples of reference styles here are taken from two, primary sources: Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, Rules for Writers: 2016 MLA Update (New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2016), and Charles Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

### Parenthetical In-Text Citations

MLA recommends in-text citations that refer readers to a list of works cited. A typical in-text citation names the author of the source, date of publication, and gives a page number in parentheses. Here are examples:

#### Book Source—Cited at the End of a Sentence

George Washington Williams was an American Civil War soldier and famous writer on African-American history (Franklin 54).

#### Academic Journal Articles

Regional inequalities in Papua New Guinea have intensified since the collapse of the Bolteau regime. As expert Richard Jackson argued, “Given the economic and political challenges associated with increased regionalism, many worry that there is no hope for true reform in Papua New Guinea” (Jackson 180).

#### Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Steve Bannon is a force to be reckoned with in modern politics. But he came from humble roots. After graduation from high school, Bannon attended Virginia Tech and served as the president of the student government association. During the summers, when Bannon was attending Virginia Tech, he took a job working at a local junkyard, often coming home so dirty his mother made him rinse off with a hose before being allowed into the house (Weber 42).

#### Speech, Academic Talk, or Course Lecture

China's precarious relationship with its neighbors is indicative of a new wave of emerging great power struggles. It's 1.6 million active duty soldiers combined with a massive \$11 trillion Gross Domestic Product offer it tremendous leverage in the region and beyond (Krain 2017).

#### Sources Found Only Online: Newspaper Articles, Speech Transcripts, Blogs, Government Documents and Webpages, etc... [Good Rule of Thumb: Provide Sufficient Information that the Source Can Be Located Easily]

Today, Turkey is secular, modernized, and Westernized. But recent events suggest that these characteristics might be under tremendous stress (“Turkish Odyssey: The Republic Period,” <http://www.turkishodyssey.com/turkey/history/history4.htm#Ataturk>).

## Works Cited/Bibliography Style

All items in the bibliography are entered in alphabetical order according to the last name of the author (or by titles of works without authors). MLA Style provides at the end of the paper a list of works cited that provides publication information about the source. NOTE: items in the bibliography are not numbered; each source should be listed separately.

### Books--Single Author

Franklin, John Hope. George Washington Williams: A Biography. University of Chicago Press, 1985.

### Books--Two Authors

Kernighan, Brian W., and Dennis M. Ritchie. Democratization in Latin America. Prentice-Hall, 1978.

### Chapter by One Author in a Work by Another Author

Beech, Mary Higdon. "The Domestic Realm in the Lives of Hindu Women in Calcutta." in Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia, ed. Hanna Papnanek and Gail Minault, pp.110-38. Chanakya Press, 1982.

### Newspaper Articles

Camille, Andre. "Deciding Who Gets Dibs on Health-Care Dollars." Wall Street Journal. March 27, 1984, p.5.

### Journal Articles

Jackson, Richard. "Running Down the Up-Escalator: Regional Inequality in Papua New Guinea." Australian Geographer, vol.14, no.2, 2003, pp.175-84.

### Magazine Articles

Weber, Bruce. "The Myth Maker: Karl Rove and the Presidency." New York Times Magazine. October 11, 2004. p.42.

### Webpage

"Turkish Odyssey: The Republic Period." <http://www.turkishodyssey.com/turkey/history/history4.htm#Ataturk> (accessed September 14, 2015).

### Journal Article Online

Small, Christopher. "Genocide in Darfur." Comparative Politics, vol.19, no.3, 2004, pp.340-359. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0734-4392.3455AWDTWL> (accessed March 15, 2013).

### Youtube Clip

"Best of Borat." Youtube Video Clip. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFP-MktgOKU> (accessed January 8, 2016).

**Sample MLA Works Cited Page** [alphabetized by author last name]

**Works Cited**

Beech, Mary Higdon. "The Domestic Realm in the Lives of Hindu Women in Calcutta." in Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia, ed. Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, pp.110-38. Chanakya Press, 1982.

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