

History &137 - Spring 2012
Essay: Competing Ideas on the Role of Government

Due: Tuesday, May 29th

Length: 4-5 Pages, Double-Spaced

Purpose: For this assignment you will read primary sources and write an analytical essay that interprets them. The assignment is intended to develop your analytical and writing skills and will also familiarize you with the conventions of writing in history.

Essays should:

1. Directly address the assigned topic.
2. Be structured with an introduction, body, and conclusion.
3. Contain a thesis in the introduction that is supported with evidence from the document(s) in the body of the essay. Use specific examples to support your points.
4. Cite quotes and paraphrased ideas. Please use footnotes rather than endnotes.
5. Follow the conventions outlined on the back of this sheet.
6. Be proofread and contain few to no grammar and spelling errors.
7. Be written so that a reader who has not read the assigned sources can understand it. In other words, the essay should “stand on its own.”

Assigned Readings:

Links to the readings can be found at the course website:
<http://davenorberg.net/history/137documents.php>

These are political speeches from three presidents and one presidential candidate that express their ideas on the role of government. I recommend that you look through the textbook or online for background information on these four people. Try to get a sense of their ideas and policy proposals before you read the four speeches.

Question:

Compare and contrast the ideas about the proper size and role of the federal government presented by Lyndon Johnson, Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama.

How do their ideas compare? Generally speaking, what role did they see for the federal government? In general, did they favor or oppose federal programs to address problems in American life? Why? For this essay, focus primarily or exclusively on domestic policy and only analyze their ideas as presented in these speeches. Their actual policies are beyond the scope of this essay.

Format

- Margins: 1" on the top and bottom of the page, and 1" on the sides
- Font: use Times New Roman size 12 or Courier size 11
- Please number your pages.
- Staple the paper in the upper-left hand corner. Do not use a binder of any sort.

Conventions

- For the most part, use the past tense when writing in history.
- For the most part, use the third person perspective. (Avoid the pronouns I, me, we, and you.)
- Use rhetorical questions sparingly, if at all. If you do use them, be sure to answer them.
- Avoid slang or colloquial (informal) language.
- Be careful to avoid anachronism - avoid discussing events, ideas, or people out of historical context. You should not read modern day ideas and beliefs into the past. Instead of moralizing about or judging the past, explain how those in the past understood themselves and their era. (In other words, explain their idea. Do not take sides.)
- Be careful with generalizations. Avoid using words like "always," "only," and "all." Only use them if you have solid evidence to support your statements.
- Do not use contractions.
- Be sure to proofread the final paper.

Footnote Format

Author, *Full Title*, Full URL (web address) for the site (Month and Year accessed). Example: David Norberg, Courses: Fall 2010, <http://davenorberg.net/history/> (October 2010).

Subsequent Notes

Ibid., page number(s). ("Ibid." means "same as above." Page numbers aren't needed when citing online sources.)

Author, page number(s). (Use this format when "Ibid." can not be used.)

For more information on footnotes, see:

- http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c10_s1.html
- <http://www.libs.uga.edu/ref/chicago.html#docnote> (See Documentary Note Style)

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Rubric for the Essay on the Role of the Federal Government

Introduction & Thesis Statement / 20 points

The essay starts with a clear, organized introduction that gives the reader a good sense of the topic covered in the essay: the people involved, place, timeframe, and central issues. The introduction has a clear thesis that directly states the paper's central argument.

Use of Evidence / 15 points

The essay's argument is thoroughly supported by evidence (brief quotes) from throughout the assigned sources. The evidence that is presented is relevant and directly supports the thesis, is presented in a clear and effective manner, and is properly cited. The evidence that is presented is representative of the sources and is not taken out of context. All major points in the essay are supported by evidence.

Paragraph Structure / 5 points

Body paragraphs have one topic or central point each. All paragraphs are relevant and focused. Paragraphs have a clear topic sentence that states the main point of the paragraph.

Focus, Development & Quality of Argument / 40 points

The essay has a central argument that directly answers the question asked. The essay is focused, well-organized, does not wander off-topic, and is not repetitive. The argument is sound, accurately and effectively answers the question, does not contain any major logical fallacies, and does not ignore evidence that would contradict it.

Conventions / 15 points

The essay has been proofread and contains a minimum of spelling and grammar errors. The essay is clear, easy to follow, and is written in an appropriate tone. Quotes are presented properly: with quote marks, proper footnotes, and in block format if over 50 words. All quotes and paraphrased material has been cited with footnotes that follow the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.

Conclusion / 5 points

The essay has a clear conclusion that effectively summarizes and reinforces the main argument and does not introduce new ideas, topics, or evidence.