American Foreign Policy Analysis Requirement

As specified in the syllabus, each student is required to produce one written paper of approximately 10-15 pages. The paper will attempt to answer a question about the Obama administration's foreign policy's foundations: How closely does the Obama administration's foreign policy adhere to values of the United States and what is your evidence? Each student will also present his/her answer to the question (with empirical substantiation) as a poster to be displayed and discussed at Stapleton Library on December 11th.

As you should have determined by now, the requirement is two-fold: first you have to determine what the Obama administration's foreign policy is and then you have to answer the question at the heart of the requirement. By now you have probably realized that determining the United States' foreign policy is not a simple task. Unfortunately, there is no one place that allows you to retrieve the "foreign policy of the United States." You will have to use a variety of official government documents and other contemporary articles and administration commentary to "piece together" the substance of America's foreign policy. I have placed some materials that might be useful in the class's I-drive/American foreign policy/fall 13 folder but these are not by any measure the complete library of documents or sources that could be used to determine the U.S.'s foreign policy. You should use whatever sources you can find that will help you determine the Obama administration's foreign policy and answer your chosen questions.

The answer to the chosen question is as important as the determination of what the foreign policy is. You should use analysis, political science and international theory, and, most of all, logical thinking to substantiate your answer to the chosen question with empirical evidence. There is no "right" answer; any answer is potentially as valid as any other, given the persuasiveness and weight of your evidence, and logic of your rationale.

The analysis is due **Nov.** 21, and the poster presentation will be in Stapleton Library on **Dec. 10th** from 10:15-12:15 as the "concluding exercise for the term; there will be no in-class final exam. You will (as a group) display your poster in the public space of the 1st floor and be prepared to inform any visitors (and the other students and the instructor) of your answer to the above question and of your evidence to support your answer to the question.

Remember, plagiarism is a serious offense. Plagiarism is using someone else's information, ideas, or language as if they are your own original thoughts. Use the MLA (see http://www.mla.org or http://campusgw.library.cornell.edu/newhelp/res_strategy/citing/mla.html for assistance in properly using MLA style) or APA (http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.htmp for assistance for APA style) style to document a source if you use a fact, paraphrase, or direct quotation from a source. You should cite the author's or authors' name(s) and the page number of the source where the fact, paraphrase, or direct quotation is found, within citations then refer the reader to the complete documentation of the source in a "Works Cited" listed at the end of the analysis. The "Works Cited" list should be double spaced on a separate page with the entries listed alphabetically by the author's last name. Any analysis not properly documenting the use of acquired data will be assigned a grade of **zero (0)** but the student can (as all students can) re-write the analysis to receive a higher for record grade.

What is a Poster?

Sample of Poster Layout

A poster is essentially your research paper presented on a poster board. Developing your poster's content may seem like a breeze. After all, you just have to cut and paste parts of your research onto the board, right? Wrong! To be successful, a poster requires planning **how** you will depict specific information and providing text and graphics to capture your audience's attention.

Only rarely is research so focused and narrow that a poster can include all the data, results and conclusions of a professional research project. As you choose the information to present on the poster, don't rely solely on graphs and tables you've already drafted for a formal paper on your research. Instead, look at key information in a new light and choose the best visual forms to present the subset of data and results you decide to highlight on this poster.

The final material that goes on a poster is quite unlike what most researchers and writers generally write for other contexts. The poster calls for much more attention to visual impact than other forms of writing do. And the restricted space of a poster requires careful condensing of ideas that we would write about at length for other forums. Along with an abstract and written text you can also present graphs, tables, drawings and pictures.

- Although one can present figures and tables, papers that **do not** have these can also be usefully presented as posters. By writing concisely and with a few areas of focus, the presentation can intellectually communicate your research and help synthesize your main ideas and research directions.
- The researcher usually stands by the poster while other participants view the presentation and interact with the author.
- Handouts relative to poster presentations are popular and encouraged.
- Use a mailing tube or portfolio case for transporting your poster to the meeting.

Poster Layout Diagram - Image Map Explanations

Poster Layout Diagram
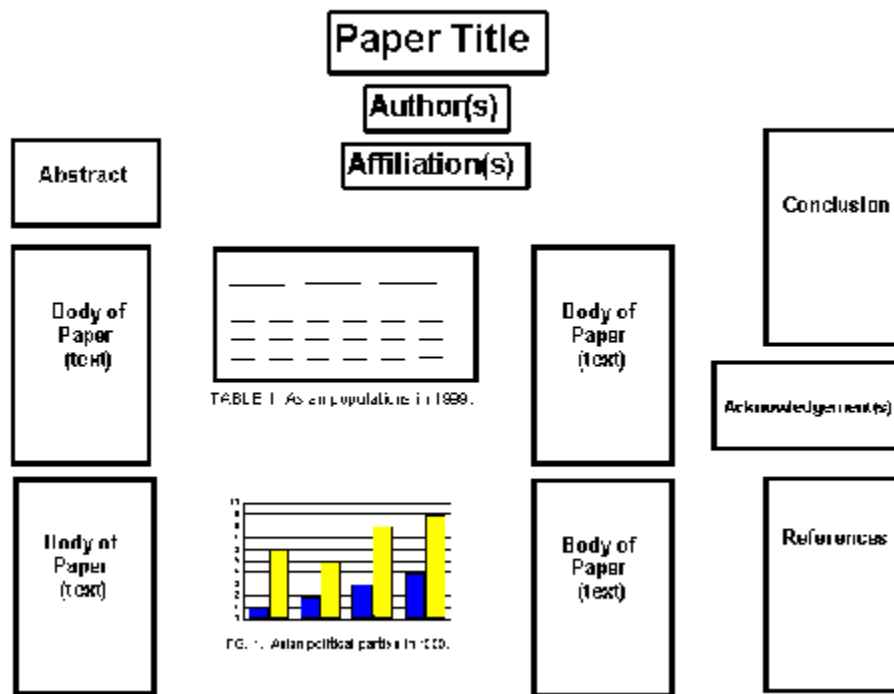
Paper Title, Author(s) and Affiliation(s)

Each poster should include the title of the presentation in large letters, the institution where the work was completed, and the author names at the top center of the poster. Materials must be easily read at a distance of 4 feet (1.5 m). The paper title, author(s) and affiliation(s) should be placed in larger point size in separate blocks at the top center. In general the rule is the following:

Point Size for Poster Text	
Paper Title	104 points = 35-40 mm
Author(s)/Affiliation(s)	72 points = 25 mm
Regular Text	16-18 points = 5-6 mm

- By using 14" paper, in a landscape page size setting, you can create the titles, authors and affiliations in a nice looking way.

Abstract

An abstract placed in the upper left side of the poster is suggested. The abstract of your paper should not attempt to explain all the content in-depth of your paper. It should highlight just a few points about the meaning and organization of the paper:

- The major purpose of the paper
- Outline briefly the organization of the paper
- Mention 1-2 major conclusions and some idea of the significance of the work

- The abstract ideally should be between 200-300 words.

Body of Text

Because posters condense a great deal of information, the tricky part is determining what information is relevant for your particular presentation. If you depict too much information, few viewers will read your poster completely. If you depict too little information, viewers may not realize they're missing key information. One of the most common mistakes in developing a poster is relying too heavily on text and trying to include too much textual explanation.

Unlike a research-based paper, which might run from 15 to 80 pages (or more), a standard poster will include only about 3-4 pages of single-spaced text or graphics in 12 point font (i.e., before formatting for the poster). In other words, writers for posters have very little space to fill, particularly if they have to explain complex ideas or research. The key to crafting a good poster, then, is to focus as narrowly as possible on the central ideas you need to convey. You just won't have room to explain relationships among ideas in any detail, so pick out what's central to your topic and concentrate on that narrow focus. Typically, the less text, the more appealing the poster is. When in doubt, edit out - crowded cluttered posters are difficult to read and are often disregarded. Make sure every item in your poster is necessary!

Cutting and pasting a research-based or informative paper onto a poster provides too much information and will overwhelm poster viewers. To get and keep your audience's attention, consider what information sums up your work or is most important for your viewers to know. Then think about how you can best depict it—through graphics or text.

Also, wherever possible, use shorter sentences, shorter paragraphs, lists, or groups (chunks) of information. Because you'll be printing your text chunks in a large font, even two and three sentence paragraphs will appear long on the poster. Always look at trial printouts of the poster text before you decide that you don't need any more revisions for clarity and readability.

You can cut parts from your research paper to begin compiling text and graphics for the poster. Be careful, though, not to stop at that point. The compiled material will still be too dense if you don't revise carefully for the poster format. Typically, there is an:
- Introduction that will give some background to the subject and research/study approach.
- A series of a few well-developed results of research such as an analysis of political party affiliation and regional affiliation, or instances of literary publications, one or two philosophical ideas, results of a social educational survey, 1-2 case studies of an incident or pattern of behavior, etc. **The key point is to make a few cases well.**
- Shorten your sentences to be as concise as possible. One way to re-work longer sentences is to underline the main points in the sentence and determine whether or not you can break this information into a list or graphic.
- Another way to avoid a text-heavy poster is to group or "chunk" your information. This involves providing only bits and pieces of text at once. For instance, to describe consequences of leaving high blood pressure untreated, you could list the consequence and then write a description next to it. For example:

	Description One
Consequence A	Description Two
	Description Three

	Description One
Consequence B	Description Two
	Description Three

Supplying headings for groups of information then allows your audience to quickly locate the information they need.

- Think about ways to break the text into bulleted or numbered lists that that summarizes the evidence or conclusions. It makes the presentation lucid and easy for the reader to follow. Don't distort the relationships of ideas in your paragraph, but try to avoid long blocks of text. If you need to include large text blocks for clarity, be sure to have supplemental handouts that viewers can take with them to review later.
- The text should **not** be laden with footnotes - and with few endnotes. References should be given at the end and cited, when appropriate in the following manner:
  - Single source by the author: (Name, pp.)
  - Multiple sources by author (Name, short title or date, pp.)
- However, avoid oversimplification. Because viewers probably don't know much about the topic, many posters oversimplify too much. Then the information can be distorted or easily misunderstood. As you work on your poster, keep asking yourself these questions about content:
  - Have I presented the most important information for viewers to walk away with?
  - Is there any way that viewers could misunderstand the key points I present?

Revising As you revise the text of your poster, you'll almost certainly have to consider three main areas of concern:

Clarity
Because you'll have very little space to explain your ideas and your readers will take very little time to skim your poster (usually about five minutes), you must communicate your main points quickly and clearly. If your poster sends a muddled message or takes too long to figure out, readers won't bother to work through the confusion. So checking clarity is vital.

Jargon
Jargon or specialized language can be a valuable shortcut for the poster writer. But you can use jargon terms only if your audience is knowledgeable enough to understand them. As you think about your target audience, examine each jargon term and decide if it needs to be redefined in more general language.

Sentence Length and Connections

The typical advice for poster writers is to "use short sentences." Like most advice, you can't follow this maxim all the time. Shorter sentences do work better than long ones on posters, but as you cut sentences be sure not to lose track of how each sentence relates to the next. Many writers create short sentences by cutting long sentences apart and taking out connecting words, such as "because," "then," "after," "therefore," "while." When you take out the connecting words that show the logical relationships between sentences, your text can become harder to understand. So always revise sentences with overall clarity in mind. If only a long sentence can show a complex but necessary relationship between ideas, use the long sentence.

When to Use Text

Because viewers can take in visual information much more quickly than they can read text, use graphics whenever you can on a poster. Not all information has to be accompanied by graphs, tables or pictures. For example, the distillation of a philosophical theory in a poster would provide a fruitful intellectual experience. When you could oversimplify and thus mislead by using a graphic, stick to text instead. Don't try to include the most complete explanations of complex ideas on a poster, but do use text to convey key points and to announce that you have supplemental handouts. Also, make your text easy to read by chunking information in bullets, lists, or short paragraphs and use clear headings throughout. Your poster should stimulate discussion, not give a long presentation.

Why Use Graphics

Graphics are more pleasing to look at than paragraph after paragraph of text. However, if a graphic requires lengthy textual explanations, you should reconsider how effective it really is. In general, a poster graphic should speak for itself. A title or heading helps the audience understand its content, but overall you should keep written explanations to a minimum.

Since your audience won't be spending large amounts of time reading your text, they'll expect to understand much of your information through graphics. A visual representation of your ideas allows viewers to quickly digest your information and begin discussing your work with you. Graphics are also great solutions to the text-heavy poster problem.

In general, graphics should make your research easier for your audience to understand. Depending on the information you need to convey, you can choose from various types of graphics. Graphics mainly depict numerical values, but they also convey concepts such as designs, models, and prototypes. Effective graphics show the relationships, trends or comparisons among your data. Because you're posting your graphics on a poster, you'll need to enlarge them enough to be seen from a distance. Keep in mind that most viewers will be four to eight feet away from the poster

Conventions of Graphics

Leslie Olsen and Thomas Huckin provide a crisp overview of our expectations about graphic elements on posters:

"First, we expect . . . to proceed from left to right. . . . Second, we expect things to proceed from top to bottom, and, third, we expect things in the

center to be more important than things on the periphery. Fourth, we expect things in the foreground to be more important than things in the background; fifth, we expect large things to be more important than small things; and sixth, we expect thick things to be more important than thin things. Note that type that is larger, thicker, or bolder than the surrounding type is usually more important: a heading, a title, or an especially important word in a passage. Seventh, we expect areas containing a lot of activity and information to contain the most important information. Eighth, we expect that things having the same size, shape, location, or color are somehow related to one another. . . . Finally, we see things as standing out if they contrast with their surroundings because of line thickness, type face, or color. (You should note that warm or hot colors— red, yellow, and orange—stand out more than cool colors—blue and green.)"

Types of Graphics

Lists

Lists are effective ways to present information. Not only do they break down large amounts of text, but they are also visually pleasing, especially if you use bullets or other graphic features to separate items in the list. Lists are especially useful when you have to convey parts or steps. When creating a list, consider writing phrases, fragments or even questions and answers. By avoiding full sentences in a list, your information is concise and more likely to be read by your audience.

Figures

Figures can be charts, graphs, maps, photograph or art reproductions or any other visual media. For example, one way to use a figure to get across a good amount of information is to have a chronology of an incident or an historical figure. It allows for both concise and synthetic information.

Tables

Tabular information is one of the useful ways to present information in a compelling and clear manner. Tables do not have to just present statistical information. They can be used to show different archival collections, database categories that were used in research or periodizations and associated phenomena. Remember that column labels and categories should be clearly presented.

Conclusion

The Conclusion is an important part of the poster. Its main purpose should be to highlight the main idea(s) and to only briefly be used as a summation device, if at all. New interpretations or research sources/areas should be underscored in the conclusion. Again, consider using a "Bullet" format to make your points here, as well as to separate the ideas.

Acknowledgments

Where appropriate, for granting agencies, librarians and archivists, or those who provided a place for your research, you might consider a brief acknowledgments section.

References
Concentrate on key references only. This is not meant to be an exhaustive listing of sources, either in terms of the subject area or your own research. While you want to show your expertise in the area, and back up your ideas, remember that you can expand on the discussion of sources directly with your readers during the poster session.

Putting It All Together
After you've determined audience, purpose, and the total amount of space you'll have to present your ideas, it's time to think about putting the poster together. Most often, posters are assembled from several sheets of standard printer paper with each sheet (or two) including the information for a particular section of the poster. Then you need to consider how to arrange the pages on and attach the pages to the poster.

To increase the visual appeal of your poster, you might consider using more color in the poster and a greater contrast between heading and text fonts. Do not use italic or elaborate script fonts, though. Even though they will appear distinctive from a distance, these fonts are much harder to read. If at all possible, use color in your graphs, charts, and diagrams, and use pictures or drawings wherever possible to add color and visual variety to your poster.

Because your poster will be competing with all the others at the forum for viewers' attention, you need also to take time to consider the visual attractiveness of your poster. A poster needs to appeal to the eye as well as present information clearly.

How you post information greatly affects your audience's comprehension and, ultimately, their interest in your work. A poster that includes only text in a small font will not attract viewers from far away or close up. But a poster that uses large headings to announce topics, that includes graphics and text, that uses color and white space wisely will attract viewers.

Clarity and Layout
Because a poster will often separate chunks of texts or visuals that would appear together in a long paper, the layout of a poster can enhance or destroy the clarity of the overall point. After you've drafted chunks of your poster, try various arrangements of the chunks on a large tabletop or even the floor.
- Do you need arrows to direct readers' eyes from one chunk to the next in a logical sequence?
- Do you need to number headings to show the flow of ideas?
- Should you combine chunks to show clearly a close relationship of the ideas?

Work back and forth between revising for clarity and arrangement for clarity before you decide that your poster is ready to assemble.
- Draw a rough sketch of your poster first. The size of the poster should be 6' x 4' (1.5-2 m).
- You may find it helpful to use graph paper and small pieces of paper to better visualize where the components of your poster will go.

- When composing your poster, use blank space to highlight or offset information.
- Be sure to align all edges of paper. Place related materials (e.g. photo with accompanying text) close together, then offset it by surrounding it with blank space.
- Space your information proportionally. A good way is to divide your poster either horizontally or vertically into three or four sections, and place your materials within those sections.
- When choosing a background to frame the components of your poster, remember that neutral or grayish colors in your selection of poster or matte board will be easier on the eyes than a bright color. Dark backgrounds will make a dark photo seem brighter and vice versa. Color photographs look best when mounted on a grayish backing.

Font Sizes and Lettering

Because your audience will be standing from four to eight feet away from your poster, you must make your text readable from a distance. Your font style should be legible also. Highlighting with colors or underlining important information is acceptable, but make sure your font style is consistent over the entire poster. Don't use more than one style!

Avoid using all capital letters except for the title. The emphasis of capital letters helps titles stand out, but in general all caps take longer to read than mixed upper- and lower-case letters.

Finally, always use a laser printer to produce professional-looking sheets. Handwritten posters appear sloppy and imply that you didn't put much effort into preparing your poster.

Colors and White Space

Colors can help liven up your poster. Some experts recommend you use only one color plus black, while others suggest you choose several colors. When using more than one color, consider the overall impression your poster makes. Since dark-colored objects generally draw the eye to a specific area, consider when and why you might need to do this. You also might consider using warm colors, such as red, orange, and yellow since these are typically more inviting.

As you plan your poster, be sure to leave ample white space. This makes your poster appear less cluttered, and helps you distribute information proportionally.

Clark Harris, Gary Maricle, and Bob Birkenholz offer this advice for using color in posters:

> "When mounting text, graphs, figures, or pictures, care should be taken to use contrasting colors to 'show off' the information. White paper on white background will cause a 'white out' effect and the text may be lost in the background. A good rule of thumb is to always mount light items on darker, contrasting colors and mount darker items on white or light-colored paper. Leave a border from ¼ inch to 1 inch around any artwork or text. . . . Be sure to blend colors so they do not clash."

Finally, your poster must be attractive and informative. To help you accomplish this, consider the following:

- Provide a title and your name in larger text. This helps your audience determine whether or not they are interested in your research.
- Remember that viewers will typically expect information to flow from left to right and from top to bottom. If you want to use a different flow, be sure to give explicit signals on your poster.
- Use headings and subheadings to label your information. Keep these short and to the point since they function as an index.
- Use the same size margins on both graphics and text.
- Don't use glossy paper because reflections will make your content more difficult to read.

The information contained in these instructions for preparing posters came mostly from Eastern Oregon University and Colorado State University. More information on those institutions' programs and others can be found at the following websites:

http://www.lcsc.edu/ss150/poster.htm

http://writing.colostate.edu/references/speaking/poster/index.cfm

http://www.u.arizona.edu/~jag/poster.html

http://www.isanet.org/portland/posterguide.html