

Final Exam Essay Tips

1. The essay on the exam will be graded similarly to the response papers; you'll need a clear thesis, ample evidence to support that thesis, at least 2 historical and 2 current examples (rather than sources), and some insightful analysis.
2. You will have a choice of prompts, so use the time at the start of the exam to read the prompts carefully and select the one that you think will best display your knowledge from the course and can best answer. Please read the whole prompt and address all issues mentioned in it.
3. Think big when studying for the final--what unites different readings? What are some broad themes and big questions that we keep coming back to? You can try writing practice prompts and outlines, but do make sure that on the actual exam that you answer the prompt as written.
4. Remember that you will need to provide at least 2 historical examples (defined as pre-2010) and 2 recent examples (post 2010) as supporting evidence (it will say as much on the prompts, but just as a reminder). Current events presented in class and in the lecture may be applicable, but you are also welcome to use things from the recent news from other sources (including some of those on the resources for foreign policy news handout on CANVAS).
5. When citing a reading in the essay, do your best to be accurate; something as simple as "As Mead wrote," "According to Krauthammer", or "As President FDR's speech implied" is fine, but please don't go crazy agonizing over the specific source. Describe the source as best you can if you can't recall; "the paper we read the first week with the Republican policy point of view" is ok for Rice for instance, though it would be ideal of course to say Rice.
6. This is the higher-level analytical thinking part of the class! Don't just regurgitate a lot of facts, think about how all the issues we've discussed in this course interact and analyze some of the readings, assumptions, etc. critically as needed to support your argument.
7. It's totally okay to make an argument that you don't totally agree with. Just make sure it's a well-considered, nuanced argument that you can defend with evidence.
8. Always be sure to ask "Why" when writing your thesis. If your thesis says the United States should do X, you need to explain WHY the United States should do X.