

First Paper Assignment: Position Paper

Choose One Paper Topic:

T1: San Diego imports up to 90% of its water from Metropolitan Water District, whose source is primarily Colorado River and State Water Project deliveries. Besides water availability even under ideal conditions, it is possible an earthquake could cut off supplies for San Diego from these remote sources. San Diego desperately needs to diversify and complement its water supply. Would you support plans for a desalinization facility at San Onofre, powered by nuclear energy? Why or why not? If not, how do you propose San Diego diversify its water resources and reduce reliance on the two main remote delivery systems?

T2: An August 2007 U.S. District Court ruling may reduce State Water Project deliveries supplied to Southern California by up to 30% in an effort to help secure the viability of the delta smelt, a 1-inch fish living in the San Joaquin delta. The State Water Project, a 600-mile-long stretch of dams, reservoirs and pipelines, serves more than 25 million people (including San Diegans) and thousands of acres of crops. Both environmentalists and water officials agree that the smelt population has declined precipitously in recent years. The fish are protected under the California Endangered Species Act, and their well-being is considered a measure of the environmental health of the fragile bay delta ecosystem. The suit argued that excessive pumping of water from the delta damages the smelt's habitat and the pumps also suck in and kill the fish. What is your view of this decision? Why should/shouldn't the viability of the delta smelt take precedence over Californians' water allotment? Be sure to support your view and address your detractor's concerns and arguments. Included in your position, you should mention whether you believe the smelt is endangered and whether you believe reduction in pumping will help the smelt. Cite credible evidence to support your claims.

Guidelines for the Position Paper

Many of the solutions to environmental problems are extremely controversial. Your position paper should take the following form:

Introduction

- A brief description of the issue
- A clear thesis of your position (one sentence)

Background

- A brief unbiased description of the roots of the controversy
- Necessary background information
- An unbiased discussion of both sides of the issue, including motivations behind the opposing views

Position

- Arguments that support your thesis (recognize and address opposing viewpoints)

Conclusion

- Restatement of your thesis
- Synthesis of your arguments

Each of the four sections should have a heading. It should be clear from the text of your introduction which topic you are addressing; you should not need to explicitly state which topic you chose. Your paper should be 2000-3000 words (which is roughly 4-6 pages); a one grade penalty will be assessed on the technical grade for papers that are less than 2000 words or longer than 3000 words.

You should use at least four reputable, independent references and they should be included in a bibliography. Please refer to the "Writing Assignment General Information Page" linked from the syllabus for proper formatting and other guidelines. Please also look at the "Position Paper Evaluation Form" linked from the syllabus. The questions on the form will be used to evaluate the quality of your position paper.

Schedule and Due Dates

25% - Topic, position, outline

25% - Draft (the quality of the draft)

25% - Evaluation (the quality of work done by the evaluator)

25% - Final product

April 7 (Monday) – Assign paper and provide schedule

April 15 (Tuesday) – Topic, position, and rough outline due to <http://turnitin.com> at 11:59pm.

April 21 (Monday) – Draft of paper due to <http://turnitin.com> by noon. Also, bring a hard copy of your draft to class. Before the end of class, drafts are anonymously matched with evaluators; Instructors track process using ID numbers; Evaluation criteria and questions are provided to evaluators; the diligence of evaluators will be graded.

April 25 (Friday) – Evaluations due to <http://turnitin.com> by noon. Also, bring a hard copy of your evaluation to class. Evaluations are handed back to the original author at end of class.

April 29 (Tuesday) – Final draft due to <http://turnitin.com> by 11:59pm.

April 30 (Wednesday) – Marked-up evaluations due in class.