**Paper/essay writing guidelines Politics and Economics**

1. **Structure and presentation**

1.1 A good essay or paper will have an introduction which provides some brief background and context essential for the question posed (avoid excessive detail); gives a clear outline of the structure of the essay to follow; and presents your initial response in answer the essay question. This is not a detective story! Do not save your answer to the question posed for the conclusion.

1.2 The main body should provide support for your argument with evidence based on appropriate sources which are properly referenced. Define specific terms or concepts used where appropriate to demonstrate that you actually understand them; explain methods or theories employed and why you have chosen them as required. Depending on the topic covered, the main body could narrow its focus as it progress, or could be building towards its strongest case study to support the argument being put forward. Reiterate and signpost the argument you are making throughout – avoid making the reader guess, assume, or read between the lines. Be careful of long digressions which fill out the word count but are not relevant to the essay question.

1.3 The conclusion should reconfirm your argument in response to the question and should be based on material you have provided in the main body of the essay. Do not suddenly introduce new points or key ideas in the conclusion: its purpose should be to summarize the case you are making, not explain it for the first time. Where possible you could place your findings in a wider context.

1.4 If your piece is over 1,000 words, divide the text into different, internally coherent sections. Sections should be divided into different paragraphs. As a rule, paragraphs should be longer than one sentence, but not exceed more than half a page. Paragraphs are internally coherent pieces of text. The relationship between different paragraphs should be understandable to the reader. Distinguish between paragraphs by way of an indentation, or separation by a blank line.

1.5 The transliteration of Russian names should accord to the language of your assignment. If you write in English, make sure that you consistently apply English transliteration. A table for the English and Dutch transliteration of Russian names can be found here http://www.schaeken.nl/lu/onderwijs/extra/cyrtrans.pdf

1. **Content and writing style**

2.1 If you write about a topic/theory/concept that you are unfamiliar with, don’t write down the first thing you find about the topic/theory/concept, but first get a solid understanding of it by reading a broad range of different publications.

2.2 Far from everything you come across in the assigned readings is necessarily true, and much is controversial. Therefore, instead of ‘The growth of the Russian economy was a consequence of the tax reform’ (Hanson 2014: 189)’, it is preferable to write, for instance, ‘According to Hanson (2014: 89), the growth of the Russian economy can be ascribed to tax reform’, or ‘One explanation for the growth of the Russian economy concerns tax reform’ (Hanson 2014: 189).

2.3 If there is reason to question the accuracy of a particular piece of information or of an argument, apply ‘triangulation’ whenever possible. This means that you try to corroborate the information or the credibility of an argument by consulting multiple sources.

2.4 Don’t be too descriptive – do not just provide a chronology of events, but include some analysis and interpretation drawing on the academic literature. Including original, independent analysis will make your essay or paper stronger.

2.5 Don’t use lots of generalizations and assumptions. Statements like ‘Many scholars argue…’ with no examples of these alleged many scholars is not adequate. Claims that ‘it is widely believed’ should include evidence of something being widely believed! An academic essay is not a place for you to say what you ‘feel’ or ‘believe’ – it should be a place where you argue, analyze and prove something

2.6 Avoid having a number of long quotes linked together by a few of your own sentences. Even if it is properly referenced, if most of the essay is actually in other people’s words, it is difficult to assess your real understanding or the topic or own essay writing skills. You should be summarizing and paraphrasing where necessary. Remember, even if you are paraphrasing an argument from an article or book in your own words, you should still reference the source properly. Referencing is not limited to direct quotes only.

1. **References**

3.1 In this class we use Chicago Style Citations (author-date style). For details, see: http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/Chicago\_Author\_Date\_16th\_ed.pdf

* 1. The list of references should be in alphabetical order.

3.3 There are no strict guidelines regarding the number of references per page or per assignment. Inserting a reference after each sentence is excessive. If a long paragraph in its entirety draws from a particular source, then it is insufficient to include just one reference to that source at the end of the paragraph.

3.4 You should include a page number (numbers) in your references in case the relevant information is found on a particular page; if, instead, you refer to the general argument of a publication, no page number is required.

3.5 Do not use relatively antiquated sources when writing about current issues. For example, when you write about the current human rights situation in Russia, do not refer to a source from 1998. Also, do not assume that what you read is still accurate. If, for instance, a publication from 2009 mentions that Russia has high inflation, do not assume that this is the case today.

3.6 When you quote a source, you should provide the quotation in the original language, unless you have reason to believe that the person reading the assignment does not know the relevant language. In that case, translate the quote into English, but provide the quote in the original language in a footnote.

3.7 There is an informal hierarchy in the types of sources that you can cite. If you can choose between citing an academic source or a non-academic source (e.g. newspapers, think tank reports), it is preferable to cite the academic source.

1. **Plagiarism**

4.1 Always write ‘in your own words’, or use quotation marks to indicate that you don’t. We can usually spot plagiarism very easily, even before it goes through Turnitin. Beyond blatant cheating, plagiarism can encompass a range of poor or misleading referencing: e.g. if you use information from a source listed in your bibliography but don’t provide a proper citation to it; if you properly reference material from a source but don’t acknowledge that in fact it is a direct quote, which would be seen as passing it off as written in your own words; if you paraphrase an argument from a source in your own words, but don’t cite where that argument came from; taking a piece of writing and replacing a couple of words with synonyms or leaving out a couple of words is not an example of summarizing or paraphrasing.

4.2 If plagiarism is found in your paper, it will be referred to the Board of Examiners. In a typical procedure, you will have to appear before the Board of Examiners, which collectively rules on a sanction. Sanctions can, and do range from re-writing your paper to expulsion from the program.

4.3 More information on plagiarism can be found at: http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/plagiarism.pdf