



WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

« The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails »

– William Arthur Ward (1921-1994)

Imagine this: You are finishing your course, The Global Economy, and are contacted by *Political Economy in the Anthropocene*, an academic journal covering issues of political economy in the context of sustainable development. The editor of the journal asks you to write an article in which you propose and discuss a **solution(s) to a present day sustainability challenge within the field of political economy**.

Political Economy in the Anthropocene is an academic journal, but is read by a surprisingly large audience. The editors attribute this popularity to three unique requirements the journal explicitly places on authors. First, articles are written as if the reader's experience matters. The journal demands academic language and writing standards, but reminds authors that those who read the journal prefer engaging writing, rather than the dry boredom of much the text pouring out of academia.

Second, authors dedicate one third of their whole article to their chosen problem(s) and two thirds to proposing or describing solution(s) to the problem(s). This emphasis on solutions keeps the journal at the center of debate and innovation within political economy – a starting point for possible economic futures. Third, the journal prefers solutions that are both creative and assessed critically; a rare mix. They should be novel, perhaps even surprising, but also well thought-out and credible.

There are three types of article that may be submitted to the *Political Economy in the Anthropocene*:

- 1. Feature article** (most common): In a feature piece, the author presents his or her solution to an issue of political economy in the format of an article.
- 2. On the ground:** Reportage on a successful solution being implemented at a specific location (at any scale: country, city or community.). Submissions for the *On the Ground* section should capture a sense of place by providing detailed and vivid description of the location. Provide background and history where necessary to clearly outline both the problems and the solutions intended to address them.
- 3. Solutions in history:** Articles submitted for inclusion in the History section of *Solutions* can take several forms, including: (a) examinations of how a past society or civilisation has attempted to cope with a significant ecological problem and how its efforts to solve this problem can inform our current situation; or (b) explorations of scientific and intellectual “solutions” from the past, particularly those that were not followed at the time but which might be worth reconsidering today.



To write this article:

- Consider what you see as a significant issue(s) of political economy within the context of sustainable development today.
- Consider ways to solve this problem, both existing and new. This may be where you temporarily delay critical thinking and allow creativity to enter your process.
- Next, consider which solution(s) – that can be placed within the field of political economy – you deem most interesting, efficient or successful in coping with your problem.
- **Choose one¹ solution to focus on.** They can be solutions that have been mentioned in readings or lectures (examples include cap & trade/share, taxation schemes, complementary currency, micro-finance and community banking initiatives, collaborative consumption schemes, institutional reforms in the WTO or the IMF, shorter working week, social entrepreneurship and alternative business structures etc.) You can also create your **own solution** based on the knowledge you have acquired during the course.
- Evaluate your solution according to its potential, accessibility, and costs and benefits.
- Remember, as per the requirements of *Political Economy in the Anthropocene*, around 1/3 of your article should focus on describing the problem, while the remaining 2/3 should be dedicated to explaining your solution.

Evaluating your solutions:

Once you have proposed your solution, it is crucial to evaluate it also. Recall that even renowned economists such as Milton Friedman, Elinor Ostrom or Joseph Stiglitz have – in their books and throughout their careers – proposed many solutions which they knew were far from perfect. Part of their work as economists is to evaluate their own solutions critically, just as you also must.

Following are examples of questions to consider when evaluating your solution(s). How much potential does it have? How fast can it be implemented? Is it accessible for both the rich and poor? What problem(s) does the solution solve? Who controls it? Does the implementation depend on a supranational institution, on a national government, a business or can it be implemented by a group of individuals? Who gains from this solution – directly or indirectly? What are the costs and who is paying for them?

Formal requirements

- The paper should follow the rules and meet standards of **academic writing**
- Read the questions and follow instructions thoroughly.
- The paper should consist of between **2000 – 2500 words²** (not including references)
- Font Size: 12. Spacing: 1.5. Font: Times New Roman. Margins: 25mm
- Write your name on top of every page (in the header)
- Name the file in the following way: `firstname.lastname3` (example: john.galt3.doc)
- Upload the file on the *File Area* titled *Writing Assignment 3* on Studentportalen
- **Deadline: Sunday 9 December 2013, 23.59**

¹ Your solution can be a specific economic policy, or a strategy including several economic policies.

² As you will discover when submitting your first paper to a proper journal, the word limit is **non-negotiable**. Both papers under 2000 words or above 2500 words will be automatically rejected.



References

- You will have to refer to course literature when writing your article, even if you focus on challenges and solutions not mentioned in the course. **Make at least 6 references to different works in the course readers or the course books.** You may of course reference the same book or article several times, but this will only count as one reference. Beyond this you are free to refer to lectures and other literature.
- Support your claims with reasons and evidence. Make sure to make it clear to the reader when you express your own ideas and opinions, and reference your sources when you write about other people's opinions or ideas.

Assessment criteria

To evaluate this assignment, the following 9 criteria will be used:

1. **Significance:** Having importance, being of consequence; having considerable or substantial meaning.
2. **Clarity:** Understandable, the meaning can be grasped; free from confusion or ambiguity.
3. **Accuracy:** Free from errors, mistakes or distortions.
4. **Logic:** The parts make sense together, no contradictions; in keeping with the principles of sound judgment and reasonability.
5. **Precision:** Exact to the necessary level of detail; specific.
6. **Fairness:** Free from bias, dishonesty, favouritism, selfish-interest, deception or injustice.
7. **Relevance:** Bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand; implies a close logical relationship with, and important to, the matter under consideration.
8. **Breadth:** Encompassing multiple viewpoints, comprehensive in view, wide-ranging and broadminded in perspective.
9. **Depth:** Containing complexities and multiple interrelationships, implies thoroughness in thinking through the many variables in the situation, context, idea, question.