Good term papers (and education in general) require finding the right references. Noodling around the internet for a few minutes is not the way to go. There are a lot of excellent bibliographic references available to help you get started or to zero in on any particular topic. However, it’s surprisingly useful to start with a good book and go from there. So here are some good books. Another surprisingly useful thing for students accustomed to internet searching is to actually go to the library. Look up some of the books below. They’ll likely be catalogued and placed on the shelves near other books on the same or similar topics. Spend an hour in the stacks of the library, the old fashioned way, browsing through books shelved to the left and the right of the books you initially locate. Read at least one of them for each of your papers.

Here are a couple of pointers about what professors like to see. We like to see books published by university presses. Why? Because they are not likely to be text books (that is, general surveys of well known material). However, text books are often very useful to students as you begin (same with Wikipedia and other on-line sources, a good place to start, but not to finish, your research). Your own text book in this class is a case in point: at the end of each chapter it points you to a number of other books on the topic. If you find other text books, they will do similarly. I’ve listed a few text books below. Like an encyclopedia entry, these are good places to start.

We don’t really like to see edited books all that much. Why not? Because each chapter is just a short essay, and the combination of the various essays in the edited book might or might not add up to a detailed discussion of your topic. There are of course some exceptions to this, a few of which are listed below.

We don’t like to see books published in 1935 used as if they were contemporary references. Using older books is fine (some of the ones below are older), but make sure you notice the publication date, and make allowance for what may have changed in the meantime.

We like seeing articles published in academic journals as well as books published by university presses. Main reason: These go through peer review and tend to be the result of original research, rather than just someone’s opinion or a compilation of well-known facts, as in a text book.

We don’t like internet-only sourcing. Call us old fashioned. The reason is not that, however; it is quality control. If you find the same material on-line, by all means use it. But a trip to the library will be surprisingly helpful, and the contents of entire books are not typically available on-line. Reading the little excerpts available at Amazon can give you a quote or two, and that might look like research, but believe me, professors are not that dumb.

One exception to the rule above is if you are interested in reading biographies of individual political figures, or books written by political figures, or books written by journalists about particular controversies. But you have to know what you have read; often these books will lay
out opinions, which is fine. Similarly, looking at the web sites of political parties, government ministries, and other political actors is a great idea, as long as you know what you’re reading. Just don’t present those as fact in your paper.

**General overviews:**


**More focused books:**


