

## How to write summaries after taking notes

Taking marginal notes and underlining/circling/highlighting important phrases are helpful for comprehension. In order to retain that comprehension, you should also write a short summary of each piece after you have read it. Summaries provided by the author are helpful but not sufficient, since the abstract that comes with (some) articles rarely contains all of the important information. Below I have demonstrated three ways to summarize an article that we are reading for the next week.

The idea is to make a summary that is sufficiently thorough that you can reference it for papers (or, say, midterms or finals). Instead of one or two sentences, make sure that you capture all of the key ideas (or at least NEW key ideas). You can then draw on these notes directly when writing essays. See three examples below; the third one is the shortest model, if you're looking for that.

Note that this is also how you make up missed classes. After class, simply post some short summaries of each article to the relevant **forum**. If you post it to the questions/observations, I won't see it and can't count the makeup.

### **John J. Mearsheimer (2001) Anarchy and the Struggle for Power.**

#### Summary#1

Mearsheimer: Five assumptions

- 1) international system is "anarchic" in that there is no overall authority governing international relations. ("911 problem"; no mechanism for punishment)
- 2) great nations have an ability to engage in offensive actions.
- 3) these powers can never be completely sure of each other's intentions, which change quickly and are uncertain.
- 4) survival is the primary goal of these nations: territorial integrity, domestic policy
- 5) they are unitary rational actors: aware of environment, think strategically

Result: Fear, self-help, power maximization

To ensure survival, states maximize power: try to become the most powerful state. States never stop trying to get more power: 1)Difficult to assess how much is enough; 2)Shadow of the future.

Relative power: Means to an end (survival); Absolute power: End in itself (don't care about rival gains)

States make mistakes from imperfect information, and incentives to misrepresent power and intentions.

Defensive realists: Threatened states balance against aggressors; Offense/Defence balance often tips towards defense. But 60 percent success rate for initiators.

Anarchy and uncertainty in intentions are constants; capability changes drive fear levels.

States can pursue other goals as long as it does not threaten security. But they will dump them when security is threatened.

Two factors inhibit cooperation: Relative gains considerations and cheating.

Summary#2

Mearsheimer has five assumptions: Anarchy (no overall authority); great powers have Effective Offenses (can hurt each other); they are uncertain of each others' Intentions; their primary goal is their Own Survival; and they are Unitary Rational actors. This leads to fear, self-help, and power maximization. The latter is to ensure survival; states never stop because it is difficult to assess how much power is enough and the shadow of the future. States are concerned with relative power rather than absolute power; they will not enter into deals if a rival gains more. States make mistakes due to imperfect information, which comes from incentives to misrepresent power and intentions. Defensive realists argue that threatened states will balance, and that the offense/defense balance often tips towards defense; however, there is still a 60% success rate for initiators. Capability changes drive fear levels (anarchy and uncertainty are constants). This doesn't mean states don't pursue other goals, they will do so as long as it does not threaten security. Two factors inhibit cooperation: Relative gains considerations and cheating.

Summary#3

Mearsheimer has five assumptions: Anarchy, Effective Offenses, Intentions Uncertain, Own Survival; and Unitary Rationality. This leads to fear, self-help, and power maximization, which happens to ensure survival. States are concerned with relative power rather than absolute power. States make miscalculations due to imperfect information, since states have incentives to misrepresent power and intentions. A 60% success rate for initiators means that offense often succeeds. States can pursue other goals, if they do not threaten security. Two factors inhibit cooperation: Relative gains considerations and cheating.