Justice/Political Science.  Guidelines for Papers Goal: Your goal should be to construct a clear, persuasive argument that appeals to the reader’s reason. Avoid the use of loaded language, which appeals to emotions in ways that may not be rationally defensible. Example: Calling a practice or policy “barbarous” may add an emotional spin to your appeal, but it usually contributes nothing of substance to the argument. Thesis: Every paper you submit should have a clear, meaningful thesis. If the paper is a response to an assigned question, be sure to answer the question. Avoid waffling. Process: Writing is a painstaking process, but for writers who have attained at least a moderate level of skill, it is often enjoyable, too. You should compose a draft, proofread and analyze your work, and rewrite. If possible, have someone else read the draft for you and point out places where your argument needs improvement. (Do not ask or allow anyone else to write the paper, or any part of it, for you!) Argument: Your argument is the substance of your paper. A good argument combines reasonable premises, strong evidence, sound logic, and clear rhetoric. Premises. No argument can be good if its premises are seriously flawed. Your premises should be at least plausible, and at best compelling. Be careful to distinguish the premises (assumptions) of your argument from its conclusions. In political philosophy, it is also important for you to distinguish empirical premises (i.e. premises about matters of fact) from normative premises (i.e. premises about values or, put differently, about criteria for making judgments). Evidence. In everyday life, people’s beliefs are often shaped strongly by anecdotal observations and personal experiences, but this kind of evidence is seldom strong enough to support a good argument. If you deploy examples to prove your point, you should normally cite several of them. If you cite statistical information, try to become aware of some of the ways in which statistics can mislead. (Please read the article accompanying these guidelines, “Numbed by the Numbers.”) Be critical when using sources of information. Many factual claims in print and other media are either false or misleading. Seek informed and impartial sources, and be especially careful when you use sources on the internet. Please note two exceptions to the general rule that when you deploy examples, you should cite several of them. First, a single example is sometimes sufficient to disprove a strong claim. (For example, to disprove the claim that all Americans like steak, it would be sufficient to produce a single example of an American who dislikes steak.) Second, if you are using an example to illustrate your argument—that is, to make it clearer to the reader—rather than to prove it, then there may be no purpose in citing