

The *fiche technique* or policy memo

Methodology Workshop n°4

A written assignment not like the others

- The fiche technique gathers all the relevant elements of a question, summarizes and presents them in a rational order
- The fiche technique cares less for contradictory theoretical debates than for the student capacity to synthesize a difficult problem

The FT is related to specific disciplinary fields

- Economics
- International Relations
- Law
- European Studies

The FT finds its roots in Law studies...

- Sciences-Po drew much of its methods from Law Studies, that were the “ancestors” of Political Science in France.
- FT are frequent in Law Studies, where they are used to determine the mission and boundaries of political institutions (*droit administratif*)
- Main function: to define and set the boundaries of an institution or a policy instrument

...and looks like a policy memo.

- However, fiche techniques, even though supporting the same view, encompass a wider range of questions.
- This exercise gets its inspiration from policy memos, as used in ministerial offices, as to make the essential known in the shortest period of time
- Most seminars will demand that you write it down to 2 pages, no more.
- This is intended for you to be able to quickly “seize” the essentials and be able in to integrate this newly acquired knowledge to work.
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Frequently found elements

- A glossary:
- A presentation of institutions (or variables) that are the most relevant for the question's explanation.
- A short chronology
- Statistics
- A good definition of keywords and their relation to the theoretical field

Pitfalls to avoid

- Even though you must present the information in a synthetic way, your *fiche* must rely on a structure. Depending on the quality of it your grade will vary.
- Not to become brain-drainers: great is the temptation to cut and paste articles, summaries, etc and present them as if they were your own work. Be careful, most professors consult internet on a regular basis.

Tricks of the trade:

- All of the elements described above can find a place within a plan. Even though your fiche technique will articulate ideas as an exposé, these will be only partially detailed, with few examples, and will include most of the times concrete data (as statistics, graphs).
- Introduction and conclusion will only consist on a few sentences to provide the key ideas of the question asked.

Some examples:

- **Some examples from the Seminar “National Parliaments and Community Law”**
- Fiche technique n°12 The European Commission
- Fiche technique n°13 The European Parliament
- Fiche technique n°14 The European Council and the Council of the European Union
- Fiche technique n°15 ECHR and JCEC : competition or complementarity?
- Fiche technique n°16 The European Charter of Fundamental Rights

- **Other examples from the Seminar “ INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY”**
 - **Session title: The International Politics of Trade**
- The dispute settlements instruments as stipulated by the WTO.
- China’s admission to the WTO.
- Multilateral trade negotiations : the agricultural impasse.

A closer look

- For instance, in the case of a question like: “China’s admission to the WTO” ...



The Glossary

- China's economic weight: define its share of the world economy and the interest of industrialized nations in China
- The WTO: the organization and its new role after the GATT (that is after 1995)
- The status of emerging economies and their integration to the organization

A short chronology

- 1984 Beginning of China's negotiation to become a GATT member.
- 1995 Creation of the WTO
- 1995-98 China obtains the title of MFN on exchanges with the US. In 1999 obtains title of a "Market Economy" by the EU
- 2001 China's integration to the organization
- 2006 China's revision of its status as 4th World Economic Power

Keywords

- **MFN:** Most-Favoured Nation clause. Describe its importance in the multilateral trade system design
- **Emerging Economies Status:** describe which specific conditions are applied to these economies (waivers, tariff reductions facilities, etc.)
- **Dispute Settlement Instruments, etc.**