

REQUIRED RESEARCH PAPER
Government 2305, Fall 2009
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Purpose: For this class you are required to write a research paper, worth 100 points. There are several goals that I have in mind for you in writing this paper:

1. The primary purpose of the paper is to help the student gain a greater understanding of the complexity of public policy issues at the national level. Most people do not understand the complexity of trying to solve large issues in a diverse society. It is hoped that in analyzing the information you find that you will have a greater understanding of this complexity.
2. Secondly, this assignment is designed to help the student to understand the process of writing analytical research papers. In essence, the student should approach the topic in a non-judgmental way, carefully analyzing the topic and its complexities. This helps to assist in developing the student's ability to think critically about an issue, thus developing the skills necessary to analyze future issues and be able to make wise decisions on aspects of public policy that can directly affect the student's life.
3. Finally, this paper seeks to assist the student in developing his or her skills in conducting research to find relevant materials about the topic. In addition, it is designed to aid the student in evaluating the merits of sources of information, thus being able to find articles that carefully analyze an issue, thus helping to develop the critical thinking skills mentioned in step 2 above.

The paper is due on **Tuesday, November 24, 2009**. The paper can be delivered in class or emailed to me. Late papers will be accepted, but you will be penalized five (5) points for each class day that they are late.

Format: The papers are to be five to eight pages in length. It should be typed, double-spaced, standard one-inch margins, standard 12-point fonts, and no extra spaces between paragraphs. The paper will be graded not only on content (that is, whether the students meet the requirements for a particular paper), but also on writing style, grammar and spelling, logic, coherence, thoroughness, and thoughtfulness.

You are required to provide documentation of the sources used in writing your paper. Documentation should follow MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines. Information regarding MLA guidelines can be found at this URL:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Research: You will also be evaluated on the merits of the sources used in researching your paper. For this project you are **required to provide at least two secondary sources of scholarly quality**. To help you understand what is meant by "a secondary source of scholarly quality" please refer to the URL listed below:

<http://www.smccd.edu/accounts/csmlibrary/tutorials/english/determineeng.html>

Failure to obtain articles of scholarly quality will result in a penalty of 5 points off for each one that you are unable to provide.

You may use as many other sources as you wish to gather information for this project. There are many other locations to find information relating to public policy issues to supplement the two required sources, including magazines (such as Time or Newsweek) or newspapers or even a general search of the Internet. However, you need to be cautious of some of the information you may gather on the Internet, because many of those sources cannot be verified.

Where can you find sources of information that qualify as scholarly? One location is through the ACC's library Academic Search Complete. To start, click on this URL:

<http://library.austincc.edu/eresources/AtoZ.htm>

Locate the "Academic Search Complete" link on this page. If you are not at an ACC campus, you will then have to first enter your ACC EID and password to get to the Academic Search Complete page. From that page enter in keywords related to the topic you wish to research. A little further down the page you should see a box which can be checked that says "Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Articles". Check this box, and then the search will try to find articles which qualify as scholarly. You can download or directly print these articles. This is a great way to find material for this paper.

Another good source of finding articles that fit the requirement for scholarly is to use the Advanced Search feature of Google. From the main www.google.com page choose the "Advanced Search" option. On the next page you will find a link to "Universities". If you click on this link you will be taken to a page which will show you a list of all universities in the United States. You can then choose one of those schools (say, for example, the University of Texas), and from there type in keywords which you wish to research. The search then will only search the holdings published at the University of Texas to find related articles. Many of the articles found under this search qualify for being scholarly in nature.

We will take a few minutes of time to go over both of these techniques in class so that you understand the process of searching for appropriate articles for your paper.

Topic: You should choose a topic that is related to a national policy issue. It may involve a process or institution of U.S. Government. The choice of the specific topic is up to the student, and should reflect your interest in policy issues. You should try to present what you feel are the most important aspects of the issues, as well as those opinions you may find in other research on the topic.

If you have trouble deciding on a topic, please see me and I will be happy to help you choose one. In addition, Chapters 15, 16, and 17 of your textbook each deal with a variety of public policy issues currently being addressed by the national government. Although far from comprehensive, it would offer you a fine starting place from which you may find something that you might be interested in. Although we will not be covering these chapters until the end of the semester, you would be wise to go ahead and read them in order to find valuable information on what makes up a policy issue.

If at any time you have any questions about this project please feel free to seek my advice.

Keys to a Good Paper

Below are some conceptual ideas that you should keep in mind while writing your paper. If you can follow these general guidelines on what a paper should be then you will be able to have a good understanding of the qualities that professors are looking for in a quality research paper.

Focus

- 1) Does your paper state a clear thesis?
- 2) Does every sentence in the paper help support, explain, or relate to your thesis?

Depth

- 1) Is each idea explained and described completely?
- 2) Do you include specific details and examples?

Organization

- 1) Does the introduction help the reader understand what the paper is about? (Does it state your thesis?)
- 2) Does every sentence link to the next with good transition words?
- 3) Does each paragraph link to the next with good transition words?
- 4) Does every sentence in a paragraph explain or describe on thing?
- 5) Does the conclusion summarize your support for your thesis?

Clarity and Fluency

- 1) Can readers understand all of the words easily because they are spelled correctly?
- 2) Do readers know when sentences begin and end?
- 3) Are sentences short and choppy, or long and rambling?
- 4) Are all sentences complete or did you include fragments?
- 5) Do sentences read the way people normally speak? (If you would not say it that way, then don't write it that way.)

For further information on the process of writing a really good research paper you can refer to the two web pages listed here:

<http://www.csuohio.edu/academic/writingcenter/writproc.html>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/01/>