Annual Assessment Report

Department: Political Science
Academic Year: 2015-16
Date of Submission:
Department Chair: Susan Penksa

I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

Item: We did not respond to PRC recommendations last year.	Response: We apologize and will respond this year. Our neglect wasn't intentional; we simply were not clear that responses were required.
Item: PRC recommended gathering data across several years to get a bigger sample size.	Response: We will do this. Moreover, when appropriate, we will gather data across several classes in the same year to increase our sample size (as we did with this writing assessment report).
Item: The PRC noted that we were not specific when discussing how we would "close the loop" on service.	Response: We should have mentioned that closing the loop means spending more time connecting theory to the work students are doing, especially in the internship class. The Department talked about doing a better job articulating a theology of service, not just in the internship class, but in our substantive courses as well. Dr. Covington, for example, discusses a theology of creation in POL 030 that explores how all work can participate in bearing the divine image and developing creation. Likewise in POL 140, Dr. Covington explores a range of theologies of politics that directly engage questions of service, including serving the common good and the pursuing the flourishing of the whole community. Dr. Knecht has introduced a new lecture on political action as service in his POL 10 course.
Item: The PRC noted they would like to see more evidence of collaboration and communication among members of the Department.	Response: We will do a better job discussing our collaboration. For instance, Dr. Covington and Knecht discussed closing the loop in Service during a lunch meeting on August 26, 2016. We also discussed writing in that same meeting.
Notes: Dr. Penksa is on sabbatical, so the discussions described below were between Drs. Covington and Knecht.	

II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

If your department participated in the ILO assessment you may use this section to report on your student learning in relation to the assessed ILO. The assessment data can be requested from the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness.

Program Learning Outcome	**Competence in Writing**
Who is in Charge /Involved?	**Jesse Covington**
Direct Assessment Methods	**We evaluated 17 student papers in three upper-division courses: POL-130 Classical Political Theory (Fall 2015, taught by Dr. Covington); POL-132 American Political Thought (Spring 2016, taught by Dr. Covington); and POL 111 American Foreign Policy (Spring 2016, taught by Dr. Knecht). The prompts and guides for the paper assignments are found in Appendix C.** **We adopted the AAC&U's "Written Communication Value Rubric" for our self-study (see Appendix A). The rubric ranks papers on a 4 (Capstone) to 1 (Benchmark) scale for the following categories: Context and Purpose of Writing; Content Development; Genre and Disciplinary Conventions; Sources and Evidence; and Control of Syntax and Mechanics.** **It is our goal that students collectively average a 2.5 or higher on each of these categories.** **Drs. Covington and Knecht then evaluated two student papers, one from each of their courses, to calibrate grading standards and evaluate intercoder reliability.**
Indirect Assessment Methods	
Major Findings	**We are gratified to see that the students collectively met expectations (see Appendix B for results). Here are the results for all 17 students:** **Context and Purpose of Writing (3.41)** **Content Development (2.71)** **Genre and Disciplinary Conventions (2.71)** **Sources and Evidence (2.76)** **Control of Syntax and Mechanics (2.76)**

	We also split the sample by professor. Although there were differences in Profs. Covington and Knecht's rankings—Dr. Covington students ranked higher on Genre, Sources, and Syntax; Dr. Knecht ranked students higher on Context and Content—an ANOVA test showed that none of these differences were statistically significant (See Appendix B).
	Drs. Covington and Knecht evaluated two papers to gauge intercoder reliability. Our reliability was quite good; we came up with the same evaluation on 7 of the 8 criteria in our rubric (intercoder reliability of 88%).
Closing the Loop Activities	Drs. Covington and Knecht discussed these results and how to "close the loop" on writing in a meeting in late August. Several things emerged from our discussion. First, we agreed to use the Writing Center to help improve our students' control of syntax and mechanics. For this academic year, we will pilot requiring our students to visit the Writing Center before turning in their research papers. Second, Dr. Covington will explore working with departmental librarian Lauren Kelly to help with content development through improving student research practices. A library liaison talks to Dr. Knecht's POL 40 class each year, to good effect. Third, we discussed how to better structure the peer review process. Both of us use peer reviews in our courses, but with varying degrees of success. In particular, we discussed ways to motivate students to be more critical in their remarks without demoralizing their peers. Third, we discussed the nature of our writing assignments. We are conflicted between the "research paper" writing model and the "practical/engaged" writing model. The "research paper model" is the standard in the discipline and is especially helpful for those students going on to graduate school. However, few of our students will eventually write a Master's thesis or Doctoral dissertation in political science, especially those students who take our lower-division GE courses. Therefore, we are exploring moving toward writing assignments that are more engaged and might better reflect the type of writing students will be doing after college. In Dr. Knecht's lower division courses, for instance, students write blogs, speeches, reactions to books, and book reports. Yet we worry that these types of assignments do not really prepare our future majors or those students who aspire to graduate school. The nature of our writing assignments will be an on-going departmental conversation. Finally, we celebrated the progress the department has made in writing. Our numbers were above the benchmark and we've notice considerable improvement over the years. This reflects the emphasis we've place on writing.
Collaboration and Communication. As mentioned earlier, we (Drs. Covington and Knecht) discussed these findings in several meetings (including a lunch meeting in August). We also evaluated two papers to gauge intercoder reliability and to calibrate grading standards.	

or/and

II B. Key Questions

Key Question	What types of writing assignments best serve students?
Who is in Charge/Involved?	Jesse Covington
Direct Assessment Methods	
Indirect Assessment Methods	
Major Findings	
Recommendations	
Collaboration and Communication	

III. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome or Key Question	
Who was involved in implementation?	

What was decided or addressed?	
How were the recommendations implemented?	
Collaboration and Communication	

IV. Other assessment or Key Questions related projects

Project	
Who is in Charge /Involved?	
Major Findings	
Action	
Collaboration and Communication	

V. Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timing

VI. Appendices
    A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data
    B. Rubrics used to evaluate the data
    C. Relevant assessment-related documents (optional)

Appendix A. Writing Rubric

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing tasks(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

Appendix B. Results.

	Professor	Context of and Purpose for Writing	Content Development	Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	Sources and Evidence	Control of Syntax and Mechanics
Paper 1	Covington	4	3	4	4	4
Paper 2	Covington	4	3	4	4	4
Paper 3	Covington	4	3	3	3	3
Paper 4	Covington	3	2	2	3	3
Paper 5	Covington	2	3	3	3	4
Paper 6	Covington	2	2	2	2	2
Paper 7	Covington	3	2	2	2	3
Paper 1	Knecht	4	3	3	2	3
Paper 2	Knecht	4	4	4	4	3
Paper 3	Knecht	3	4	2	3	3
Paper 4	Knecht	4	3	3	3	2
Paper 5	Knecht	4	4	4	4	4
Paper 6	Knecht	4	2	2	2	2
Paper 7	Knecht	3	2	2	2	2
Paper 8	Knecht	4	4	4	4	3
Paper 9	Knecht	3	1	1	1	1
Paper 10	Knecht	3	1	1	1	1
Avg for Sample		**3.41**	**2.71**	**2.71**	**2.76**	**2.76**
Avg for Dr. Covington		**3.14**	**2.57**	**2.86**	**3.00**	**3.29**
Avg for Dr. Knecht		**3.6**	**2.8**	**2.6**	**2.6**	**2.4**

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Context_of_and_Purpose_for_Writing_	Between Groups	.861	1	.861	1.779	.202
	Within Groups	7.257	15	.484		
	Total	8.118	16			
Content_Development	Between Groups	.215	1	.215	.211	.653
	Within Groups	15.314	15	1.021		
	Total	15.529	16			
Genre_and_Disciplinary_Conventions_	Between Groups	.272	1	.272	.237	.634
	Within Groups	17.257	15	1.150		
	Total	17.529	16			
Sources_and_Evidence	Between Groups	.659	1	.659	.603	.450
	Within Groups	16.400	15	1.093		
	Total	17.059	16			
Control_of_Syntax_and_Mechanics	Between Groups	3.230	1	3.230	4.096	.061
	Within Groups	11.829	15	.789		
	Total	15.059	16			

Paper Guide
POL 111: American Foreign Policy
Professor Knecht
Spring 2016

Overview

You will write an original 15-25 page paper on American foreign policy. You will also have considerable leeway in formulating a research topic and are free to choose between quantitative, qualitative, or experimental methods. This guide will help you along the way.

Task 1. Research Design (Due Jan 25)

For this task, you will specify your research question and describe your preliminary research design. You have considerable freedom to choose a research question of interest. However, you should be aware that formulating a good research question is always one of the most difficult tasks in writing a paper. Here are a few things to think about when thinking about a research question:

Research Question

Pose a question, not a topic. Think of your research as a question that requires an answer instead of a topic to be discussed. The subtle difference in mindset will alter the way you approach your research. Consider the difference between these two statements: "Did public opinion influence the Bush administration's decision to go to war in Iraq?" vs. "My paper is on public opinion and foreign policy." The former statement poses an interesting theoretical question that is bounded; the later statement is vague and potentially unmanageable.

Is my research question too broad? Sometimes students select topics that are too broad to be answered in a term paper. For example, "what causes war?" is probably too big of a question to be covered in a mere 15 pages. A more manageable topic might be "why did the U.S. not intervene militarily in Darfur?"

Is there enough evidence (data) to examine my topic? Students often pose interesting research questions that simply cannot be answered with available data. For instance, the question of whether the U.S. tried covert operations to topple Saddam Hussein is an

interesting research question that probably cannot be answered because national security concerns restrict access to files. Before you start down a road of inquiry, check to see if enough evidence is available to answer the question.

Research Design
Research design refers to the methods and evidence you will use to write your paper. Your research design should include the following:

1) Your research question and why it is important.
2) Your working thesis or set of hypotheses.
3) The method you will use. Will your paper be quantitative, qualitative, or experimental? Why have you selected this particular method?
4) The data you will use. How will you collect and analyze your data? If quantitative, which dataset will you use? If qualitative, which case studies will you conduct and why? If experimental, what is the nature of your experiment and how will you recruit subjects.

What to Turn In. Your research design should be between 1-3 pages and should be turned into Canvas before class.

Task 2. Literature Review (Due Mar 7)

There is no way of getting around the fact that doing secondary research is hard work; you will have to read a lot to get the information you need. Although you can use course readings for your paper, you are expected to conduct outside research. Your literature review should be between 4-7 pages and have at least 15 scholarly sources (Level I: peer reviewed) read outside of class. A good literature review will (1) summarize the current literature, (2) evaluate and critique this body of knowledge, and (3) motivate your current paper. You are expected to use proper APSA formatting.

You should also be aware that there is a "hierarchy" of sources in academia, and different levels of this hierarchy are valuable for different sections of your paper.

Level I. Peer Reviewed Journals and Academic Books. Your paper should rely heavily on Level I sources, especially for your literature review and argument.

At least two experts in the field have evaluated articles that appear in peer-reviewed journals. The main peer-reviewed journals in political science are: *American Journal of Political Science; American Political Science Review; International Organization;*

International Security; International Studies Quarterly; Journal of Peace Research; Journal of Conflict Resolution; International Studies Review; Political Science Quarterly; Public Opinion Quarterly; Security Studies.

"Academic" books are often confused with "popular" books. Academic books are heavy on theory and evidence while popular books appeal to a mass audience and usually play loose with theory and evidence. For instance, *Power and Interdependence* by Keohane and Nye is an academic book; *Liberalism is a Mental Disorder* by Michael Savage is a popular book. Academic books are often, but not always, published by a university press (i.e., Cambridge University Press; Yale University Press), have a university professor as the author, and cite other academic works. Rely on academic books instead of popular books.

Level II. Magazine and Newspapers. Magazines and newspapers are good for providing background information and evidence but are not great sources for theory. Within magazines and newspapers, there is a hierarchy of sources. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are considered the "papers of record" in the United States. *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. and World News Report* are good magazines.

Be careful of ideological bias when using newspapers and magazines. For instance, *The Weekly Standard* is conservative, and *The Progressive* is liberal.

Lexis-Nexis is a good source for newspapers and journals.

Level III. Websites. Although websites can be especially valuable sources of data and information, there is a wide variance in quality. Be very selective when doing research via the Internet. If your paper has a heavy dose of websites as sources, it raises a red flag. Avoid citing wikepedia.com.

What to Turn In. Turn in a Word copy of your literature review to Canvas. Your literature review should be between 4-7 pages with proper APSA citations. Your paper will be evaluated on both content and style.

Task 3. Formulating an Argument

There is a large section on formulating an argument and writing a thesis statement on Canvas. Here are a few additional comments:

Make an argument. Your paper should have a coherent argument and should be falsifiable.

Be original. Your paper should try to make an original contribution to the literature. In other words, do not simply recite what others have written.

Avoid writing an "opinion paper." Your paper should largely be non-normative. Normative views should be left to the conclusion.

Stay on track. Many papers wonder away from the main point. Write your research question and your answer on a separate piece of paper and refer to it often. If you find you are spending a lot of time on an issue that is unrelated to your question and thesis, stop and refocus.

Defeat rival hypotheses. Foreign policy events are overdetermined, meaning that there are multiple explanations for each phenomenon. As a result, there will always be other theories and perspectives that will challenge your own. A good rhetorical technique is to anticipate objections to your work by analyzing your argument. Then try to answer these objections.

Task 4. Research

This is a major research project and, as such, I expect you to spend significant time conducting research. You must start early, set deadlines for yourself, and complete the research in plenty of time to write the paper. I am happy to help you if you need assistance.

Task 5. Writing your paper.
(Rough Draft Due Apr 4; Peer Reviews Due April 11; Final Paper Due April 25)

Writing a quality paper takes a lot of work: you have to outline, write, revise, get comments from others, revise again, and then revise some more. To help you in this process, you will hand in an initial draft on Apr 4. A peer will review your work and offer suggestions. You are then expected to revise your paper and turn it into Canvas on April 24. Here is the basic outline of a research paper:

- Introduction
  - Thesis
  - Road map
- Literature Review
- Theory
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion (optional)
- Conclusions

Task 6. Peer Review (Due Apr 11)

You are expected to review a fellow student's paper and provide comments. All comments should be made electronically using Microsoft Word's editor function. Your comments should incorporate both substantive and stylistic suggestions. You are expected to be a firm, yet encouraging, editor.

Paper Requirements

Your paper will be graded on the quality of the writing as well as the quality of the argument.

- The paper will be at least 15 pages.
- Use headings and subheadings as needed.
- Citations. You are free to use any acceptable form of citation (footnotes, MLA, Chicago etc…). My personal preference is to use parenthetical notation with a bibliography. In this method of citing, you write the authors' last name, date of publication and page number with the punctuation after the parentheses (Knecht 2004: 12). If you are paraphrasing, you do not have to use quotations but do have to cite (Smith 2003: 2). "Direct quotes need to have quotation marks and the parenthetical notation goes outside the quote" (George 2004:23). If you are communicating a finding or theory that other scholars have come up with, make sure you cite each relevant author (Bradley 1999; Jones 2004; Smith 2003). The full citation will appear in the bibliography
- Plagiarism. Do not do it. I check the authenticity of students work. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.
- Late work is penalized one letter grade per day.
- All papers should be typed. Use normal margins (1") and font (12 point) and double-spaced. Include page numbers. Do not submit your paper in a binder or folder, just staple.
- A good resource on writing is: Hacker, Diana (1999). A Writer's Reference. (4th ed). Boston: Bedford/St.Martins.

Deadlines [all due by the start of class unless otherwise noted]

Jan 25. Research Design (5 pts)
Mar 7. Literature Review (10 pts)
Apr 4. Rough Draft (10 pts)
Apr 11. Peer Reviews (10 pts)
Apr 25. Final Paper (65 pts)

Overview

Per the syllabus, students will complete substantial research and writing in the final project for this course. The purpose of this project is most centrally to provide students with the opportunity to enter into scholarly dialogue in an area their own choosing, seeking to make a substantive contribution of original thinking and research. Since you will be spending a good deal of time on this paper, you should choose a something in which you have genuine interest and in which you perceive a genuine, important puzzle that warrants solving. A good research paper identifies such a puzzle and then sets out to solve it. It may be that you start doing research with a just a topic (i.e., an area of interest) and only discover your puzzle once you have started your research. However, you should clearly define your puzzle and its import as early in the process as possible.

Students are encouraged to collaborate in teams of two (subject to instructor approval) on this project. This, however, is not a requirement. We will discuss this further in class.

1) **Articulate a topic/problem:** There are a variety of ways to identify a good research topic. You may have already discovered a question or problem that you want to pursue. Or, you may only have a broad topic in mind at this point. Once you have identified an area for your inquiry, use an academic journal database (JSTOR and CSA are good starting places), to search for journal articles on your area of interest. For example, you might search for articles on Aristotle and coercion, Plato and the state, Augustine and virtue, Aquinas and natural law, etc. Once you have a manageable list of articles, begin scanning their abstracts, introductions, and conclusions to identify what may relate to your interest. The goal of this step is to articulate a <u>puzzle</u>—a question about a political philosopher—that merits further inquiry and to articulate it in a manner that makes sense in light of relevant academic literature. *At the end of this stage, you should know (and communicate) what your "puzzle" is and why it is interesting/important/worth pursuing.* An initial puzzle might ask:
   a. Does Aristotle's conception of gender difference rely on nature or coercion?
   b. "To what extent could contemporary democratic theory reject Plato's ontology while accounting for Plato's concerns about forms?"
   c. "To what extent does Augustine depart from Plato's metaphysics (or ethics) and what import does this have for politics?"
   d. "In what ways is an Augustinian polity aimed at full human flourishing? Is he more of a classical eudaemonist or a proto-modern liberal?"
   e. "What difference does *embodiment* make for the political philosophy of Augustine?"
   f. "To what extent is Augustine a proto-Machiavellian in his treatment of coercion as necessary? Can coercion be truly *justified* or is it merely necessary?"
   g. "How does Aquinas differ from Aristotle in his understanding of the role of law in the habituation of virtue? Is he more Aristotelian or Christian, or is there even a tension between these?"
   h. "How does Al-Farabi construe the relation between religious and political authority?"

If you are not sure how to use the research tools that you need, talk to member of the library staff—they are a wonderful help!

Note: for your paper, you should develop one to three paragraphs that contextualize your question, render it clearly, and demonstrate its

importance. By "importance" I mean the legitimate "so what—who cares?" aspect of all of this. Please pick something that you are genuinely interested in, think others should be interested in, and has implications for how we approach contemporary politics. In the final version of your paper, this explanation of the "puzzle" and its importance will serve as your introduction. Be sure to *demonstrate* the puzzle, not just assert it. (This requires some framing and some detail). Make this interesting! It is academic research, but this introduction should still be a "hook."

2) **Build a bibliography of highly relevant sources:** Identify no fewer than 12 highly relevant academic sources (peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, book chapters) that speak directly to the issue you want to resolve. (The bibliography of any highly relevant source will be a great starting point for finding other good sources. Again, <u>relevance</u> is the hallmark here.) Please note: book reviews and reference works do *not* count towards your 12-work total, though if you use these be sure to include them in your bibliography. The bibliography will eventually be placed at the end of your paper. (The annotated bibliography is only for your paper proposal; you will not need to include annotations on your final bibliography).

3) **Write a literature review:** This should sum up very succinctly the range of answers that other scholars have concluded regarding the subject of your inquiry (i.e., your puzzle). Think of the literature review as a "funnel" that moves from a general statement of your research question to a more specific articulation of it—all based on existing research. What are the broad fault lines of agreement and disagreement about it among scholars? What burning questions have been sufficiently answered? Insufficiently? Are there different methods of approaching this issue? Use this section to distill and clarify the issues based on existing research. This should be done succinctly and synthetically, avoiding any hint of a laundry-list approach to the authors. (If you are not sure what a well-synthesized literature review looks like, please ask!) The literature review identifies what remains controversial with regard to your puzzle, helping to focus your inquiry. *At the end of this stage, you should demonstrate your knowledge of relevant literature and articulate exactly what remains unresolved in your area of inquiry.*

4) **Re-articulate your puzzle and formulate the answer you anticipate**: does existing research resolve the issue completely? How does it cause you to adjust your original question at all? Does it leave a major question unanswered? *At the end of this stage, you should offer a one-sentence re-statement of your refined puzzle in light of the literature review, followed by your best guess as to the answer (your thesis).* You should note potential alternative answers as well.

5) **Write a Research Design**: Outline what steps will allow you to answer your research question. This section should explain both the <u>structure</u> of your paper and the <u>methods/resources</u> you will use. As for structure, you should identify 3-5 steps that will serve to break down the body of your paper into identifiable subsections. As regards methods, what questions can you answer that will help you resolve your research question? What resources and methods will allow you to answer those questions? You will want to include critical engagement with the primary texts and careful analysis of relevant scholarly literature in your plan, though the particular focus of your paper will determine how much space you devote to each of these. *At the end of this stage, you should have clearly explained a road-map for the body of your paper, demonstrating how it will allow you answer your research question.* (NOTE: These first five sections of the paper should make up no more than about a third of your paper.)

6) **Write the main body of the paper:** The bulk of your paper should implement your research design, seeking to answer your research question/puzzle in light of the best evidence you can find. This will involve both scholarly literature (in more depth and with more of a critical eye than in your literature review) and your own analytical engagement with the philosophical texts in question. Be sure to account for the best evidence on each side of your research question, analyzing and evaluating each component of your inquiry (i.e. be as balanced and objective as possible). Where a Christian perspective sheds unique light on your subject, work to reveal this analytically and objectively, as opposed to comparing the text to Scripture/doctrine. (I.e., demonstrate with your analysis any difficulties with unbelieving views of God, reason, human nature, etc.) **As you follow the structure outlined in your research design, clearly identify this structure with subheadings, and conclude each sub-section of the body of your paper by relating it to your research question and hypothesis.** *By the end of this stage you should have implemented your research design, completing the tasks that allow you to answer your research question.*

7) **Write a conclusion:** To what extent is your question resolved and what is the import of your conclusions? Here you should: 1) re-state your conclusions succinctly, 2) relate them to your question and thesis, 3) highlight their import for political life, and 4) acknowledge further questions that remain unanswered. *By the end of this section you should have clearly stated your research findings <u>and</u> reflected on their significance.*

8) **Write an outline:** This should consist of a hierarchically-organized, one-page outline of full-sentence declarative statements summarizing the *argument* of your paper (this will necessarily emphasize the body of the paper). I strongly encourage you to look at each paragraph of your paper and ask, "What does this *argue*? What is the thesis of the paragraph?" Writing this outline should result in greater clarity about your argument, significant re-organizing of the paper itself to better structure its argument, and substantial editing and revision to make the point of each paragraph clearer. While the outline will be included at the beginning of your paper, it does not count against your word-count.

9) **Revision and Polishing:** Every paper should go through multiple rounds of revision, editing for content, clarity, grammar and usage. I highly recommend using the writing center in the library. Remember: be clear, brief, and precise.

Dates:

Week of 10/26-10/30—Complete proposal and meet with Prof. Covington during office (Tuesday & Thursday) hours to review it. Each proposal should include a 1-3 paragraph explanation of your research question/puzzle and its import, plus an annotated bibliography of at least 8 highly relevant sources.

Week of 11/2-11/6—Complete Draft of Literature Review & Research Design; meet with Dr. Covington during office hours (Tuesday & Thursday) to review these together (submit materials at the meeting).

Friday, November 20—Complete Paper Drafts Due. These will be submitted to Dr. Covington and to your peer reviewer via e-mail.

Tuesday, November 24—Completed Peer Reviews Due (submit via e-mail)

Friday, December 4—Final Drafts Due by hard-copy to Deane Hall mailbox and by e-mail.

Format:

- 12-point font, standard margins (1-1.25in.), double spaced, 4500 words maximum for individual papers, 6000 words for co-authored papers. Please put the word count on front page.
- Your paper should have an appropriate title and a title page, followed by a **one-page outline of your argument.** Neither the title page, the outline, nor the bibliography counts against your word-count.
- Please use in-text parenthetical citations (as per APSA standard) and a works cited. I will distribute a handout detailing this method.
- Structure your paper with major headings delineating each of the above sections, and subheadings within the main-body of your inquiry denoting each step of your efforts to answer the research question.

Additional Advice:

- Make every sentence count. Do not tell me what you are going to do—just do it. (You don't need an introduction, thesis statement, or conclusion).
- Define your terms. Whenever you use conceptual terminology in discussing a text, you must clearly define what the author means by that term, e.g.: "Aristotle understands 'happiness' as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue."
- Cite the text. Back up your claims with references to the text. Parenthetical page numbers serve as adequate citations in these papers.
- Stay "internal" to the text. That is, engage the text on its own terms. This means "trying on" the assumptions of the author and exploring the extent to which they work—not comparing them to something else external to the text.
- Write objectively in the third person. Avoid even the implicit use of the first person. Affirmations of a text's interestingness, practicality, or other quality ("it seemed….) are often asserted with an implicit "I think."
- Write simply and precisely. Use short sentences, unobstructed by jargon. This will help you to determine exactly what you mean to say and communicate it to others.
- Use correct grammar, punctuation, syntax, and diction. This requires proofreading and editing. As part of this, read every paper aloud prior to submitting it—you will catch mistakes you would otherwise miss.
- Avoid the passive voice and helping verbs. Use active verbs and the active voice as much as possible. Any phrase to which you can add "by my grandmother" is in the passive voice; i.e. "The point was made…"
- Consider purchasing a writing guide such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.
-

Goal: To develop an argument for an amendment to the Constitution that addresses a significant need in the American polity.

Explanation: This assignment asks you to *identify and explain* a problem in the American polity (a "need"), *design* (create or adapt) a constitutional amendment to meet that need, and *defend* the amendment proposal through a carefully constructed practical and theoretical argument.

Examples of Topics for New Amendments (your options are not limited to these!):
- Clarifying Constitutional Powers of War and Foreign Relations
- Debates in Constitutional Interpretation
- Fixing Federalism: Reconciling Individual and Corporate Liberty
- Clarifying the Equal Protection Clause

See the Appendix for examples of past amendments (failed ones might be adapted for this project).

Some issues that you will need to address in your paper:
- Be careful to clearly demonstrate the *need* or problem being addressed. This requires showing 1) that a serious problem exists, and 2) that it is best solved at the level of the Constitution rather than by ordinary state and Federal legislation (or other means). You should choose an issue that you believe to be truly important and in need of attention. You should *not* choose something only on the basis of its being a fun intellectual exercise (though I fully intend that you should enjoy this intellectual exercise).

- Frame the amendment itself very carefully. If you are designing a new amendment, you may want to examine how other constitutional democracies have dealt with this issue, perhaps even borrowing language from them. *Remember that brevity and precision are essential*. Carefully debate the merits of every word, phrase, clause, etc. and be sure that the amendment says exactly what you intend. While some of your work in shaping the amendment will not be included in your final draft (apart from including your sources in your bibliography), you will want to justify the language and phrasing of the amendment in your paper. For example, if adapting a prior amendment, you will need to account for why it failed, how your changes address prior shortcomings, and how you account for any relevant changes in historical circumstance. Be sure to anticipate future (mis)interpretations or abuses.

- Your defense of your proposal should in some ways be modeled after the sort of approach used in the Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers, which combine practical and political theory concerns. This means your diagnosis and defense must explicitly address political theory, particularly the values of the Declaration of Independence and their development over time. In focusing on political theory, you should identify which theoretical problems or issues are implicated (by your arguments or by potential counter-arguments) and then carefully analyze and treat these throughout. However, careful theoretical work should certainly not preclude careful treatment of practical, political science issues.

- Another sense in which your proposal's defense should follow the ratification debate is that in defending your position, you should have a *clear argument*: you are arguing to change the constitution in a specific way; you are not just identifying the possible benefits and liabilities of such a change. Stake out a position! At the same time, your argument should be carefully nuanced, accounting for a range of counter-arguments and resisting the urge to be polemic. *The depth and development of your theoretical and practical arguments will constitute one of the major evaluative criteria for these papers.*

Project Parameters and Guidelines

- You may work on this project alone or in groups of up to 3 people.
  - If working alone, the project should be about 3000 words (10 pages)
  - If working in a group of 2, the project should be about 4500 words (15 pages)
  - If working in a group of 3 the project should be about 6000 words (20 pages)
  - NOTE: These are very low page numbers/word counts. Quality, concision, focus, and clarity will be crucial for a successful paper.

- Paper Structure:
  - Every paper should follow a clear, logical structure that includes the three major components: establishing the need, proposing a solution, and, most extensively, defending that solution.
  - You should include a one-page outline after the title page, offering full-sentence, argument-summarizing declarative sentences covering your entire argument (doesn't count for your word count).

- Sources
  - You should take advantage of contemporary and historical research on the issue in question. Given the potential breadth of such research, only the most relevant texts should be selected. Depending on your proposed amendment, some empirical research may be helpful; if so, do locate and include it. However, I strongly recommend engaging contemporary theoretical debates in academic journals/books. You may also find that "crossover" sources (like *First Things*) are helpful. While the total number of sources that you will engage will depend on your project, a minimum of ten is expected.

- Format
  - Double-Spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, cover page with title, author name(s), date, course information, and word count.
  - Follow the formatting guidelines of the APSR, including in-text parenthetical citations, as described in detail on the Political Science Department's website: http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/departments/political_science/documents/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf
  - Structure your paper with clear headings and subheadings.
  - Include a works cited (not part of your word-count). This too should follow APSR standards.
  - Number your pages.

- Writing
  - Write in the third person and avoid the passive voice.
  - Please take great care with grammar, punctuation and overall clarity.
  - Demonstrate arguments rather than assert them.
  - See the short papers handout for more writing tips.

- Additional Advice
  - While this paper should use a contemporary problem as a starting point, **it should be a primarily a constitutional-theory focused paper—not a policy paper, a history paper, or a "current events" paper.** While other aspects may be relevant to your argument, the focus throughout should be on political theory and constitutional praxis within the American political context.

- Due Dates:
  - **3/7-3/11**: Submit project descriptions (< 1 page), a rough outline, & collaboration plans (including proposed division of labor). If possible, meet with Dr. Covington in office hours (M & F) to discuss.
  - **Monday, April 11**: Submit complete drafts for peer review (due **Friday, April 16**).
  - **Monday, April 25**[th]: final drafts due at 5:00pm. Both a <u>hard copy</u> (in my box in Deane Hall) and an <u>e-mail copy</u> must be submitted.