

All students are required to write a paper on one of the topics listed below. The essay requires that you research and analyze a question of importance to contemporary American Politics. Your paper should be **balanced** reviewing both sides of the question and considering the arguments and evidence raised by supporters of both sides. Evaluate the arguments and evidence; then, form your own conclusions and defend them with logical arguments and evidence.

Your research must be based on at least **five primary sources** (books and articles on the topics) not more than two of which may be internet postings (an article that you find on the internet is fine if it existed first on paper in a library), but only two blogs or other non-published sources). Wikipedia does NOT count as a primary source and should not be used. Your essay should summarize, synthesize and evaluate the research from the various sources and then form an independent answer of your own to the question you are asking based on your research and analysis.

The paper must be at least six (6) pages in length but not greater than eight (8) pages. It must be typed, double spaced, with 1 inch margins. Papers must be stapled in the upper left hand corner. Paper clips, binders, duo-tangs, folders or other covers/holders for the paper are not permitted.

Papers will be evaluated both on the quality of ideas, arguments, and evidence presented and on the quality of style, grammar, and organization of the paper. I highly recommend purchasing Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. This book will help improve the quality of your papers, and it will also come in useful throughout your college career.

Papers must include proper citations for material taken from your sources including both direct quotations and information that you paraphrase. The citation should include the author's last name and publication date (i.e., Mishler, 1999). A list of all sources used in the paper should be included at the end of the paper giving the author's full name, date of publication, source title, publisher or internet URL.

Students have the option of writing a draft of the paper, receiving feedback and then rewriting the paper. If you choose this option the first draft of the paper is worth 10% of the total grade. It will be evaluated and returned to you. You may then revise and resubmit the essay for a final grade, which will count an additional 15% of the total course grade.

If you choose not to rewrite the paper, then the first (and only) draft will be worth 25% of your grade.

Papers must be your own work. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating in any way will receive an E for the course, unless you have been caught cheating previously, in which case your violation will be referred to the university for more serious sanctions possible including suspension from school (Hint: don't cheat!)

The first draft of the paper (if you choose to write one) is due on **March 5th**; the final version of your paper is due on **April 16th**.

Late papers will be penalized 1 letter grade for each **class day** they are late.

APPROVED TOPICS:

1. Should the Constitution be amended to abolish the Electoral College and provide for the direct election of the President? Discuss the arguments made for and against the electoral college (including those of the American Founders). Where do you come down in this debate?

2. Some people argue that “there is a religious war going on in the United States, a cultural war . . . for the soul of America.” The ‘culture war’ presumably centers on issues such as abortion, school prayer, and gay rights. Other disagree and argue that most Americans are pretty much middle-of-the-road on most issues with only small differences between Democrats and Republicans. What do you think? How polarized is the American public today on hot-button moral, religious and cultural issues? Write an essay in which you review and evaluate the evidence on American public opinion today.
3. Immigration policy has become a hot button issue in the US in recent years. Debate focuses on who should be admitted to the US, how many, and what do with the millions of immigrants who are here illegally (i.e., without proper documents) some of whom have children who were born here and thus are US citizens. Write an **BALANCED** paper in which you summarize the major issues in this debate and review the arguments and evidence on both sides. Where do you come down in these debate? If you were President, what would your immigration policy be?
4. The Tea Party, unheard of five years ago, is now a major factor in American Politics. Write an essay in which you assess both the factors that explain the sudden rise of the Tea Party in America and evaluate its impact on American Politic and public policy. Has the Tea Party been good or bad for American? Why?
5. A number of Tea Party advocates have argued that the United States should repeal the 17th amendment that provides for the popular election of US Senators. They think that state legislatures should be allowed to select their Senators as provided in the original US constitution. What do you think? Write an essay in which you analyze the effects of eliminating the direct election of Senators and evaluate its costs and benefits for American politics and public policy. What is your position on this issue and why?
6. The high levels of partisanship in Congress in recent years have all but paralyzed the institution making it almost impossible to pass even the most routine legislation. Thirty years ago, Congress was much less partisan, and it was common for Democrats and Republicans to compromise to pass legislation on a bipartisan basis. What are the main factor the explain the increasing partisanship in Congress over the past 30 years? Identify the major explanations offered by political scientists and journalists and evaluate the arguments and evidence is support of each. What do you think? Which explanations are most persuasive to you? Why?

If none of these paper topics is of interest to you, you are welcome to suggest a different one. However, you must give me a one paragraph statement of that topic in writing for my approval by **February 22nd**.

The Teaching Assistants for this course will grade your papers and are available to help you as you write. You also may contact me for help, but their advice is probably better since they are doing the grading. You should email them to make an appointment to meet with them if/when you need help.

Each Student should work with one TA. The TA assigned to depends on your Last name.

Students whose last names begin:

A-I Rebecca Kopp (rlkopp@email.arizona.edu)
K-Q Megan Hauser (hauser@email.arizona.edu)
R-Z Michelle Ohanesian (michelleanoush@gmail.com)

Please note: Do NOT contact the TAs or me for assistance with the paper within 48 hours (two days) of the due-date. We are happy to help you but only if you take responsibility for starting the paper well in advance of the deadline.