

**30:154 Political Psychology
Paper Guidelines**

I. General Requirements

- A. Your basic requirement is to write a research paper. Such a paper should probably be at least 13-17 pages long to do your topic justice. The particular topic is up to you as long as it is related to political psychology. Look at the syllabus for ideas for topics or feel free to come see me.
- B. Please note that these papers are to consist of *original thought and research*. They are not simply compilations of existing thought on the topics. You should use existing literature for your sources, but you need to go beyond what you read to draw your own conclusions. In other words, I want this paper to be more than a summary of what others have said. I want you to interpret and analyze the material. References must show the materials you used, and should be cited in the body of your paper. Don't include references that aren't actually cited in the paper, just to pad your references. References include ANY source of information from which you draw quotes or ideas, whether a formal academic publication, or the popular press (newspapers, magazines) or interviews with people involved in the decisions you are writing about.
- C. Make sure that any tables or illustrations are referenced in the body of your paper – so that if you have a “Figure 1” or a “Table 2” you discuss it at some point within your text, and tie it into the paper itself. Please number the pages of your paper and provide a separate title page that includes your name, ID Number, Course Number, and Date.
- D. You must include an Abstract with your paper. An abstract is a brief summary (100-150 words) of the paper. It should indicate what the paper is about, what your findings are, and how you found them. An abstract not only gives the reader a quick summary, but also makes you think about what your paper is really all about. Please note that the Abstract does not replace the first couple paragraphs of your paper, where you introduce the topic and explain what your paper will cover. You can get examples of abstracts from academic papers in any journal (such as the *American Political Science Review*, or the *Journal of Politics*.)
- E. Please staple your paper and don't bother putting it into a plastic cover.

II. Typical Paper Outline (Guidelines only, you will modify as needed.)

- A. Introduction. Here's where you spell out what you are investigating and previewing what will be discussed in your paper. Generally this is a couple paragraphs, and should never be more than a page. Don't forget to make clear what it is your paper will be doing.
- B. The Problem (in general terms). Use a subheading to indicate what you plan to analyze. Remember that your reader may know nothing about the particular area you are discussing so you must provide sufficient background to help the reader understand what the issues are and where your paper is going.
- C. The Problem in Specific Terms. Use another subhead to indicate that you are now going to discuss the details of the topic and then use whatever additional subheads you need to allow the reader to make sense of where you are going. In this section (the largest part of the paper) you will get into the details of your topic, including your analysis of the situation. This must also include references to the literature you have researched which provides the backbone for your own analysis.
- D. Conclusion. Finally, you should summarize the paper – you start by returning to the general topic and summarizing your findings. Then you need to discuss the implications of your findings.

- E. References/Tables/Figures. After the main body of your paper, you should have your references (beginning on a new page) and then any Tables or Figures, each on its own page.

III. Procedures

- A. Writing in political science (or anywhere else for that matter) should NOT be a “write once and done” procedure. It is, instead, a process of thinking, outlining, writing, and revising. Your assignments for this paper will help you do this.
- B. You will first turn in your LITERATURE REVIEW and a list of sources. This should be 4-5 pages and will include at least 4 academic sources outside of our readings which you will analyze.
- C. You will then turn in a ROUGH DRAFT of the paper. This draft is to be a finished product in that it is to have all the parts of a complete paper. It must show evidence that you have done the basic research and thinking necessary to complete a good paper. I will read the draft and provide comments both as to the form of the paper and its substance.
- D. Finally, you will turn in the FINAL DRAFT of the paper. The final draft must take into account the feedback provided on your rough draft – that is, I expect the final draft to be a substantially rewritten and improved version of your rough draft. When you turn in the final draft, I expect your original rough draft to be attached with it.

IV. A few other points

- A. Plagiarism. Plagiarism is when you use somebody else’s work and call it your own. When you use verbatim excerpts from books, papers, internet sites, any source at all, you MUST provide a citation, and you must use quotation marks around the verbatim section. Even when you borrow an “idea” without quoting verbatim, you MUST cite the source of the idea. Failure to properly cite sources is academic dishonesty and can result in a range of penalties, including an “F” on the paper or an “F” in the course.
- B. Citations. The citation in your text should generally be the Author’s name and the date of the work, placed in parentheses, e. g. (Redlawsk, 1999). This must tie back to a listing in your References section of a work by that author on that date. Interviews should be referenced in the same way, so that there is a listing of the interview in your References section. Examine some papers in the *American Political Science Review* for appropriate format.
- C. Grammar and spelling COUNT! Please write in appropriate academic style – avoid contractions, use proper grammar, and make sure your spelling is correct. Improper grammar/spelling makes it very difficult for the reader (me) to follow your arguments.

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Note: Many of the specific suggestions about how to define and organize your paper listed here are adapted from an assignment Prof. Debbie Schildkraut, Tufts University uses for her students.

Research Paper

Thirty-five percent of your course grade will be based on your work on a research paper. The final paper itself should be about 13-17 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font) and is worth 15% of your course grade. Before you turn in the final version, however, you will do a literature review (worth 10% of the grade) and a “rough draft” version of the paper (also worth 10%).

You have a lot of freedom in choosing the topic for your project. The only requirement is that your project be a research paper on any topic related to political psychology. Political psychology is a broad discipline so you have lots of choices. What will make it political “psychology” is that your topic must have some focus on the psychological aspects of political behavior.

First, you will need to select a broad topic in political psychology that interests you. Then you will need to narrow your topic down to a specific research question. Designing your paper will require you to:

- review relevant scholarly literature
- identify controversies, problems, or unresolved issues
- develop a thesis about your assessment of these controversies, problems, or issues, and write a paper that uses existing academic research to support your thesis.

This assignment requires you to find, read, and incorporate scholarly academic readings **not included on our syllabus**. I do not expect you to collect your own data or conduct your own experiments or surveys.

Your stated thesis should be as specific as possible. For example, do not state that negative campaigning has an effect on voter emotions. Specify what type of effect. Indicate whether all negative campaigning should have this effect or whether there are particular features of some negative ads that make them especially potent.

There are 3 checkpoints in this assignment where you will turn in work to be graded.

First, you will turn in a literature review on your topic. A rough draft of the lit review is due in class on **February 21**. The final draft of your literature review will be due in class on March 7 and will be graded. In between, you will meet with your Writing Fellow to review comments on your rough draft in order for you to improve it as a final version.

Second, you will turn in a rough draft of your final paper on **April 6** in class. *This is to be a complete paper* and will be graded as such. You will discuss the rough draft with your writing

fellow who will provide you with comments about your style and communication. You will also receive comments from me about your substantive work.

Finally, you will turn in a **final draft** of your paper, which should reflect revisions based on comments from me and your writing fellow, as well as additional research you should do. The final draft will be due in class on **May 4**.

Literature Review:

TWO copies of a 4-5-page (minimum) literature review are due in class on **February 21**. The lit review must include:

- o A description of your paper topic, your research question and thesis, and why it is important.
- o An outline of the overall paper
- o An ANALYSIS of at least FOUR academic sources that you will use in your paper. This analysis should be about one page for each source, and should identify what the paper or book is about, the author's research question/thesis, and the findings. The analysis should also include assessment of how the source will further your own research question.

Rough Draft:

TWO copies of a 13-17 page page rough draft are due in class on **April 7**. This is to be a complete paper and will be graded as such.

Meetings:

You will meet with your Writing Fellow twice, once to review the writing on your literature review and once to go over your paper rough draft. You are strongly encouraged to incorporate writing style and technique ideas from these meetings into your final drafts. These meetings are mandatory. Failure to meet with your Writing Fellow will reduce your grade.

Important dates:

February 21:	TWO copies of literature review rough draft due
Between 2/21-3/4:	Meet with Writing Fellow
March 7:	Final draft of literature review due
April 6:	TWO copies of paper rough draft due
Between 4/6-4/15	Meet with Writing Fellow
May 4:	Final draft of paper due

Policies:

Remember that proper grammar, correct spelling, and appropriate citation of sources are minimum requirements for acceptable papers. I am assuming that you understand what is meant by the phrase “appropriate citation of sources.” See me if you have questions. **When in doubt, cite it.** Plagiarism need not be intentional. It is better to err on the side of too much citation rather than too little.

If you cite a website, be sure to explain in the text what the source is (ex: if it’s a particular interest group), and be sure to include the date you accessed the webpage in the citation. **DO NOT** put full web addresses for scholarly articles that have a full-text version online. In those cases, put the full journal citation instead.

I will not accept late work.

Back up your work early and often (and in multiple places). A computer problem is not an acceptable excuse for not meeting deadlines.

Questions to help organize your approach and narrow your investigation:

What is the general topic I want to investigate?

- o Why am I interested in it?
- o Why should other people be interested in it?
- o What other aspects of politics does this topic relate to?

Who else has written important work on this topic?

- o Do I agree with them?
- o What insights does their work provide?
- o What are remaining questions that merit investigation?

What approach do I plan to use that might help me design a study to address some of those remaining questions?

What are the possible flaws with my approach?

- o What are some alternative hypotheses to my thesis?
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As you write:

Be wary of making grand claims that you do not support with evidence. With every argument you make, ask yourself: “Have I given the reader sufficient reason to believe me?”

And be sure to situate your project in the larger context of existing research on your chosen topic. Remember, view research as a **conversation**. In other words, make sure you include a review of relevant existing literature and make sure you explain how your work builds upon, or contributes to, or makes up for mistakes in, or fills gaps in, existing published research.

NEVER include a table, graph, or chart without discussing it explicitly in the text of your paper. Do not assume that readers will interpret these visual presentations of data in the way that you want them to. Make sure you explain why they are there, what they show, and what you want readers to take away from them. It is acceptable for you to place all tables and graphs at the end of the paper; you do not need to paste them exactly where they are supposed to go in the text.

USE SUBHEADINGS: divide your paper into logical sub-sections. This will help you develop, organize, and express your ideas in a coherent manner. But remember, transitions from one section to the next should not be abrupt or awkward.

Finding sources:

The nature of this assignment requires that you delve into political science research. The paper should have a literature review clearly in addition to an articulated hypothesis and research design. Tools that might help you locate relevant literature, such as books and journal articles, include:

- o JSTOR: The Scholarly Journal Archive: www.jstor.org
- o Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)
- o Worldwide Political Science Abstracts
- o Lexis-Nexis/Academic Universe/Congressional Universe

Note: relying on newspaper and magazine articles is not sufficient. You should be including published academic research in your description of the current state of knowledge regarding your chosen topic.

For finding primary data, good starting places include:

- o Look at our own class website – I have some links to online sources
- o The U.S. Census: www.census.gov
- o Fedstats: www.fedstats.gov
- o The National Journal: www.nationaljournal.com
- o The Pew Center for People and the Press: www.people-press.org
- o The National Election Study
- o The General Social Survey

- o Thomas: searchable database of legislative activity in Congress:
<http://thomas.loc.gov/>
- o Public Agenda: public opinion and policy summaries on a variety of issues:
www.publicagenda.org
- o National Conference of State Legislatures: lots of good state-level information:
www.ncsl.org

I am happy to help people navigate these tools for finding primary and secondary sources. But, you cannot wait until a couple days before an assignment is due and ask me to help you then! Also know that you can make **individual research appointments** with reference staff at the library.

Tips for successful proofreading:

1. Print your paper and read it out loud. If it sounds awkward as you read it, it will sound awkward when I read it. You will also catch typos this way that you might not find otherwise.
2. Edit.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2.
4. Make sure your schedule allows you to have a day or two where you DO NOT look at your draft. Then go back and repeat steps 1 and 2.
5. Ask a friend to proofread your paper for you.
6. Offer to proofread your friends' papers, even if they are taking classes you know little about. Evaluating other people's writing can be very valuable in helping you to improve your own writing. The best thing to happen to my writing was for me to start teaching and grading other people's work.
7. Repeat steps 1 and 2 as often as you can.