

### Essay 1: Topics and Format

For the political science half of the course, you must write two essays of 2-3 pages each (approximately 500-750 words, excluding reference page). For this first essay due on **April 22nd**, you have a choice of the following two topics:

- 1) Powers of the U.S. Presidency have increased over time, largely due to the need to respond to national security, economic and other crises. Is this appropriate, or is the U.S. Presidency now too powerful compared to other areas of government?
- 2) Lately, use of the *filibuster* in the U.S. Senate has led to a backlog of legislation and confirmations of appointments. Should the U.S. Senate eliminate the *filibuster*, change the rules of how it works, or keep it as is?

These topics are meant to sound simple, but to answer them, you'll need to have a certain amount of knowledge of what these institutions/rules are, be able to define and explain how they work, and then *make an argument* that answers the question. You should be able to answer either of these topics after being in class for lecture and doing the reading; outside research is not necessary but is possible if you want to add information.

#### Format

This essay will be graded with 80 points for content, 20 points for writing and citations.

#### Content:

The content portion of your paper depends on how well you answer the question in terms of showing you understand the concepts of the question, and make an argument. There is no one answer to either of these questions, and they are deliberately open to encourage you to do some serious thinking about the topics before you write. You are expected to do some advance preparation in terms of looking over the pertinent class material from lecture/the Edwards text to help you come up with an answer, but how much you do is up to you. The same principle applies to any outside reading you may wish to do.

It is possible that a student, seeing these topics, will simply draft an answer that does not rely on any background reading and is purely their opinion. This is a dangerous way to answer the question; while some students at this point may be able to write an answer that shows they know all of the concepts and can make an informed opinion without aid, most students will need some help. An answer that is a poorly informed opinion for this paper will get the equivalent of a C- (56 points) at best in terms of content.

Conversely, it is possible that a student could go overboard in terms of research for this paper, packing it with information from the class and outside sources, but fail to make an argument that answers the question. A paper that is mostly quoted or badly paraphrased information in place of the student's own words, with no overall argument, is also a bad way to answer this question and could result in a grade in the low B to C range (62 or lower) for content.

An "A" paper in terms of content will have:

A clear thesis that introduces the argument from the start;

Development in terms of reasons, with terms defined as necessary over the course of the paper;

Presentation in the student's own words as much as possible, showing the student understands the concepts and is able to use them;

A clear conclusion that summarizes the argument at the end.

#### Writing:

20 points of this paper depend on how well you can present the information in terms of actual writing and use of sources.

Any quotes or information not common knowledge (the Constitution is, current events may not be, and information from the text/lecture definitely is not) must be cited in the body of the text and in a reference page at the end. Lack of citations for this paper, if they should be there because the information is quoted or not common knowledge, will result in a loss up to 10 points. Please note: any information that is badly paraphrased from a source or copied as passages into your document, then not cited, is plagiarism. Measures are being taken to discourage this (see below). But if this occurs, a student risks high penalties including loss of all points for this assignment and a resulting lower grade for the class, plus report to Student Conduct.

The remaining 10 points will be based on quality of writing, and could have deductions for:

Lack of spelling (do not rely on spell check – this creates other problems)

Poor word choice

Poor sentence structure, run-on and fragment sentences

Lack of introduction/body/conclusion (one paragraph is not an essay)

Poor use of punctuation

Inconsistent verb tense in paragraphs

Passive language when active tense is preferable

If you are concerned with how you are writing a draft, Dr. Pinnell is available during office hours to preview rough drafts. Drafts cannot be sent via e-mail.

#### Turning in Your Paper

For this part of the class, you must submit your paper in two copies: the first is a hard copy due at the start of class on April 22nd. If you cannot attend class, it is your responsibility to turn it in to my mailbox in Clark Hall 471 before class and note the time on the sign-in sheet in the office; alternatively, have a friend bring it to class. The second copy must be uploaded to Turnitin.com within one day of the due date; you have until 11:59 p.m. the next day.

Papers that do not make either of these deadlines, or that are submitted electronically to other places such as e-mail, are not considered turned in on time and will not be graded. There are no exceptions to this policy unless there is an emergency that you can verify in writing such as a note from a medical practitioner, garage receipt for a vehicle accident, etc. If you get into an emergency situation, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor before the paper is due to inform her. Any extension to allow a late turn-in is then at the instructor's discretion.

Please set up your account with Turnitin.com well before the deadline to make sure you can upload the paper. The Class ID for Pols 15B is 5990647; the password is eagle. If you have never done this before and need assistance, see the instructor in office hours or after class. A successful upload should result in an e-mail confirmation or .pdf receipt; please keep this for later verification if necessary.