# Annual Assessment Report

**Department:** Political Science
**Academic Year:** 2020-21
**Date of Submission:** August 16, 2021
**Department Chair:** Dr. Jesse Covington

### I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

| | |
|---|---|
| **Item: Collect student data over several years to overcome small-N problem.** | **Response:** Aggregating data over several years is a good suggestion. Unfortunately, we spend the last couple of years trying to keep our collective heads above the COVID waters. We will try to remember this valuable suggestion for future years. |
| **Item: The PRC Committee said that they were looking forward to hearing about a full curriculum review.** | **Response:** We are excited about this as well. There were several discussions during both the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters about curriculum review, focused primarily on departmental aspirations and vision. While we have made progress in this area, moving into the next step of operationalizing this vision was hampered by COVID. One concrete exception to this: we have added POL-113 "Race and Politics" to the curriculum. We will continue these conversations in the coming years, though they will be limited in the current year due to two sabbaticals in a three-person department (see proposed "Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan", below. |
| **Item:** | **Response:** |
| **Item:** | **Response:** |
| **Notes:** | |

### 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 | Written Communication |
|---|---|
| | |

| | | Context and Purpose of Writing | Content Development | Genre and Disciplinary Convention | Sources and Evidence | Control of Syntax and Mechanics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Who is in Charge /Involved?** | Tom Knecht, Jesse Covington | | | | | |
| **Direct Assessment Methods** | We used the AAC&U's "Written Communication VALUE Rubric" to evaluate 20 papers from the following courses: Dr. Knecht's POL 113 (11 papers); Dr. Covington's POL 130 (three papers); and Dr. Covington's POL 150 (six papers). Papers were scored on a 1 (low) to 4 (high) scale along the following categories a) The Purpose of Writing, b) Content Development, c) Genre and Disciplinary Conventions, d) Source and Evidence, and e) Control of Syntax and Mechanics. | | | | | |
| **Indirect Assessment Methods** | | | | | | |

**Major Findings**

| | Context and Purpose of Writing | Content Development | Genre and Disciplinary Convention | Sources and Evidence | Control of Syntax and Mechanics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Averages: | 3.55 | 2.55 | 2.40 | 2.40 | 2.90 |
| Tom's Avg | 3.82 | 2.55 | 2.27 | 2.09 | 2.55 |
| Tom's SD | 0.40 | 1.04 | 1.19 | 1.04 | 1.13 |
| Jesse's Avg | 3.22 | 2.56 | 2.56 | 2.78 | 3.33 |
| Jesse's SD | 1.09 | 0.53 | 0.88 | 0.67 | 0.50 |
| | | | | | |
| P-value (TK vs. JC) | 0.15 | 0.98 | 0.55 | 0.09 | 0.06 |

The table above describes our evaluation of students' written work. Overall, students preformed best in their "Context and Purpose of Writing" (3.55/4), and relatively poorly (2.4 average) in "Genre and Disciplinary Convention" and "Sources and Evidence." Although Dr. Knecht's evaluations were generally lower than Dr. Covington's—Context and Purpose of Writing is the exception—none of these differences were statistically significant. Dr. Knecht's higher standard deviation scores reflect three exceptionally poor papers.

**Closing the Loop Activities**

Much of our recent Departmental discussions focus on the ethos of the Department moving forward. To put it bluntly, we are conflicted about whether we are training students for the Academy, for real life, or for both. The mission of the Department certainly reflects the type of writing we expect. If we are training future graduate students, the typical research paper is in order. If we are training graduates to be thoughtful, well-rounded people, then other types of writing styles and conventions are more appropriate. We haven't settled on an answer. Indeed, this question will continue to animate our discussions about the ethos of the Department and what we want from our students.

**Collaboration and Communication**

**or/and**

**II B. Key Questions**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Key Question** | |
| **Who is in Charge/Involved?** | |
| **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 |
|---|---|---|
| Last summer, we adjusted our six-year action plan so that we would be focusing on our curriculum review in 2021-22 year. We need to make 2022-23 our year of primary focus on curriculum review. During the 2021-22 year, we'll assess "critically trained" and will not have a separate assessment category for 2022-23 so that we can focus on curriculum review. | COVID challenges led two members of the department to delay their sabbaticals until the 2021-22 year. This will prevent us from focusing on our curriculum review this year. | Our goal is still to complete this process by the end of the 2022-23 school year (end of summer 2023). |
| | | |

### VI. Appendices

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

# Paper Guide
POL 113: Race and Politics
Professor Knecht
Spring 2021

## Overview

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

**Accountability Groups.**  There is a strong tendency to procrastinate on large research projects.  To help you avoid this pitfall, you may consider joining an accountability group with other students.  In your group, you will pledge to:

- turn paper assignments in on-time or face a loss of total points from your final grade.
- turn in work that warrants full points or accept a reduction in grade,
- read and comment on other students' work.

## Due Dates [all due dates are by 10 am]

January 28. Research Design  -5pts
February 25. Literature Review        -10pts
March 25.  Research Completed  [variable]
April 8.  Rough Draft  -10pts
April 22. Final Paper

**Task 1.  Research Design (Due Date January 28)**

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 challenging 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 latter 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 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.

### Task 2. Literature Review (Due Date February 25)

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 useful for providing background information and evidence but are not great sources for theory. In 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 the *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 valuable sources of data and information, there is a wide variance in quality. Be very selective when researching the Internet. If your paper has a heavy dose of websites as sources, it raises a red flag. Avoid citing wikepedia.com.

## 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 merely recite what others have written.

**Avoid writing a pure "opinion paper."** Your paper should mainly be non-normative, but you can discuss the normative import of your work in the conclusion.

**Stay on track.** Many papers wander 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 unrelated issue, 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

I expect you to spend significant time conducting research. You must start early, set deadlines for yourself, and complete the investigation 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 April 8 at 10 am; Final paper Due April 22 at 10 am**

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.  Here is the basic outline of a research paper:

- Introduction
  - Thesis
  - Road map
- Literature Review
- Theory
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion (optional… takes the place of a concluding section)
- Conclusions

**Paper Requirements**

I will grade your paper on the quality of the writing and 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 2/3rds 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.

## Overview

Per the syllabus, students will complete substantial writing project for this course, worth 25% of the semester grade. The purpose of this project is most centrally to provide students with the opportunity to pursue a topic/question of their choosing. The assignment is designed with significant flexibility in mind, giving students substantial freedom on the *type* of writing project undertaken—not just the topic/question.

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 desire to both know more and to speak into with your own scholarly voice.

## Options:

1. Critical Book Review Essay (See Appendix "A")
2. Traditional Research Paper (See Appendix "B")
3. Mock Judicial Opinion (See Appendix "C")
4. A Persuasive Essay (See Appendix "D")
5. 'Choose Your Own Adventure"—draft an alternative proposal with clear parameters and guidelines (subject to approval)

## Important Dates:

Friday, 3/12—Proposal: Select one of the options for your paper and write 1-3 paragraphs explaining what you plan to do and why it matters. If you are able to include any bibliography, that is ideal but not essential.

Monday, 4/12—Complete Paper Drafts Due. These will be submitted to Dr. Covington via Canvas and to a peer reviewer in the class via e-mail (CC Dr. Covington).

Monday, 4/19—Completed Peer Reviews Due (submit via e-mail and Canvas)

Saturday, 5/1—Final Drafts Due by 12:00 noon.

## Details, Expectations, Format, etc.:

- Your paper should have an appropriate **title and a title page**—including a 150-word **abstract.**
- **Include an outline:** This should follow your title page and consist of a hierarchically-organized, one-page outline of full-sentence declarative statements summarizing the claims of your paper. I strongly encourage you to look at each paragraph of your paper and ask, "What is this paragraph's thesis?" Writing this outline should result in greater clarity about your argument, often leading to 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.
- **Structure your paper** carefully, with major headings and subheadings, as appropriate within the main body of your inquiry denoting each step of your efforts.
- **Revision and Polishing:** Every paper should go through multiple rounds of revision, editing for content, clarity, grammar and usage. Remember: be clear, brief, and precise. Also remember that first drafts largely chronicle your writing process and must be re-shaped to more directly say something meaningful. Once you have a reasonably polished draft, each student should visit Writer's Corner in the library for further help.
- **A Bibliography / Works Cited**: This—and your in-text parenthetical citations—should follow APSR Guidelines.

- Use 12-point font, standard margins (1-1.25in.), double spaced, 4500-6000 word count range for the body of your text. Please put the word count on front page. Neither the title page, the outline, nor the bibliography counts against your word-count.

**Additional Advice:**
- <u>Make every sentence count.</u> There is no space for filler or fluff in these papers.
- <u>Define your terms.</u> Whenever you use conceptual terminology, you must clearly define what the author means / what you mean by that term, e.g.: "Aristotle understands 'happiness' as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue."
- <u>Cite the text.</u> When doing any sort of textual engagement and/or research, back up your claims with references to the text.
- <u>Write objectively in the third person (in most cases).</u> Most of the options included here should be written in the third person, with the possible exception of a the persuasive essay—though even with this, care should be taken to demonstrate rather than assert claims.
- <u>Write simply and precisely.</u> Use short sentences, unobstructed by jargon. This will help you to determine exactly what you mean to say and communicate it to others.
- <u>Use correct grammar, punctuation, syntax, and diction.</u> 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.
- <u>Avoid the passive voice and helping verbs.</u> 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…"
- <u>Consider purchasing a writing guide</u> such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.
- <u>Don't be dull.</u> Write something worth reading—both in content and in style.

## Appendix "A"—Critical Book Review Essay[1]

Students will write a paper in which they review a significant work engaging major course themes (book selection is subject to instructor approval). The purpose of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to read and think seriously about a particular author's work and, further, to reflect carefully on the broader issues on which the work touches. Students will select a book, read it carefully, then write a paper that does at least three things:

(1) Explains the book's arguments and situates them in their historical, legal, philosophical, and/or theological contexts;
(2) Critically analyzes those arguments both as a matter of internal consistency and in the context of the broader arguments of which it is a part; and
(3) Reflects on the adequacy of the book's arguments—evaluating them theologically, legally, and philosophically.

In other words, students should make sure to describe the book's arguments, explain their context, and construct an argument as to their adequacy, both in their own day and in our own. Of course, this means that to do this paper well, you may have to do more than just read one book. You will need to read "around" the book, figure out what it is responding to, and work to understand its context. (It will likely be helpful to organize the essay's sections around these three items.)

Students who elect this option should propose a book (with a paragraph rationale for why it is important for course themes) **no later than Friday, March 12**. In addition to your own research, the bibliographies of books and articles we've read as a class are a good place to look for potential books.

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[1] *Adapted from Dr. Bryan McGraw, Wheaton College*

## Appendix "B"—Traditional Research Paper

The central purpose of a research paper to enter into scholarly dialogue in an area your choosing, seeking to make a substantive contribution of original thinking and research. A good research paper identifies an important puzzle and then sets out to solve it by appropriate means. 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.

Each research paper should go through several stages of composition, each of which will be included in the final paper (with the exception of the annotated bibliography). When grading, I will look for each of these and evaluate each independently! **You should use headings in your paper that identify these major components.**

1) **Articulate a topic/problem:** There are a variety of ways to identify a good research topic. Ideally, you should start with some issue in Classical political theory that political theory scholars disagree about. 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 Worldwide Political Science Abstracts would be good starting places) to search for journal articles on your area of interest. (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!) Once you have a manageable list of articles, begin scanning their abstracts, introductions, and conclusions to identify what may relate to your interest. Your puzzle does not have to come from a journal article, but you will need to articulate it in relation to relevant scholarly literature.) The goal of this step is to articulate a <u>puzzle</u> that merits further inquiry. *At the end of this stage, you should know (and communicate) what your "puzzle" is and <u>why</u> it is worth pursuing.*

2) Note: for your paper, you should develop one to three paragraphs that contextualize your question, render it clearly, and demonstrate its importance. This is a key feature of your project proposal! 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). Write something that you would want to read!

3) **Build a bibliography of highly relevant sources:** By the time your research is complete, you should 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 8-source annotated bibliography is only for your paper proposal; you will not need to include annotations on your final bibliography).

4) **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.*

5) **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.

6) **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.)

7) **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 text 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.*

8) **Write a conclusion:** To what extent has your question resolved? Re-state your conclusions succinctly, and relate them to your question and thesis. Does your conclusion offer any meaningful implications for political life? Once you have articulated how your research question is answered, devote some careful thought to the significance of your answer. Reflect on its implications for contemporary politics, Christian thought, etc. *By the end of this section you should have clearly stated your research findings <u>and</u> reflected on their significance.*


## Appendix "C"—Mock Judicial Opinion[2]

This option allows you to tackle an as-yet undecided case in U.S. Constitutional Law and to write a simulated majority opinion. While largely following the format of a Supreme Court opinion (legal reasoning, drawing on multiple types of constitutional theory, etc.), you should also engage important theoretical considerations relevant to this course.

For your proposal, you should

- Identify and select a case currently being litigated in the Federal Court system (it need not yet be before the U.S. Supreme Court).
- Clearly state the legal question (issue) at stake and why it matters (especially with regard to the place of religion in a liberal polity. Feel free to break down the issue into sub-issues if it would help in organizing the rationale.

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[2] *Adapted from Steve Bretson, Wheaton College.*

- Identify the 10 cases most important as precedents that you will need to engage (some you will no doubt agree with; others you will disagree with. These should be included in your proposal (though they will not be set in stone at this point).

For your opinion, you should

- Begin with the facts and issue of the case.
- Craft good arguments and rationales that apply constitutional law principles to facts by analyzing primary sources and any relevant statutes, citing holdings and rationales from supporting cases, and distinguishing the holdings, rationales and facts from opposing cases.  A good brief or opinion is well-researched, well-reasoned and well-organized with a clear structure.
- You should not assume that the reader knows anything about the Supreme Court's jurisprudence relevant to the issue, even though the reader may be a federal judge or an attorney who regularly practices before the Supreme Court!  Begin with first principles (a key place for theory, not just law). Identify and describe relevant history, arguments, statutes, and cases.  Identify tests and claims from prior cases and then apply the tests to the current facts.  Use quotes from prior cases with an appropriate citation.
- Again, you can use sub-issue headings to help you organize your arguments or rationale.  Your strongest arguments should appear first (unless there is an internal logic to your argument structure).
- Be sure to address counterarguments thoroughly.


**Appendix "D"—Persuasive Essay**
- If you want to make an original argument regarding a core course theme, you have the freedom to do so in a well-written, carefully structured, and rigorously argued persuasive essay. Rather than attempting to answer a research puzzle *per se*, an essay like this seeks to propose a thesis that addresses a controverted area of relevant theory and practice (on course themes at the intersection of religion, law, and liberalism).
- Your essay should conform to standards for this sort of writing. For example:
  - https://blog.taaonline.net/2019/10/academic-writing-styles-persuasive-academic-writing/
  - https://rhs.rrdsb.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_75335/File/How%20to%20write%20an%20academic%20persuasive%20essay.pdf
- The essay must situate itself in relevant literature, relying on no less than 10 highly-relevant sources (aim to include at least 5-6 of these in your proposal). It is vital not to repeat existing arguments but rather to demonstrate a distinctive thesis.

## 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.

This will entail detailed analysis of relevant primary texts and the use of scholarly texts that shed light on the inquiry. Each student's project should go through several stages of composition, each of which will be included in the final paper (with the exception of the annotated bibliography). When grading, I will look for each of these and evaluate each independently! **You should use headings in your paper that identify these major components.**

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

## Important Dates:

Week of 10/26-30—Complete proposal and meet with Prof. Covington during office hours (Zoom, by appointment on Mondays and Fridays) to review it. Each proposal should include a substantive paragraph (c. ½ page) of your research question/puzzle and its import, plus a preliminary annotated bibliography of at least 8 highly relevant sources.
Friday, 11/13—Submit Draft of Literature Review & Research Design
Friday, 12/4—Complete Paper Drafts Due. These will be submitted to Dr. Covington and to your peer reviewer via e-mail.
Monday, 12/7—Completed Peer Reviews Due (submit via e-mail)
Saturday, 12/12—Final Drafts Due

## Format:

- 12-point font, standard margins (1-1.25in.), double spaced, 4500 words maximum (word count totals are higher for multi-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 APSR standard) and a works cited. I will distribute a handout detailing this method (Canvas).
- 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.

9) **Articulate a topic/problem:** There are a variety of ways to identify a good research topic. Ideally, you should start with some issue in Classical political theory that political theory scholars disagree about. 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 Worldwide Political Science Abstracts would be 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. (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!) Once you have a manageable list of articles, begin scanning their abstracts, introductions, and conclusions to identify what may relate to your interest. Your puzzle does not have to come from a journal article, but you will need to articulate it in relation to relevant scholarly literature.) The goal of this step is to articulate a puzzle—a question about a political philosopher—that merits further inquiry. *At the end of this stage, you should know (and communicate) what your "puzzle" is and why it is worth pursuing.* An initial puzzle might ask something like:

    a. Does Aristotle's conception of gender (or slavery) 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. "In what ways is an Augustinian polity aimed at full human flourishing? Is he more of a classical eudaemonist or a proto-modern liberal?"
    d. "What difference does *embodiment* make for the political philosophy of Augustine?"
    e. "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?"

f.  "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?"

g.  "How does Al-Farabi construe the relation between religious and political authority?

Note: for your paper, you should develop one to three paragraphs that contextualize your question, render it clearly, and demonstrate its importance. This is a key feature of your project proposal! 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). Write something that you would want to read!

10) **Build a bibliography of highly relevant sources:** By the time your research is complete, you should 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 8-source annotated bibliography is only for your paper proposal; you will not need to include annotations on your final bibliography).

11) **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.*

12) **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.

13) **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.)

14) **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 text 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.*

15) **Write a conclusion:** To what extent has your question resolved? Re-state your conclusions succinctly, and relate them to your question and thesis. Does your conclusion offer any meaningful implications for political life? Once you have articulated how your research question is answered, devote some careful thought to the significance of your answer. Reflect on its implications for contemporary politics, Christian thought, etc. *By the end of this section you should have clearly stated your research findings <u>and</u> reflected on their significance.*

16) **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.

17) **Revision and Polishing:** Every paper should go through multiple rounds of revision, editing for content, clarity, grammar and usage. Remember: be clear, brief, and precise. Also remember that first drafts largely chronicle your writing process and must be re-shaped to more directly say something meaningful. Once you have a reasonably polished draft, each student should visit Writer's Corner in the library for further help.

**<u>Additional Advice:</u>**
- <u>Make every sentence count.</u> Do not tell me what you are going to do—just do it. (You don't need an introduction, thesis statement, or conclusion).
- <u>Define your terms.</u> 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."
- <u>Cite the text.</u> Back up your claims with references to the text. Parenthetical page numbers serve as adequate citations in these papers.
- <u>Stay "internal" to the text.</u> 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.
- <u>Write objectively in the third person.</u> 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."
- <u>Write simply and precisely.</u> Use short sentences, unobstructed by jargon. This will help you to determine exactly what you mean to say and communicate it to others.
- <u>Use correct grammar, punctuation, syntax, and diction.</u> 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.
- <u>Avoid the passive voice and helping verbs.</u> 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…"
- <u>Consider purchasing a writing guide</u> such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.
- <u>Don't be dull.</u> Write something worth reading—both in content and in style.

# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

*for more information, please contact value@aacu.org*

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

## Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

## Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collectios of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinarity through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers' work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing -- in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm)

## Glossary
### The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Content Development: The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- Context of and purpose for writing: The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- Disciplinary conventions: Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- Evidence: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- Genre conventions: Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- Sources: Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

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**Definition**

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

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