

Initial Reflection

100 points

Due date: Monday, August 29 before class

Purpose and Goals: One of the goals of a 500-600 level “Craft of Research” class in the Political Science major is that you conduct original research: testing a claim by collecting and analyzing raw data. This project is designed to help you fulfill that goal while also offering insight into the ways public opinion is used by community organizations to further their goals. Over the course of the semester, we will collaborate with a community partner to identify a question of interest to them, decide how to best gather opinions about that question, and then actually collect and interpret responses from Georgetown residents.

This semester, we will work with RISE Georgetown to understand the Georgetown community’s knowledge, attitudes and action around the city’s school board. What do Georgetown community members know about the politics and process of school board elections and meetings? What are their expectations of schools in meeting their needs and the needs of their children? And what would motivate them to (keep) turn out in school board elections?

Before we jump into this collaboration, I would like each of you to take a moment to reflect on what you know about the topic we’ll be investigating and about the research process itself. This exercise will help you identify what you need to and hope to know by the end of this class in order to be intentional in your academic experience and give you a record of where you started that will help you assess your own learning when you return to these questions at the end of the semester.

Requirements:

Your paper should be submitted on Moodle and include the following elements:

- An introductory paragraph that summarizes what you know about public opinion, how it is measured, and how it might relate to representation on the local school board. It should end with a clear, 1-2 sentence assessment of what you hope to learn in this class.
Example: By the end of the semester, I hope to know enough about political science methods to feel confident about using one in capstone. I also want to have a better understanding of why so many people don’t vote in local elections.
- At least one paragraph responding to each of the following questions:
 - What do you already know about how we form our political beliefs? About what drives us to participate in politics?
 - What do you know about how school boards work? About local elections?
 - What do you hope you’ll learn about each of these topics and about the research process as you progress through the semester?
 - What do you think will be your biggest hurdle in reaching your learning goals?
- A bibliography of cited sources (if necessary), formatted in Turabian style

The rubric I will use to grade this paper is included below. Papers should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced, in Times New Roman or a similar font. Strong papers will include all of the above elements in a logically organized format that uses clear, concise and precise language.

Guidelines and Assessment Rubric: Initial Reflection Paper

	Points Possible
THESIS: Clearly and succinctly articulates what you hope to learn by the end of the course	10 points
RELEVANCE: Responds to each of the guiding questions in clear, detailed paragraphs that are fluidly connected to one another and the introductory paragraph	30 points
CLARITY AND PRECISION: Makes accurate and well-supported statements, consistently provides examples, illustrates points, and expresses ideas, and consistently provides specific information, descriptions and data.	40 points
WRITING: Persuasively advances argument in language that is clear, coherent, concise, and grammatically sound	10 points
ORGANIZATION: Organizes the paper clearly and logically	10 points
HONOR CODE: honor code is written and signed on the paper	
TOTAL	100 points