

POLS 102 – AMERICAN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

COURSE TOPIC PAPER

DETAILS

5-6 double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins. You must upload an electronic copy to Canvas before the deadline (**see syllabus**). Penalty for unexcused lateness: 1/2 of a grade for each 24 hours.

PROMPT

Research is one of the most important things we must learn to do well during our academic careers. It is not only the bedrock of the academy but is an essential professional and life skill as well. That being said, research papers can be challenging to write and boring if they are on topics, we have little to no interest in. To help motivate you through the challenges ahead, you should choose a topic—relevant to this class—that is of interest to you. Recognizing that not all of you will have a defined interest prior to this class, I have outlined some potential topics below. You do not have to choose from this list!

POSSIBLE TOPICS

Gerrymandering	Political polarization	Free speech rights
Women in politics	Voter choice	Dark money
Religious liberty	Military industrial complex	Citizenship & immigration
Race and policing	Values voters 2 nd	Amendment Rights
Income inequality	Social media/new media	National security
Drugs & drug policy in America	Privacy rights	Poverty

Once you have selected a good topic, it is important to narrow the focus. To do so, you will need to gather sources in advance of writing the paper. You will need a **minimum of 3 scholarly sources** that are no older than 1990 (a scholarly source is one that has a well-developed list of references, is published in a credible journal or by a credible publisher and has been peer reviewed). Please use the library site (<https://www.imperial.edu/courses-and-programs/divisions/arts-and-letters/library-department/>) to access the online databases. If you are new to research papers, don't worry—we will go through the writing process together!

Your paper should also have the following qualities:

1. An **APA cover/title page**.
2. A **research question** that guides the logic of the paper
3. A well-developed **thesis claim** stated in the first paragraph and a theoretical analysis that logically follows from this thesis.
4. **Source support and evidence**. Your paper should not merely describe problems, events, etc. Rather, your paper should use theories, arguments, concepts and/or evidence in the academic literature/textbook to explain and **support your claim**.
5. **In-text citations** giving credit to the scholars you are pulling from. This may include peer-reviewed journals or books published by university presses (**do not cite websites**). Sources

should be explicitly cited and discussed in the body of your paper (**do not merely to cite the sources in your reference section**).

6. A **reference page** properly citing all sources you have used.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

I will use the following outcomes to measure how well you have learned some of the most important themes and concepts from the course so far.

ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC

(See Canvas rubric for more nuance description of each cell)

Criteria	Missing	Needs Vast Improvement	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Introduction & Thesis Claim	0	5	6	7	8	9	10
Effective Use of Textbook Chapters	0	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thesis Defense & Analysis	0	30	36	42	48	54	60
Effective Use of Outside Sources	0	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Quality	0	5	6	7	8	9	10
No Bibliography	- 5	Late Penalty	-5				

TOTAL _____

STRENGTHS

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT