

iCitizen Project
PART 6: ESSAY ON AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP & POLITICS
POL 120 – Winter 2020

Overview. In this final essay, you'll address the following question:

If you could change one aspect of American politics or citizenship, what would it be and why?

In formulating your answer, you'll be expected to utilize your knowledge of American politics/citizenship, political institutions, and civic engagement. Your task is to demonstrate both your substantive knowledge and your ability to apply that knowledge.

Not sure what to write about? Consider the following:

1. Think of something about politics that you find upsetting and/or you think doesn't work well. For example, do you think legislators are responsive to citizens? Is hyperpartisanship making lawmaking too difficult? Do interest groups have too much power? Are citizens prepared for civic life? How could we increase voting rates? How can we defeat fake news without running afoul of free speech? What reforms to the media could help American political discourse?
2. What do you think caused the problem? It may be a single factor, but likely might be many. List them.
3. Next, how do you think this problem could be fixed given the causes? Maybe the problem cannot be solved completely, but some changes might help redress it. List those possible solutions.
4. Now, choose a few solutions and think about how you would justify them. Put another way, consider how you can persuade others to accept your point of view. You will likely need to use evidence (research, conceptual knowledge, statistics, constitutional principles, etc.) to justify and help persuade others.
5. Take the outline you just created and write your essay! (See directions below.)

Directions. In answering the assignment's question, you should compose a thesis-driven essay:

- **Introduction/Thesis:** A **thesis statement** will clearly state to your reader the purpose of your essay; in this case, your thesis will answer the aforementioned question that also communicates a proposition. For instance, a poor thesis statement is one that simply states what you would change (e.g. "I believe that birthright citizenship should be ended in the U.S."). An effective thesis, though, would give the reader a clear argument that will be developed throughout the paper through your analysis and rationalization. For example: "In order to forestall further decline, we must reinvigorate civil political discourse by requiring civics classes in both high school and college." The latter thesis statement not only identifies what would be changed, but also provides an argumentative proposition.
- **Body:** Beyond your thesis and introduction, you should prepare several body paragraphs where you (1) **identify** the features/aspects of American politics or citizenship you'd change, (2) **diagnose why** changes are needed, and (3) **explain how** you'd change those features/aspects. Your body section should be several paragraphs in length, and I highly recommend that you use subheadings throughout.
- **Evidence:** In providing your analysis, you should use copious amounts of **evidence**, demonstrating your understanding of American politics. At a *minimum*, you should cite at least **FIVE (5) readings** from the class (the textbook DOES NOT COUNT). *Starship Troopers* counts as a reading for the purposes of this assignment. You may elect to use external sources to bolster your essay's arguments; feel free to use them in addition to the five readings. In short, you should use the conceptual knowledge gained from the textbook and supplemental readings to make a persuasive and logical argument.
- **Conclusion:** Finally, conclude with a well-written conclusion section that not only summarizes your argument but also provides a projection of whether you think your proposition will be adapted in the future or not.

Citations. Throughout your essay, you will be using references to course readings and potentially other external sources. Whenever you use an idea that is not yours, or reference information from a resource that is not self-authored, you should cite the source. I expect most of these references will be paraphrases rather than direct quotes (the latter should

be used sparingly!). You should use both in-text citations (i.e. parentheticals at the end of sentences noting where you found the information) and include a works cited page at the end. You may use either MLA or APA citation style.

Technical Details. Your essay should:

1. Be double-spaced;
2. Not exceed 5 pages in length;
3. Use readable, 12-point fonts and normal margins;
4. Use citations to reference resources both in-text and on a works cited page;
5. Have your name placed at the beginning of the paper; and
6. Be paginated.

Grading. Essays will be evaluated and assigned a letter grade based on the following schema (100 points):

A: The essay is focused and well-developed, concisely identifying and diagnosing features/aspects of the political system needing repair and how to fix them. The paper is logically organized with excellent argumentation. Analytical elements are clear, accurate, and well-developed, drawing explicitly on course concepts and readings and/or external sources. Few or no mechanical mistakes; graceful, unambiguous sentences, with a touch of elegance. The essay demonstrates a superior understanding of American politics and citizenship.

B: The essay is accurate and fairly completed. Compared to an A paper, the essay may be less sharply focused, while the analytical section may overlook an important point, stress minor points, or lack precision. There is less originality, clarity, and/or development than A papers. Clear topic sentences, focused paragraphs, and so on; lapses are minor. Clear writing; the few repeated errors are minor and do not significantly affect meaning. Overall, the essay demonstrates a solid understanding of American politics and citizenship.

C: The essay suffers from inaccuracies, a lack of precision, or irrelevant information. Much of the material may seem derived largely from class notes or textbook, with little of the precision and citations that would indicate close study and/or expansive research or reading of supplemental materials. Demonstrates a shaky understanding of course concepts, lacks a sharp focus, and/or is inadequately developed. Organization is evident but lacks consistent coherence while parts of the paper are “rough” (e.g. lacking transitions and topic sentences). Grammar errors or weak proofreading negatively affect the reading experience; a few errors serious enough to cloud meaning. Overall, the essay has the required parts, but they do not coalesce, demonstrating understanding of American politics and citizenship.

D: In addition to the weaknesses of a C paper, the essay is marred by significant inaccuracies and/or is missing required elements.

E: Plagiarized in part or whole. Too short. Off-topic. Unreadable. Assignment is not sufficiently attempted to warrant constructive criticism. Not turned in.

Submission. Submit your completed essay on Blackboard using the SafeAssign link in the iCitizen Part 6 folder (click on the iCitizen Project tab to access). SafeAssign will perform a plagiarism check. **NO EMAILED OR LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Make sure that your document is submitted as a WORD or PDF file; failure to do so will result in delayed grading. If you encounter difficulties with uploading your file, please email me as soon as possible.

Due Date. April 22, 2020 @ 11:59 p.m. via Blackboard.

I am available to help with this assignment until 24 hours before the due date