

## **Political Science Department Writing Plan**

The ability to communicate ideas through writing is important in all walks of life, including those careers most closely associated with the study of politics: teaching, law, politics, and advocacy. In our courses we help students pursue writing projects that express a clear point or thesis; use evidence effectively in support of a paper's thesis; and follow grammar and style conventions of standard written English.

### **Types of Writing Assignments**

Writing in political science uses two major approaches:

- *research papers* that include formulating a significant question to investigate, presenting the information gathered, and drawing appropriate conclusions
- *argumentative papers* that take and defend a position, usually in response to an issue raised by others

In addition, a few of our courses include a series of short response papers on class readings. Some courses require writing that is more closely associated with politics. These include short, dense policy briefings and op-eds.

### **Signs of Excellence**

Whatever the approach, students and practitioners of political science strive for papers that do the following:

- state the paper's focal question or issue clearly and describe it comprehensively, delivering the range of perspectives necessary for full reader understanding
- comprehensively synthesize information from background sources, going beyond the literal meanings of texts to draw appropriate inferences
- demonstrate appropriate background knowledge of the area which the paper addresses, whether American or international politics
- use language fluently to communicate meaning to readers

### **Writing Emphasis Courses**

Nearly all of our department's courses include a significant writing component. These can range from brief reading responses to multi-stage research projects. Those that include competency in written communication as a principal course objective include the following:

POL-207 Religion and US Politics  
POL-248 Political Violence and the Violent  
POL-258 World Politics  
POL-266 Latin American Politics  
POL-276 African Politics  
POL-277 Women and US Politics  
POL-286 Asian Politics  
POL-298 European Politics  
POL-305 Terrorism  
POL-310 International Organizations  
POL-325 American Congress  
POL-345 American Presidency  
POL-350 US Social Policy  
POL-365 American Foreign Policy  
POL-386 International Development  
POL-398 Religion and World Politics  
POL-435 Ancient-Medieval Political Theory  
POL-445 Modern Political Theory  
POL-405 Contemporary Political Theory

Thus, as students progress through a major or minor in political science, they will write a number of papers of different lengths and perhaps different styles. This reflects our understanding of writing as a skill, which, like other skills, must be practiced and honed. Writing is also a central form of political communication and, if done well, can be a political act.