

PSCI 2305: U.S. Political Behavior and Public Policy
Honors Supplemental Syllabus
Professor Blackstone

To earn Honors credit in PSCI 2305, you must complete the Policy Recommendation Project outlined below.

You and your teammates are a research team for a leading policy institute. Your team has been tasked with formulating a policy solution to a pressing national issue. Your recommendation should be based on careful research of the issue, a consideration of alternative solutions and their tradeoffs, as well as political constraints. Your goal is to make a recommendation that could realistically be achieved in contemporary American politics.

Complete the Issue and Team Preference Form in Canvas by the end of the second week of classes.

Your group will:

1. Prepare a report outlining your policy recommendations. The report should be a minimum of 2,100 words excluding citations, footnotes, and the bibliography.
2. Prepare a 1-page executive summary of your report.
3. Make a formal presentation of your policy recommendation to Dr. Blackstone and the Teaching Assistants during pre-Finals week.

Your report and presentation must do the following:

- Define the **problem**;
- Describe **options** for addressing the problem, summarize the key **tradeoffs** faced in confronting the policy issue, and explain why your preferred option is the best choice.
- Identify key **stakeholders** and anticipate their degree of support or opposition to the team's recommendation.
- Identify key **political obstacles** to passage of your proposed policy and **strategies** to deal with them.
- Identify key **obstacles to full and faithful implementation** of your preferred policy and **strategies** to deal with them.

You will earn Honors credit if you meet all of the following specifications:

- Report follows prescribed organization and each section includes required information supported by appropriate evidence.
- Report and executive summary are well-written. Ideas are clearly expressed and well-organized. Grammar and spelling are correct. A report or executive summary that includes more than 3 grammatical errors per 250 words will not earn credit.
- Your report draws on at least 10 academic sources.
- Sources are cited completely and consistently in footnotes.
- You submit complete peer evaluations for each member of your team by Reading Day.
- Peer evaluations from your teammates indicate you contributed substantially to the group's work.

PSCI 3200: The American Legal System
Honors Supplemental Syllabus
Professor Blackstone

To earn Honors credit for this course, you will write a research paper based on research on judicial policymaking between 2013 and 2017 by a state supreme court. There are no strict word requirements or limits, but you will likely need to write between 3,000 and 3,750 words (excluding quotations, footnotes, and references) to meet the substantive requirements for the paper.

If you would like to work with a partner on this assignment, I will assign your team 2 state supreme courts and your paper will include all of the requirements below plus a comparative analysis of the two courts. Fill out the form in Canvas to indicate your preferences for state assignments and solo or partnered work by the end of the second week of classes.

The paper should be written for a non-specialist audience. Draw on course materials to explain key concepts and follow the structure below.

- **Introduction.** Introduce reader to judicial policymaking.
- **Description of the Court:** Describe the state supreme court. At a minimum, describe the size, term length, selection mechanism, and demographic composition of the court. Also, place the court in legal and political context by discussing the court's power (e.g. does it have discretionary jurisdiction) and the state's political climate.
- **Hypotheses.** While this paper is largely descriptive, based on the traits of the state supreme court and its context, you may generate expectations about the political role you expect the court to play in the state.
- **Review of State Supreme Court Policymaking.** Information on state court policymaking can be gleaned from several sources. At a minimum you should (1) review the available data from the National Center for State Courts Court Statistics Project and (2) use LexisNexis to analyze the court's use of judicial review. Read the opinions in cases where the court exercises judicial review and discuss them in terms of policymaking. Local and regional newspapers are another potential avenue to acquire information about significant cases and their policy impacts.
- **Conclusion.** Evaluate your court as a policymaker and place what you have learned about it within the expectations of the literature on judicial policymaking.

You will earn Honors credit if your research paper meets *all* the following specifications:

- Paper is submitted by 11:59 pm on Reading Day.
- Paper follows prescribed organization and each section includes required information as described above.
- Essay is well-written. Ideas are clearly expressed and well-organized. Grammar and spelling are correct. *A paper that includes more than 3 grammatical errors per 250 words will not receive credit.*
- Discussions of judicial policymaking draw on at least 10 academic sources.
- Sources and cases are cited completely and consistently using APSA/Chicago format.