Course Objectives

This course is first and foremost a writing class. I will work closely with you to help you write an excellent research paper, revisiting important topics learned in Political Science 200 such as selecting an appropriate research question; writing a research design; using proper documentation styles; writing and revising multiple drafts of papers; using appropriate logic, examples, and statistical evidence in your papers; and locating library and Internet materials to help you in your research. You will also write a variety of papers, in addition to your research paper, and you will practice writing to different audiences. We will also practice oral presentation skills and use peer reviews in revising papers.

The advantage of this course as a writing course is that we are able to combine your political science knowledge with your writing. We will cover the main topics of the study of electoral and party systems, and you are expected to incorporate this knowledge into your writing and into class discussion.

Who should take this course

Though the topic of this course is one of comparative politics, this course is open to all Political Science or International Relations majors, and your paper may come from any of the traditional subfields of Political Science, as long as it is relevant to the study of parties and electoral systems. For example, a student of American Politics could write for her paper in this course an analysis of the party system in the state of Minnesota or primary elections in Kentucky. A student of political philosophy could address any of the philosophical issues that surround representation and make an argument about the appropriateness of one type of representation over another. A student of International Relations could write on voting systems used in an international organization. Though many other topics in these subfields are not appropriate for this course, there are at least a few topics in every subfield that could be used appropriately for this capstone seminar.

Many of the questions that we ask in the study of elections and political parties are best answered with the use of quantitative data. If you ask a question that could be best answered with quantitative data, I will expect you to find that data and analyze it using the techniques you
learned in Political Science 200 and 328. Though you are not required to do quantitative analysis in this class and many questions are best answered through other methods, it is inappropriate to avoid quantitative analysis when that would be the best or one of the better methods of answering your research question.

I do not expect students taking this course to have completed previous course work in Comparative Politics or in the subject of political parties or elections. I do expect students to have completed Political Science 200.

Course Requirements

Readings: Our readings are primarily taken from papers recently presented at the national convention of the American Political Science Association. These papers are of mixed quality. Some are well polished and are of near publishable quality. Others are a first attempt at addressing a topic and will be revised several more times before they are in any shape to be published. We read these papers for two reasons: (1) in a class on writing papers it helps to see all kinds of examples of papers, not just excellent papers. I hope that you will see, by reading these papers, that you too have the skills necessary to produce a professional quality research paper. (2) These papers represent the latest research on each of the topics that we will address. Typically the author summarizes the previous work on this topic and then applies it more narrowly. Thus, you get the advantage of having a summary of the literature on this topic and a more narrow, cutting-edge application of this topic. It also doesn’t hurt that these papers are available for free on line.

There are neither tests nor quizzes in this class. The readings will be helpful for your research, but it is conceivable that you could write a research paper that doesn’t touch on the themes or ideas addressed in these readings. Why are we reading them? They will give you a broad understanding of the issues of comparative parties and elections that you would miss if you concentrated only on the narrow topic of your research paper. Students who take this class usually appreciate the readings and discussion because they open their eyes to topics and issues that end up being useful as they think through the issues of their own research paper.

The readings are of crucial importance to our class discussions. To be able to participate in the seminar style discussions of this class, you will have to read and understand the ideas in these articles. There is no lecture in this class. Rather, we will all come to class each day with questions and comments about the assigned readings. If you have not prepared, you will not be able to participate well in the discussion and such a lack of preparation will be reflected in your participation grade for the class. In order to help you prepare the readings for each class period, I will post on Learning Suite a series of questions for the assigned readings for each day’s class. You should come to class prepared to answer and discuss each of the questions for the assigned readings that day.

Paper: The core of this course is to produce a well-written and well-researched paper. Along the way you are required to write and turn in for a grade five other writing assignments. Most of your course grade will be determined by your grades on these six writing assignments. I have very specific expectations for each of these writing assignments, and we will periodically spend time in class going over those expectations and helping you to write better. Each writing assignment is graded separately, so it is in your best interest to turn in, for example, an excellent draft of your paper. If you turn in a rough version of your paper as a draft, it will be graded accordingly, and you may receive a D or an F for the draft. This grade (as well as all other paper
grades) will count towards your course grade, independent of the grade that you receive for your final paper.

*Peer reviews:* You are required to review and grade two proposals and two first drafts written by other students. You will in turn receive back your proposal and your draft having been graded by me and two other students. I will grade your reviews of other students’ work before returning them to those students. If you do not put much effort into these reviews, your grade will reflect your lack of effort.

*Presentations:* You will present and answer questions twice about your research to the rest of the class. I have specific expectations regarding these presentations listed in an appendix of this syllabus. It is important to present in an interesting and effective manner. The style of your presentation is as important as the content of your presentation. It is easy to earn a mediocre or a bad grade on a presentation, especially if you do not read and follow the presentation guidelines in the appendix.

*Course policies:* All of the writing assignments can be submitted at any time on the given due date. You may turn them in at my office, but if you come after 5 p.m., the hallway doors to my office will be locked. You may then turn them in at the Political Science Department office assignment drop box (located outside and to the right of the Department office door (7th floor Kimball Tower). At some point the building is locked (at 10 p.m)?) If you come so late that you can’t get into the building because it is locked, you will receive a late penalty for turning in your paper. You are responsible for making sure that you can turn in your paper on time. If you submit the paper a day late, there will be a 10 percent penalty. The penalty increases 10 percent for each additional day that the paper is late (not counting weekends). Papers may not be submitted by e-mail. If you decide to submit your paper by e-mail, a five percent penalty will be assessed. Some students decide to take an extra night to work on their papers and submit them in the morning before I pick them up. I am fine with this strategy, as long as I can’t distinguish that your paper actually came in after the deadline. If I can tell that your paper actually came in late (e.g. you put it in the Department paper submission box after the secretary picks up the papers in the morning or you put it under my door after I have come into work and already picked up the papers under my door), then your paper will get a late penalty.

*Grading:* Your course grade will be based on the following

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (Assignment 6)</td>
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<td>Full Paper Proposal (written) (Assignment 3)</td>
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<td>Funding Proposal (Assignment 2)</td>
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<td>Partial Draft of Paper (Assignment 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Draft of Paper (Assignment 5)</td>
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<td>Request for information (Assignment 1)</td>
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<td>Peer reviews of Proposals and Drafts</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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Grades are assigned in the customary manner of 90-100% as an "A- or A" etc. Students who are unsure about their performance in class should feel free to talk to me. I will do my best to help you in any way that I can.
Writing Assignments

1. Request for Information (Assignment 1)
   In this assignment you will ask for information that you will need to complete your research. You are contacting an important and busy person who receives many requests each day for his or her time. Your request could be for data, an answer to a question, for an opportunity to interview the person. Please choose a real person who actually could help you do your research (whether or not you actually decide to contact that person or even do research on that topic). Please decide on the most effective method of contacting that person and persuading them to help you in your research. You should explain who you are, what your research topic is, and why you need their help. You should show them that you have already done considerable work and that you are not just asking them to do your work for you. You should make a specific request and try to place as much of the burden on yourself rather than the other person. I will grade your requests based on how persuasive you are in your request and will look at everything, from how concise you are in your request to your writing style to the perceived arrogance or perceived self-deprecation in your choice of words and writing style. There are many ways to do this assignment wrong, and I can not list every single way that a request could be off-putting. The bottom line for the evaluation of this assignment is would an important and busy person be likely to answer your request or would they be more likely to ignore the request. We will talk in class in more detail about what makes a good request for information.

2. Funding Proposal (Assignment 2)
   Please write a two-page proposal for a $2,000 grant to conduct the research that you propose. Please highlight (at a minimum) your research question, methodology, likely data sources, summary of the literature relevant to your research question, and a brief but specific budget of how you would spend the $2,000. The ORCA proposal grants would be an excellent model of what you should do for this assignment. The ORCA proposals ask you to discuss your qualifications to do this research. It is fine to leave this out of your proposal. Please visit the ORCA website at BYU to see some examples of good proposals. Please consult Appendix 1 for general guidelines of good writing that would apply to this assignment. Please be aware that some ORCA proposals are very specific and are too limited in their coverage of a topic to work for this class assignment. You should cover your research topic in your proposal, even if it is broader than the topics covered in many ORCA proposals.

   This proposal, your oral presentation of your proposal, and the full research proposal should each have the following elements:
   (1) An introduction in which you “sell” your topic to an audience that is not interested in your narrow research topic. Think of the implications of your research. What larger questions does your research inform? Begin your presentation or proposal with a fact, a story, a puzzle that will interest the reader. Don’t just introduce your broader topic, tell us something interesting about an implication of your research.
   (2) A hypothesis or a thesis. If you can’t say what you think is causing what, then think again and try to put your research question in the terms of a causal relationship. Speculate as to an answer to your research question, and that answer is your hypothesis or your thesis
   (3) A theory that explains the causal relationship between your variables
(4) A survey of what previous work has been done on your topic. This survey should be used to justify your research, either by saying that there is a dispute in the field and your study will be another study to help answer the question of which side is correct, or pointing out something that the other studies have not done (a variable not controlled for, a data set where the relationship has not been examined, a possible causal variable that has not been considered).

(5) A test or series of tests by which you will test your hypothesis. This test section should include (if space allows) information about how variables will be measured, control variables, the methods used, the availability of data that you propose to collect, justification of case selection, and the observable implications derived from a process tracing of the causal logic done for any case studies.

In a short proposal, some of these items might be only one or two sentences. In a longer proposal the same item might be 3 paragraphs. You should adjust the length of each one to best fit the overall length of the presentation or proposal, but each one of these items should be in both your presentation on your proposal and the two versions of your written proposal.

3. Full Research Proposal (Assignment 3)

Please model this paper after the research proposals that you wrote in Political Science 200. Your proposal should cover each of the areas covered in the proposals that you wrote for Political Science 200. The format for the actual proposals varies from instructor to instructor, so the format of your proposal for this class is not important, but it is important that you discuss each of the topics required for such a proposal. If you have questions about 200 proposals, please look your past syllabus for the course or visit the archived syllabi for the class accessible from the Political Science Department web page. Please consult Appendix 1 for general guidelines of good writing that would apply to this assignment. Please refer to Assignment 2 to see the necessary elements of a research proposal.

4. Peer Review of the Full Research Proposal

I expect you to make extensive marginal comments on the paper and detailed final comments about the paper at the end of the paper. Feel free to praise and criticize as seems appropriate. You should comment on both the writing style and the content of the proposal. Peer reviews that say very little, are factually incorrect, or are offensive in tone will not receive good grades. In addition, reviews that only comment on grammar or only comment on ideas will also be penalized. The more useful your review is to the author, the higher the grade for your review will be.

5. Partial Draft of Paper (Assignment 4)

Our tendency is to put off writing until the last minute. This assignment is to help you do some writing each day as you work on your paper. Please identify a section of your paper and write that part of your paper (at least five pages). Make sure that you revise and rewrite that portion of the paper before you turn it in for this assignment. Please turn in a well-written, extensively revised portion of the paper. Do not be confused by the term “draft.” I expect to see professional or final-version quality in this paper (the same standard that I will use with all of your writing assignments in this class). Your writing may come from any portion of the paper: an introduction plus a discussion of the theory, a summary of one set of evidence, an explanation of the data, a discussion of case selection and your hypothesis. I will grade both your ideas and your
writing style. Please consult Appendix 1 for general guidelines of good writing that would apply to this assignment.

Please realize that a paper is different than a proposal. You are writing part of your paper for this assignment, not merely reproducing what you wrote for your proposal in previous assignments. How are papers different than proposals? (1) Papers present your findings (a thesis) rather than a research question. You must write this section of your paper as if you knew your findings, even if you don’t know them at this point. It makes sense to write a section of your paper that you can write at this time rather than a section that you still don’t have the information necessary to write that section of the paper. (2) Many sections of a proposal (limitations, definitions, literature review) are only included in a paper as integrated sections of the paper, not as stand alone sections of the paper. Do not set up your paper as if it were a proposal. (3) Papers are organized according to a thesis and the supporting arguments of the thesis. Please make sure that the section of the paper that you write is following this organizational pattern.

6. Full Draft of the Paper (Assignment 5)

Plan on having your research completed and your paper written up and revised several times when you turn in this assignment. This is to be final, polished draft of your research paper. I will grade your paper by the same standard as I grade the final version of your paper. Ideas and writing style (as with any paper) will both be evaluated and graded. The length of this paper should be determined by your research question. I would rather not specify a minimum length for the paper because I want you to address your topic as needed and not pad your paper to make it a certain length. Please consult Appendix 1 for general guidelines of good writing that would apply to this assignment.

7. Peer Review of the Full Draft of the Paper

The standards for this peer review are identical to those for the peer review of the research proposal.

8. Final Paper (Assignment 6)

Your final paper should be an improved and revised version of your Draft Paper. In addition, your Final Paper must include a maximum 200 word abstract of your paper. An abstract is a concise summary of your findings, laying out in the briefest possible form your thesis, supporting arguments, and methodology. Your audience for the abstract is a busy executive who has about 30 seconds to read your abstract and decide whether or not to read your paper. An effective abstract will persuade a busy generalist (not a specialist on parties and elections) that she should spend some time to read your paper. Please consult Appendix 1 for general guidelines of good writing that would apply to this assignment. If you are satisfied with the grade that you received on Assignment 5, you can choose to not turn in Assignment 6 and I will assign the same grade that you earned on Assignment 5 for Assignment 6.

9. Presentations

You will present both your research proposal and your final research results. The standards for excellent oral presentations are given in Appendix 2. The amount of time allocated to your presentations will be decided in class. Your presentation will be graded according to the standards given in the Appendix 2 and your response to the questions that will follow your presentation. Your first presentation will be about your research proposal. Please look at the
required elements of a research proposal that are outlined in the second writing assignment above. These elements should all be present in your first presentation. Your second presentation is about your research results and should be skewed heavily to explaining your tests and your findings, though some information about your theory, previous research, or “selling” your topic would be appropriate if very briefly presented.

10. Class Participation

My general expectations for class participation and the specific rules for calculating class participation are given in Appendix 3. Please look over these expectations closely. Because our class is small, expect to talk in every class and also expect to answer questions about the assigned readings every day. If you miss class, are late, are unprepared for class discussion, or your comments do not meet the expectations given in the Appendix 3 regarding class participation, then your grade for class participation will drop accordingly.

BYU Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and my own expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Preventing Sexual Discrimination and Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university, but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Students with Disabilities

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD Office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of
disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:**

- **June 24th** Writing and Selecting Topics, Data Sets and Sources, and Effective Requests for Information.
- **June 25th** Importance of Multiple tests, Using Surrogate Measures, Origins of Electoral Systems
- **June 26th** **First writing assignment due (request for information)**
- **June 27th** Crucial Elements of a Proposal, Spatial Voting
- **June 28th** Good Principles of Oral Presentations, Convergence of Parties
- **July 1st, 2nd, and 5th** Presentations of Research Proposals, group discussion of proposals
- **July 8th** **Second writing assignment due (funding proposal)**
- **July 8th** Differences Between a Short Proposal and a Long Proposal, Coalitions
- **July 9th** Pronouns, Third Person, and Passive Voice, Extremist Parties
- **July 11th** American Exceptionalism
- **July 11th** **Third writing assignment due (full research proposal). Please turn in three copies.**
July 12th Peer Reviews, Party positions

July 15th Peer reviews of research proposals due
July 15th Absolute Measures, Ratios, and Marginal Measures, Competitive authoritarianism

July 16th Differences Between a Proposal and a Paper, Types of Electoral Systems

July 18th Revising Writing, The Best Electoral System

July 19th Strategic Voting

July 22nd Fourth writing assignment due (five pages of polished writing of your paper)
July 22nd Women and Minorities

July 23rd When your Hypothesis is Wrong, Quotas
“Quotas for men? Reframing Gender Quotas as a Means of Quality Control,” Rainbow Murray, presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA, August 29-September 2, 2012; “From Placeholders to

July 25th

Money


July 26th

Vote Buying


July 29th

Fifth writing assignment due (completed and polished draft of paper). Please turn in three copies

July 29th

Pork


July 30th

Writing Abstracts, Reasons to Vote


Aug 1st

Peer reviews of draft papers due

Aug 1st

Pocketbook Voting


Aug 2nd

Voter Information

the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA, August 29-September 2, 2012.

Aug 5th  Realignment

Aug 6th  Participation

Aug 8th  Sixth writing assignment due (Final Paper)
Aug 8th  Culture

Aug 9th  Islam

Aug 12th  Presentations of research

Learning Outcomes
The following are the learning outcomes identified for all capstone courses in the Political Science Department:

Effective and Professional Writing
In this course, you will learn how to complete an article-length research project using appropriate methods of analysis and a professional standard of writing. In doing so, you will draw heavily from your learning in previous courses. Contributes to 2 program outcomes
**Political Process, Theory, and Thought**

You will accomplish these first objectives by studying a specialized topic in political science together with your classmates, under the guidance of the professor. Contributes to 1 program outcome

**Politics, International Relations, and Political Philosophy**

Thus, you will deepen your familiarity with the subfield of comparative politics and of political science more broadly. Contributes to 1 program outcome

**Effective Oral Communication**

You will also learn how to present your findings in a high-quality oral presentation, and how to give and receive appropriate feedback in a community of scholars. Contributes to 1 program outcome

**General Education Learning Outcomes**

The learning outcomes listed above are for all capstone courses in the Political Science Department. In addition, our particular version of the capstone course links to the following learning outcomes of the GE program generally and the specific learning outcomes for advanced writing courses:

"Rhetorical Knowledge. Students should demonstrate that they can write clearly, focus on a well-defined purpose in writing, use conventions of format and structure appropriate to their discipline and adopt a voice, tone, and level of formality suited to multiple purposes and audiences, including audience both within and outside the discipline in which the course is offered" Our six writing assignments, with peer feedback and my close reading and feedback will help practice writing according to accepted conventions, appropriate levels of formality, writing clearly with a good structure. We also practice different voice, tone, level of formality and audiences when we write formal research papers, funding proposals, requests for information, and an abstract. These four types of assignments help practice differences in tone, formality, voice, and audience.

"Disciplinary Writing . . . understanding of the roles that writing plays in their particular discipline . . ." We practice this by reading papers presented at the APSA convention, seeing the different quality of work and how papers are presented and then later refined and published.

"Writing Processes. Students should develop productive and flexible individual and collaborative writing processes, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading . . ." We practice formulating a research question, writing a literature review, collecting data, writing two versions of proposals, presenting orally the proposal and the final research, peer reviews of a proposal and draft paper, a short section of the paper, a full draft, and a final paper. Our study will cover all of the major aspects of the writing process identified in this learning outcome.
"Processes of Disciplinary Research. . . Use appropriate research tools. . . " We spend several class periods discussing data sources and appropriate data for each specific research question. The major writing and presentation requirements of the course are built on an expectation that the results of the data and analysis will be the core of the paper or presentation.

"Oral Communication" Each student will present orally twice and will have their ideas critiqued by the professor and their peers in these presentations. The syllabus has an instruction sheet on expectations of oral presentations that cover most of the specific items mentioned in this learning outcome on oral communication.

"Knowledge of Conventions" Every student paper will be graded closely according to the accepted stylistic and grammatical conventions. Student peer reviews of papers are also expected to give feedback on the correct use of stylistic and grammatical conventions.
Appendix 1: General Guidelines for Research Writing

Analytical Component of the Paper and Expectations of Length.
Your paper(s) should be as long or as short as the topic requires to answer the question that you pose well, or to complete the task that is required. It is more important that you focus on covering your chosen topic well and accurately than on the page length. A research paper needs to be of significant length, but there is not set minimum number of pages for this paper. Some of the writing assignments have important maximums. The abstract can be no more than 200 words. The funding proposal can be no more than two pages. Otherwise the length of the paper should be determined by what is needed to adequately cover the assigned topic. The research paper must also be 80 percent analysis. Though you should also briefly summarize events and other factors that are related to your topic, the bulk of the paper should focus on your thesis statement, which is the answer to an analytical question.

Selecting a paper topic.
Come and talk to me as you work to select and narrow your paper topic(s). I can help guide you if I think that you are choosing a topic that is too broad or too difficult. Similarly, I can help you select a new topic if your topic does not relate in some way to parties and electoral systems.

Obvious Expectations.
The paper(s) must be typed and double spaced. There should be no spelling, typographical, or grammatical errors.

Comprehensiveness of the discussion.
Your paper(s) should include a comprehensive discussion of all relevant issues and arguments. Even a lengthy research paper cannot go into great detail on all of the relevant issues of a complex dispute. However, it is important to lay out for the reader what the important issues are and discuss them. If you find that there are just too many issues to discuss adequately in your paper, then narrow the topic of the paper.

Have a clear thesis statement at the beginning of the paper.
Your conclusions should be stated at the beginning of the paper and not saved for the end of the paper. The reader should be able to read the first page of your paper and know essentially what your thesis statement is and what your main arguments are. The rest of the paper is to develop and support those arguments and not to spring new arguments on the reader. A thesis statement may be more than one sentence. A thesis statement should not only give your conclusion, it should also tell the reader what the main arguments will be that will be discussed in the paper. These main arguments must be related to and support the conclusion that is the core of the thesis statement.

Present your ideas in a coherent structure.
Each paragraph of the paper should fit into an overall structure, and the reader should be able to easily figure out the structure. If a paragraph or an idea does not fit into this structure, the structure should be changed, or the paragraph or idea should be left out.
The structure should be easily identifiable. This is best done by laying out the structure in the first paragraph or two. Give the reader a roadmap. Tell the reader what the thesis of the paper is and what the supporting arguments are. Then begin each section with a clear indication of what section it is. Use transitions to signal a change in sections or a change within sections. Such cues help a reader to understand and follow your arguments.

**Anticipate counter arguments and address them.**

A paper is much more persuasive and effective if you take the time to anticipate the weaknesses of your arguments. Then take a paragraph or two and give your response to the most likely counter arguments. Do not be afraid to directly address what you see as some of the weaknesses in your arguments. A writer is usually better off just tackling these issues head on. Usually if you are aware of the counter arguments, the reader will also think of them.

**Your thesis statement must be based on an analytical question.**

Do not write a descriptive paper. The question might be quite simple—“Will the new Japanese electoral system affect the number of viable political parties in Japan?” This question should then be turned into your thesis and presented at the beginning of the paper. For example “Changes in the Japanese electoral system will not affect the number of viable political parties in Japan. This change will not occur in Japan because the consolidating effects of the new electoral system are more than counterbalanced by three other important political phenomena.” This analytical portion of the paper must be 80 percent of your paper. In your analysis you can have description, but it must be description that is directly related to your thesis and its arguments. An example of a descriptive (and unacceptable) question would be “What are the main features of the mixed electoral system used in Japan.” To answer this question you do not need to think, you only have to find information and transcribe it into your paper.

**Each paragraph must also have a clear, internal structure.**

Develop one idea per paragraph, and tell the reader what that idea is in the first sentence of the paragraph, the topic sentence. The rest of the paragraph should be related to that first sentence. For example, if a paragraph begins with “Public opinion in Japan made it difficult for the Japanese government to send troops to the Gulf War,” then everything else in the paragraph should deal with public opinion in Japan. Halfway through the paragraph do not switch and start talking about how the Japanese Constitution also prevented the action. If you want to put both ideas in the paragraph, change the leading sentence to “Constitutional constraints and public opinion in Japan made it difficult for the Japanese government to aid the UN effort in the Gulf War.”

**Your audience is an educated reader.**

Do not expect your readers to know all the details of the events that you are writing about. On the other hand, you can just make simple reference to historical or international events that the educated reader should know about. It would be appropriate to say “just as the assassination in Sarajevo sparked World War I, some fear that the war in Bosnia will spread throughout the Balkans and will eventually involve the great powers of Europe.” You do not need to explain how the events in Sarajevo led to World War I.
Adjust your writing style to differences in your intended audience

Your request for information is written to an expert on a topic. Assume that your audience for that assignment knows more than the “educated reader” described above. Your abstract and funding proposals are to busy, non-specialists. Do not assume that they are conversant with electoral systems, other than the major differences between single member districts and proportional representation systems. Make sure that your main points in these papers would appeal to someone who is not an electoral or party systems specialist. Your research paper should be accessible to non experts, but it should also develop points that would be of interest to experts. You must assess who your audience is for each paper and adjust your level of detail in your writing to fit the audience.

Use a consistent and acceptable style of citation.

In the political science department, Turabian (Chicago Manual of Style) is the standard. Turabian allows for using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a works cited page at the end of the paper. I prefer the use of parenthetical citations but any of the three styles is acceptable.

Do not plagiarize.

You must cite anytime you use someone’s words or ideas. Arguments borrowed from other writers (even if they are paraphrased in your own words) and disputed statements of fact must be cited to their sources. You should also cite facts that are not common knowledge. You do not need to cite when an author makes an argument that many others make or cites a fact that could be found in many other books. For example, you would not cite someone who claimed that war causes suffering or someone who pointed out that China is the most populous country in the world.

Avoid the excessive use of quotations.

You should use quotations when (1) you are examining the exact text, such as an analysis of the wording of a politician’s speech or (2) the author’s wording is so superior that a paraphrase of the author’s point would be inferior. In all other situations you should paraphrase the author’s point with a citation. For example, if the original quotation says “China has long feared encroachment by what it terms hegemonic powers. In the early part of this century it was the European powers, later it was Japan and then the Soviet Union. China’s latest fears seem to center on the United States.” There is nothing spectacular about this quote, so don’t quote it. Paraphrase the information in your own words—[The twentieth century has been a time of fear for China, fear of intervention by foreigners. First it was the Europeans, then the Japanese, then the Soviets, and now China fears the United States (Hoople 1997, p. 26).] Your paper will read better if it is not just a string of quotations put together. Be careful, however, when paraphrasing. Anytime you use more than three words of another author’s work in a row, it is a quote, not a paraphrase. It is a violation of the BYU Honor Code to plagiarize, and passing off someone else’s wording as your own is plagiarism. It is also plagiarism to take someone’s quote and change only a few words in each sentence. If the majority of the words in the sentence are still the original author’s wording, it is not a paraphrase, it is
plagiarism. Examples of plagiarism that occur will be reported to the Honor Code office, and the plagiarist will fail the class or the assignment, and possibly be expelled from the university if this plagiarism is egregious or other Honor Code violations have occurred in the past.

**Check your writing style by following these tips.**

1. Count the number of words in each of your sentences. You should have sentences of varied lengths. If this is not the case, revise the length of some of your sentences to give some variety to your writing.
2. Count the number of state of being verbs in your sentences (is, are, was, were, be, being, been). If most of your verbs are state of being verbs, revise.
3. Read your paper aloud. As you read it you will stumble across awkward or garbled sentences or sentences that are too long. Revise those sentences.

**Avoid packing your paper with fluff in order to lengthen the paper.**

The paper should be tight and organized. If I come across a paragraph, a sentence, or a page that could be deleted without detracting from your arguments, I will indicate that on your paper. You should anticipate such comments from me and revise your paper accordingly before you turn it in. Similarly, do not try to include all of your research just because you have spent the time doing the research. You will come across many interesting and important facts that are not relevant to your thesis. Do not make the mistake of including discussion or argument in your paper that does not fit into the overall structure of your paper.

**Avoid the passive voice.**

Do not say “The box was shown to us by the professor” Say instead “The professor showed us the box.” You can identify the passive voice if you notice that the subject is missing “it is argued that short people are cranky” (who is doing the arguing is missing), or if the subject follows the verb “it is argued by some that short people are cranky.” Say instead “Some people claim that short people are cranky.” Sometimes the passive voice should be used, but most writers use it too much. Unless you have a good reason to say something in the passive voice, revise the sentence to eliminate the passive voice.

**Cut out all unnecessary words.**

Do not say “It is my opinion that the United States is a democracy.” In a paper that you write the reader knows that everything that you say is your opinion. Just say “The United States is a democracy.” Similarly, do not say “The Russians were unaware and did not have knowledge with regards to the fact that . . .” Say instead “The Russians did not know that . . .”

**Avoid colloquial language.**

Papers should not read like a telephone conversation. Do not say “The thing that really bothers me about Japanese protectionism is that . . .” Say instead “Japanese protectionism is unwarranted because . . .” Do not say “It’s very disgusting that the United States tries to make Japan do things that it doesn’t want to do.” Say instead “The United States should not force Japan to follow US priorities.” You should try to avoid slang words,
words that are common in informal speech, or vague words such as “thing” “really” “very” “a lot” etc. Using more formal speech does not mean, however, that you have to use big or complex words. Use the best word for the situation. It may be short or it may be long, but use the best word.

Do not use jargon or vague language.

If I read “the transcendent modalities of bureaucratic reifications” I will have no idea what you are trying to say unless you have previously defined what these terms mean in your context. It is also better to use concrete or specific language rather than abstract or general terms.

Use specific verbs whenever possible.

Rather than saying “A third proposal put forth by the committee is that courses should only be taught on Tuesdays” say instead “The committee also proposed that courses be taught only on Tuesdays” The first sentence’s verb is “is;” the second sentence’s verb is “proposed.” “Proposed” is a specific verb in contrast to a state of being verb such as “is.” A good test of specific verbs is to circle every state of being verb in your paper (is, are, was, were, be, being, been). If many of your verbs are state of being verbs, there is probably a need to revise some of them to more specific verbs.

Know grammar rules.

For example, “it’s” means “it is.” The possessive form of “it” is “its.” Two independent clauses are usually joined by a semicolon or ,and ,nor ,for ,but ,so ,yet ,or. “i.e.” is used for exhaustive lists; e.g. is used for examples. Compound subjects and predicates require parallel structures.

Use the best word.

If you say “economic growth is reverberating,” I will suggest that you reword the phrase. A better choice of words might be “growth rates are fluctuating.” Good writing is not just using correct grammar. It is using the best words and phrases to convey your message unambiguously and without awkward phrasing. Do not intentionally use big words in your papers in an attempt to make your writing sound more scholarly. If you mean big, there is not reason to say gigantic, just say big. Always use the simpler, more accessible word if there is no difference in meaning.

Avoid choppiness in paragraphs and between paragraphs.

It is important to use transitions to link paragraphs. It is also necessary to link the sentences in a paragraph with transitions. Though the repetition of words is usually undesirable, sentences in a paragraph can be linked together by repeating a key word. Another way to link sentences in a paragraph is to use transition words. Some examples are and, also, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, next, too, first, second, for example, for instance, to illustrate, in fact, specifically, also, in the same manner, similarly, likewise, but, however, on the other hand, in contrast, nevertheless, still, even though, on the contrary, yet, although, in other words, in short, in summary, in conclusion, to sum up, that is, therefore, after, as, before, next, during, later, finally, meanwhile, then, when, while, immediately, above, below, beyond, farther on, nearby, opposite, close, if,
so, therefore, consequently, thus, as a result, for this reason, since.\(^1\) If your writing is choppy, consider using some of these or other transition words to link your sentences together better.

*Back up your claims or arguments with evidence, examples (real or hypothetical) or sound logic.* Without support you are “arguing by assertion.” For example, a person could claim that affirmative action programs are bad because that person doesn’t like them. Most people are not persuaded by such arguments. Use evidence, analogies, examples, and logic to support your points.

*Writing grammatically correct sentences is not necessarily good writing.* A paper could be written without any errors but still be marked down to a C grade or lower because phrasing is awkward or paragraphs are unstructured or wordy. Do not be offended because I tell you that you can write better. Every semester I have students who tell me that they have always received A grades on their papers and I am the first professor to give them a B. I had the same experience when I was a student at BYU, and I am grateful to the professor who forced me to improve my writing by pushing me beyond simply writing grammatically correct sentences.

**Appendix 2: Guidelines for Class Participation:**

I recognize that some students are quite comfortable talking in class and some students are petrified of talking in class. I use a sliding scale in evaluating class participation. I reward effort, not volume of talking. I also reward quality, not quantity of talking. Here are some suggestions of how to have excellent class participation.

*Be prepared to answer general questions about the assigned readings and come prepared with your own questions that you had after doing the readings.*

I will check your level of preparation by asking you to lead off our discussion about the assigned reading for that day’s class. I may ask questions about the reading or ask your reaction to the reading or any questions that you had. I will provide list of questions to guide your preparations for each day’s assigned readings. Expect these questions and be prepared to answer them. Being unprepared for class discussion is the easiest way to lower your participation grade in class.

*Consider the relevance of your question or comment.*

I like provocative questions that may sidetrack us a little. Such comments are interesting and contribute much to the class. However, make sure that such sidetrips are interesting and will be relevant to the rest of the class. If we have already had ten minutes of discussion and I am obviously trying to move back to the main topic or move on to a new topic, it is probably not a good time to introduce an extraneous question.

Do not make repetitious statements.
If someone else just made what was essentially your point, do not try to make that same point again. If I call on you because I had seen your hand in the air, just say “Carol just made my point.”

Monitor the frequency of your own talking.
If you find that you are trying to answer every question that I raise, you are probably talking too much. Try restricting your own class participation. How about your own rule that you will only talk twice in each class period? Our class is a seminar class and so everyone will be participating in class discussion every day. Please make sure that you are not dominating that discussion. Do not always be the first to speak. Sit back sometimes and let the other students go first.

Treat other students with respect.
Laughing or snickering at another student’s statement is not appropriate. Anger is also not appropriate. I appreciate emotion and vigor in expressing opinions, but please do not direct it at an individual. Save your passion for your ideas. Try to use names when referring to other students.

Good comments or questions show thought or insight.
If you are sitting there thinking that what I have said seems contradictory or wrong, chances are that you have a good comment or question. Making a connection between what we are learning now with what we have learned in the past is also a good way to develop insightful questions or comments. Another good strategy is to apply what we are discussing to real world or hypothetical examples. It also helps if you try to imagine what the other side will say. You will come up with some good ideas and questions if you put yourself in the shoes of a politician and try to imagine how he or she would answer a question.

For those of you who don’t normally talk in class, I urge you to try to participate. I will help you by calling on you for your opinion. Do your best to stay with me and try to answer my questions. I am calling on you not to embarrass you. I want to help you practice this important skill. Don’t just wait, however, for me to call on you. Try to jump in and give your opinion. In class discussions I will give priority to those who normally don’t talk, so if you appear willing to talk, I will let you lead off on the discussion even though others also want to talk. As a seminar class, everyone will have to talk in class. **Expect to say something in every class period, in addition to times that I call on you.** It will be to your benefit if you choose when you talk rather than waiting for me to call on you and pull you into the discussion. If you find it extremely difficult to talk in classes, try coming up with a question that you can ask about our readings. I am just as happy if your voluntary participation in class is your asking a question.

I will record participation after each class. If you would to have these and other grades earned in this class posted on Learning Suite, please send me an e-mail giving me permission to post your grades on Learning Suite in a spreadsheet and giving me a code name under which your grades will be posted. Because these grades are posted in a spreadsheet, other students will be able to see your grades, though they will be listed under the codename that you provide. You can visit me in my office or contact me by e-mail at any time to see your grades, but in addition,
if you are comfortable having your grades posted in a spreadsheet, please send me an e-mail giving me permission to post your grades in this manner. In the spreadsheet for grades, there will be three columns for participation. The first column records the number of classes in which you voluntarily said something. This includes asking questions or joining in our discussion. I expect everyone to say something in every class, even if you just ask a question. I will excuse two days for not making voluntary comments, but every day more than the two days in which comments aren’t made will result in a deduction from part of your participation grade. For this measure, it doesn’t matter how many times that you talk in a class period, I only consider whether or not you volunteered something in a class period (not if you were called on and answered). The other two columns records the times that I called on you to answer one of the reading questions that you should prepare for each class period. If I call on you and you are prepared that goes in one column, and if I called on you and you were not prepared, that goes in the other column. If I go to call on you are you are not in class because you are absent or late, you absence counts as if you were not prepared. You can have two excused days when if I call on you and you are not prepared, you will not be penalized, but if the number of days in the not prepared column exceeds two, expect deductions in your participation grade.

If you complete the course evaluation for the class and release your name as having completed the evaluation, I will give four “free” days for class participation (voluntary comments only--the four free days do not apply to being called on in class). In addition, if you miss three or more days of class for illness, emergency, or a university excused absence, you will be allowed to make up any absences after the first two days. However, if you have fewer than three excused absences, you are expected to use your “free” days for those absences.

Appendix 3: Guidelines for Presentations

Practice the timing of your presentation.
Each presentation will have an assigned time limit. Make sure that you practice your presentation and can say everything that you want to say within this time limit. Going over time will hurt your presentation grade significantly. Going over by one minute will lower your grade to a B or B+ even if the rest of the presentation is flawless. Please take this requirement seriously. You must practice and time your presentation in advance. The easiest way to get a bad grade on your presentation is to ignore this advice and go overtime.

Make sure that your dress does not detract from your presentation.
You don’t have to wear a dress or a suit and tie, but shorts, flip flops and a T shirt will make it difficult to take your presentation seriously.

Do not read your presentation.
Practice so that as you talk you can engage your listeners. It might be a good idea to write out your presentation, but you must practice the presentation sufficiently so that you can talk with only occasionally glancing down to your notes. Ninety percent of the time you should be making eye contact with the audience. If you fail to do this, your presentation will be graded down accordingly. Also beware of the trap of looking at powerpoint slides,
an overhead, or your notes. Remember that 90 percent of the time I expect you to be looking at the audience.

Do not grope for words or stumble on phrases.
If you decide to talk off of notes rather than writing out your speech, make sure that you practice making your speech off of those notes enough times that you are comfortable and have the set phrases in mind that you will use. Do not grope for the correct word while you are doing your presentation. Make sure that you know how to correctly pronounce all the words that you are going to say. You are giving a formal presentation; practice your speech so that you use powerful, concise phrases. Think through how you want to say things and then practice saying them that way.

If appropriate, liven up your presentations with a handout or visual aid.
However, make sure that your prop does not detract from your discussion. An example of a bad visual aid would be a presentation on Africa in which a map of Africa is put on PowerPoint and it is kept on through the entire discussion and it is never referred to in the discussion. Put the overhead or powerpoint slide up, refer to it, and then turn the projector off (or insert a blank powerpoint slide) so that your listeners will again concentrate on what you are saying rather than looking at some irrelevant overhead. Similarly, long, multi-page handouts often distract listeners. Make sure that all of your handout is relevant and important. It is also important that if you make a visual aid that it be visually appealing and easy to read. A chart of election returns must be larger than the typical 12 point font if your audience is going to be able to read the chart.

Use your imagination and have a sense of humor.
Liven up your presentation with an illustrative anecdote, a provocative question, a joke, a moving photograph, or an illustrative graph or figure. If you have a lot of information to go through, it is essential that you help the listener remember and understand what you are saying by illustrating your points and presenting examples. The more interesting your examples, the better your presentation. Remember that your goal in an oral presentation is to engage your listeners and help them remember key points. Do not make the mistake of cramming a ton of information into a ten-minute presentation. That will just ensure that the listener remembers nothing. It is better to cull out less important information and then use some of your time with illustrations or examples that will liven up your presentation and help the listeners remember the points that you are making. A presentation that is competent and simply presents information but does not engage the listener will receive a grade of no higher than a B, even if the rest of the presentation is flawless.

If you have a lot of technical or confusing information to cover, outline the information. An outline or enumerating points helps the listener keep track of your arguments. Overheads, visual aids, or handouts can also help. If you tell the audience at the beginning that you have three main points and then summarize them at the end, I guarantee that the audience understanding and retention of your presentation will double.
Be prepared to respectfully answer questions.
Never ridicule the question or the questioner. Try to help questioners feel that you appreciate their questions and that their concern or question is natural or to be expected.

Be aware of distracting habits that you might have.
Do not chew gum. If you always tap your foot when you speak, try to stop doing it. Try to minimize the number of “uh” “kay” “uhm”s that are in your speaking. Do not obviously look at the clock or your watch.

Begin your presentation at a basic level.
Make sure that all the listeners understand what the main issues are and what your answers are to those problems or questions. Begin and end your presentation with a reminder of the main points of your presentation and why this topic is important.

Beware the technology trap.
Powerpoint is an excellent way to make a presentation more lively, but there are also many ways to misuse powerpoint. Do not use powerpoint to simply repeat your main points up on the screen. If that is all that you are using powerpoint for, then just have a summary slide for the end or beginning of the presentation and then insert a blank slide so that the rest of the time the audience is looking at you. If you have multiple slides interspersed with your talking, try to find a way to direct attention back to you at times by either turning off the powerpoint or inserting a blank slide. Because technology is unreliable, please also have a backup system for your presentation should the computer or powerpoint not function. Be prepared to shift to handouts or an overhead if necessary. You will be marked down on your presentation if you are not ready to start at the starting time for the presentation, and this penalty will stand, even if the delay is entirely the fault of hardware in the classroom or a software problem. Be prepared to more forward with your presentation regardless of what happens to your technology.

Balance content with entertainment
An excellent presentation will leave the listener with new and interesting information and will have conveyed that information in a memorable manner. Do not create a presentation that is all fluff and fireworks, and do not create a presentation that has tons of new information but is hopelessly complex or boring. Good presenting combines both attributes: a little bit of entertainment, but not too much; enough new and interesting information, but not a torrent of facts.

Think about the physical layout of your presentation
Set up the presentation so that you minimize distractions for the audience. Don’t stand in the way of the projector so that part of the projector light shines on your face. If you have no powerpoint slide up and are talking, consider moving to a part of the room with better lighting or turning on the lights. Don’t stand in the dark talking. It is not an effective presentation technique. If the presenter before you had the lights off, but you want them on, turn them on. If the presenter before you failed to lower the screen, correct that error by lowering the screen. Consider using a podium. Think about how far or how close you are from your audience.
Be creative and have fun

You are consumers of information and presentations every day. You are often the best judge of whether something would be a good presentation. Think through what illustration or activity would best convey your information and motivate your audience to listen to what you have to say. A bit of effort to be creative typically reaps great rewards in the quality of your presentation.