This class is first and foremost a capstone seminar which culminates in writing a professional research paper of sufficient quality to satisfy the major’s and BYU’s writing requirements. The subject matter of this seminar focuses on Iraq in all its contemporary complexity following the US defeat of the regime of Saddam Hussein. Understanding this situation, as is the case with so many international conflicts, necessitates mastering a wealth of material and methodological approaches related to political science: history, international relations, ethnic cleavages and conflict; religious schisms, and US foreign policy. A number of students are MESA majors and will use their Arabic language skills in research.

Goals for the class include

- Develop research, organization, analysis and writing skills sufficient to write a substantial research paper.
- Understand and be able to explain the situation in Iraq from both an Iraqi and a US perspective.
- Present your research in a professional manner
- Master scholarly interaction in a community of scholars

One goal of this course is to work through the research, evaluation, presentation and writing process of producing a fluently written, thoughtful and analytical research paper. An equally important goal is to master a subject (here the current situation in Iraq) in depth and to learn enough to ask and answer critical questions about it – addressing issues with curiosity and understanding. This is meant to be a demanding course with high-level readings and professional writing. You should expect to read the equivalent of a book a week between class assignments and your research. You will combine substantive reading assignments with paper research and writing. Punctuality and preparation are necessary as are critical reading and fluent writing skills. Please adjust your schedule so you devote due attention to this class. If you do, you will find it to be one of your most fulfilling experiences at university and, I hope, a model for professional experience.

What is a seminar? While classes often follow a lecture format and may employ student discussion, seminars are conducted differently. Students and professor work together to master a topic. Students, not only the professor, are responsible for presentation of readings and analysis of data from a number of different standpoints. Seminar papers are presented and critiqued by the entire group. While students each write a substantial research paper which integrates all the skills they have developed at university, the group shares a strong research experience in aiding all individuals to achieve this goal.

Reading: We will begin by reading and discussing the basics of Iraqi history and political
culture. In terms of the situation in Iraq as it unfolds, we are dependent upon journalism and the media. Journalists write the first draft of history, and we will emphasize methods to read and critique their work. Following the international news on the Middle East and on U.S. policy is essential for this class. Read the New York Times diligently – you will need a hard copy – not online – and stay abreast of other news. We will read blogs, newspapers, academic journals, magazines, and internet – everything possible. We’ll circulate material of great interest among the class and discuss them in class.

**Required:**


**Optional:**


**Grading:**

- Paper 72% (See Paper Guidelines for details)
- Research design 5%
- Substantive outline 10%
- Polished draft 15%
- Final paper 37%
- Class presentation 5%

ARP Responses to Class Readings 25%

Participation, attendance and evaluation 3% (it is possible to go in the hole for this score)

If you run into problems with illness or family concerns, notify me immediately. No late work will be accepted so if you need an accommodation, you will need to arrange it asap.

**Written responses to class reading assignments:** This category is worth 25% of your grade. For each class, an Analytical Response Paper (ARP) of around half a page single spaced of written response for each assigned reading (each chapter and article) is due by 7 a.m. to Prof Bowen by email ([donna Bowen@byu.edu](mailto:donna Bowen@byu.edu)). ARPS will be graded pass or fail.

**Each Analytical Response Paper (ARP) includes**

1. A very brief summary of the article or chapter focusing on the major purpose of the chapter.
2. Two major concepts, principles, arguments, theories found in the reading.
3. Significance of each article/chapter in light of the other readings we have done or in light of the current situation (which we follow in the New York Times and through our readings)
The ARPs should not be long, but must show that you have an understanding of the material. These written summaries will be the basis of student-led discussion on readings so include in the summary what will help you explain the reading in class. Base the summary on the notes you take on each reading. Grades for student presentation of each reading will be included in the written “response to class readings” – 25% of your class grade.

**Seminar Format:** For every class, at least one student will be called on to introduce and summarize readings assigned for that class. Be ready to summarize and to analyze and to react to each reading. I will not be summarizing the reading for you. Students will lead each discussion.

When summarizing readings in class you should begin with the title, publication reference if suitable, and author, then 1. State the major point and briefly summarize the reading. 2. Delineate two major arguments. 3. Explain why this reading is significant. Other comments on the readings are welcome; the rest of the class will add their takes on the readings when you finish.

**No late ARPS will be accepted.** If you are not in class to lead discussion when assigned, your grade will be penalized and your turn will be passed over. All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class. Please keep in touch with me if you become ill or run into other problems.

**Tips for research in Arabic for MESA majors:**

**Sign up for Capstone Arabic class with Kirk Belnap**
The easiest method I have found for research is to Use Google's Language tools.
go to Google Translated Search
1 - Type in your phrase in English - Google will translate the words into Arabic,
2 - Then select Arabic for the language of the pages you want to search.
3 - click Search - The results will appear on the left in the English translation and on the right in the original Arabic.
All the same truncation symbols apply, quotes for exact phrase etc.
You can quickly brows in English for topic relevance, then do your own more detailed translation of the page once you have found it. Hope this helps.

**MESA majors must submit their Graduation Portfolio by March 1. I will add your capstone paper when I have your final draft.**

**Learning Outcomes:**

The Political Science, International Relations, and MESA programs have posted learning outcomes and assessment on their web pages.

The capstone seminar and paper tie directly into the learning outcomes of these majors. Specifically, in this course we have assignments, lectures, and readings that will help achieve the following learning outcomes (they are listed at www.learningoutcomes.byu.edu) for political science.

1. Use appropriate methods of analysis and research, including qualitative and quantitative methods,
historical comparison, and textual interpretation to answer political questions.
2. Write professional grade research papers on political science questions
3. Think critically, analytically, and synthetically
4. Properly cite sources in their writing using a recognized citation style

In addition to course assignments that directly address specific learning outcomes, I strive in this course to indirectly address other learning outcomes such as “bring honesty and integrity to their daily lives, public affairs, and professional activities,” “want to serve communities and organizations to which they belong,” and “be able to articulate principles of faith in their analysis of politics.”

The Political Science Department has posted its learning outcomes as well as measures of the performance of students of BYU students generally and political science majors specifically at the Political Science Department website (politicalscience.byu.edu, under the student resources tab. MESA students can refer to http://kennedy.byu.edu/academic/MESA/MESALearningOutcomesDec06.pdf or https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/wiki/index.php/Middle_East_Studies_Arabic_BA

Plagiarism:
While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty are found at http://honorcode.byu.edu/content/academic-honesty-details.

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student’s own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student’s own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person’s work for the student’s own or the inclusion of another person’s work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is know as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper for also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester’s Writing Research Papers.

Discrimination: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receive 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
Disabilities: BYU is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (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. You should contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

Iraq Capstone Reading Schedule
(This schedule is provisional and will undergo changes – so be alert for revisions.):

Part I: Research and Seminar papers
Jan 4 Introduction to course
Jan 6 Research, methods, analysis

Part II. A Brief Outline of the Situation: A History of Iraq, Iraq’s Governments and Iraq’s Wars
Jan 11 Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq*, chapter 1, 2.
  Map Quiz on Middle East – countries and capitals
  (Suggestion: Run paper topics past Prof Bowen informally.)

Jan 13 Research Designs due at beginning of class

Jan 18 Present Research Designs at beginning of class; Stansfield, chapter 3


Jan 25 Stansfield, chapter 6, Watch “Survival of Saddam Hussein in class”

Jan 27 Stansfield, chapter 7, Kevin Woods, “Saddam’s Delusions” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2006); Blackboard, Jean-Marie Colombani, “We Are All Americans,” Le Monde, Sept 12, 2001; Jean-Marie Colombani, “Are We Still ’All American’?”
Wall Street Journal March 13, 2004; Not All Americans Now, Times Online, September 6, 2006 (all three articles are found in file “Not all Americans Now”); John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “An Unnecessary War” in Foreign Policy (Jan/Feb 2003).


Feb 8  Substantial outline due at beginning of class

Part III. Issues of Identity


Feb 15  Bouillon et al, chapters 3. Iraq’s Identity Crisis, and 5. Islamism, Nationalism, and Sectarianism.

February 16  Former Deputy Ambassador Faisal Istrabadi visit to BYU


Feb 22  President’s Day Holiday: Monday Instruction


March 1  Bouillon et al, chapter 8. Kirkuk as a Peacebuilding Test Case, Visser


Part IV. The New Iraqi State


March 15  Polished Draft due at beginning of class


Class Presentations:  March 22, 24, 29, 31, April 5.

April 12 Final Papers due at beginning of class.

Paper Writing Schedule.
Research design due January 13 at beginning of class
  Substantive outline due February 8 at beginning of class
Polished draft due March 15 at beginning of class
Class presentations will be delivered in class from late March through April 12
  (dates will be assigned randomly).
Final paper due April 12 at beginning of class
Capstone Paper Guidelines – Capstone on Iraq PL SC 450 Winter 2011

Your capstone paper should be a scholarly research project of 20-30 pages (double-spaced, regular font size and margins) plus bibliography which deals with some aspect of Iraqi politics. I am very open as to topics to pursue, and I encourage you to consult with me as you begin your research on possible topics.

The Capstone Paper will be completed in stages:

Paper Writing Schedule.
Research design due January 13 at beginning of class
Substantive outline due February 8 at beginning of class
Polished draft due March 15 at beginning of class
Class presentations will be delivered in class from late March through April 12 (dates will be assigned randomly).
Final paper due April 12 at beginning of class

Research Design. This is an initial roadmap for your paper.
1. Statement of general topic – what is the problem area you are investigating. (foreign policy, human rights, political institutions, ethnic fragmentation) which you wish to pursue.
2. Statement of your thesis in one sentence, based on a well-formed research question. What is the argument you intend to present?
3. A short paragraph describing what you intend to write about.
4. Bibliography of ten items (at least half of them are to be drawn from library resources – book chapters, journal articles; half may be from internet). These should be annotated with a few lines as to how these sources are relevant to your paper.

The goal of the research design is to help you zero in on the topic you will write on and to help you and me ascertain whether it is a feasible topic. I strongly encourage you to talk to me about your topic before you write your prospectus. If the first prospectus is not acceptable, I will ask you to do another one until you have chosen an acceptable topic and set up an appropriate research design. Students will present their research designs in class for questions and comments.

Substantive Outline.
The substantive outline is a 7+ page outline of the major arguments you will make and the data which supports each argument. It does not have to be polished writing or even written in full sentences. It will be graded on completeness and timeliness as well as argument.

The goal of the substantive outline is to see if your research question can be answered by the data presented in your arguments, if you have your dependent and independent variables straight, and whether you are thinking in a straight line.

Sample Outline No outline will be exactly the same as another. However, each outline will contain the same basic parts. The outline will help you see what data needs to be included and where it needs to go, if something has been left out, and whether ultimately your ideas make sense. It should create a smooth-flowing argument. *Parts VII, VIII, and IX should make up the
bulk of your finished paper.

I. Title page

II. Abstract page (single spaced)

III. Brief introduction

IV. Research question or puzzle: This will include a literature review to show how your argument fits with existing arguments about the topic.

V. Thesis: Synopsis of argument and main evidence. Don’t wait until the end of the paper to reveal your argument. This is not a mystery novel.

VI. Brief historical background: Don’t get carried away here. 1-2 pages (in the finished paper) is usually enough unless the research is on a completely unknown era or event.

*VII. Dependent variable: Detailed description of the phenomenon you are trying to explain. What is your puzzle?

*VIII. Main independent variables: Detailed explanation of your independent variables and how they link to your dependent variable. This is where you provide evidence, evidence, and more evidence supporting your thesis and explaining your puzzle.

*IX. Alternate explanations: This is where you show why alternate theories can’t explain your phenomenon, because they are weak theoretically, empirically, or both.

X. Conclusion: Brief restatement of the argument plus discussion of puzzles left unsolved, necessary future research, or implications of the argument.

XI. Works cited

**Evaluation criteria for Substantive Outline:**
- Does the paper have a thesis and statement of the major argument?
- Are subordinate arguments delineated appropriately?
- Can I see how the component pieces of the argument fit together?
- Is the literature review well done?
- Is there extraneous material included?
- Are applicable sources used and used correctly?
- Can I see evidence of sound research?
- Is the data used credible?
- Is the outline at least seven pages in length?
- Are citations, writing mechanics, and spelling correct?
Polished Draft
Here you add the writing to flesh out the outline and persuade the reader of your argument/thesis using good reasoning and robust data. The polished draft should be as complete (20-30 pages long, minimum 20 pages plus bibliography), well written, and well documented as your final paper. If it is unfinished, it will be graded down accordingly. You will receive written comments from me and from two of your peers on this draft.

The goal of this draft is try out your reasoning, data, organization and analysis to see if your argument holds up. The beauty of this draft is that you get another chance to edit and refine your work as you ready the final draft.

Your oral presentation will be presented after this draft is submitted, so this paper will be the basis for your presentation. Comments on both the written draft and the oral presentation will help you refine the final paper. The grade on the Polished Draft will reflect how well you have completed all the parts of the paper. Often there is still work to be done on arguments and finishing. I will give you a second grade which reflects how I would grade this paper if it were your finished paper. You will find the evaluation criteria at the end of this hand-out.

This paper will need an abstract which is a concise statement of your thesis, major arguments, and methods.

Oral Presentation
The Oral Presentation allows you to hone your skills by delivering the major argument of your paper to the assembled class in a short PowerPoint presentation. You will demonstrate your ability to organize your thesis and data, speak cogently and fluently, and answer questions. The rubric upon which you will be graded is appended to this document.

Final Paper
Your final paper is due at the end of the semester. It will be graded more strictly than the earlier Polished Draft and comprises the largest portion of the course grade. This is the culmination of your work in the class.

Checklist for Polished Draft and Final Paper

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Paginated
- Correct font and margins
- Foreign terms italicized
- Subheadings indicated
- Spelling checked
- Proofread
- Citation style correct
- Bibliography/Works Cited
- You’ve checked over Evaluation Criteria (end of this document) and all is good
Critiques:
Students will critique other students’ work on two occasions during the class. Following student presentations of their research thesis, students are expected to raise questions to aid student in delineating the topic.

Copies of the polished draft will be circulated among students for critique. Each student should bring three copies of his/her paper to class on the due date: one copy for Prof Bowen, and one for two students. Each student will critique two papers in writing.

As well, following class presentations of research, we hope to have time for questions and discussions on each area of research. However, class time is limited so much of this may have to be done in writing.

Important: All paper pieces are due on the date specified. Any late work will be graded down significantly. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Please keep in touch with me if you become ill or run into other problems.

On all these assignments, satisfactory or average work will receive a C grade. Only good or excellent work will receive higher grades. Remember that according to department policy, I cannot assign you a grade for this course until you have completed a final paper with a grade of at least C-. If your paper is incomplete or has not reached the C- level by the end of the semester, you must repeat the capstone class until you both pass the class and obtain a C- on your paper.

Oral Presentation Guidelines
Each student will make two presentations of their research. The first will be a one minute presentation of their research design and topic, and then they will field questions from class. The second presentation will be a ten to fifteen minute presentation of their completed research. Guidelines for oral presentations are found below.

In general:
- State the major point up front
- Organize clearly – since time is limited you may want to organize in bullet points
- Provide excellent data and analysis
- State the larger significance of the question

Remember:
- Find the rubric and read it through again
- Practice giving presentation so it fits within time allotted
- Present major points UP FRONT and reiterate how things come together in conclusion
- Use data to prove points but make it brief
- Don’t try gimmicks – don’t let style take over content
- Try to be calm and be sure to be dressed professionally

More specific criteria:
- Does introduction quickly outline purpose of presentation and major point?
• Is major point clear?
• Are theoretical arguments referenced clearly (and exceedingly briefly)?
• Are subsidiary points clearly outlined?
• Is data clearly presented to support each point?
• Does presentation include all critical data?
• Does presenter work to make audience comfortable and data presented understandable?
• Are language and gestures suitable for formal presentation?
• Are visual aids utilized when appropriate? (Overhead transparencies, powerpoint, maps, use of board, etc.)
• Is presentation at class level (not overly technical nor overly simplistic)?
• Voice and pace of delivery suited to presentation?
• Eye contact?
• Are you within assigned time limit?
• Are you dressed in a professional manner and do you conduct yourself appropriately?

Rubric is at end of this document.

For the following sections, I am indebted to Professor Cooper (see his syllabus for Pl Sc 470).

Note on Sources:
“Past experience suggests I need to be blunt here: When grading polished drafts and final drafts, I will penalize your grade if you don’t use the library effectively, for example if you rely entirely on internet sources or on inappropriate library databases. Focus on scholarly articles or books on your topic. Newspaper articles may also be helpful, especially for students researching a very recent event. I will gladly work with you to suggest appropriate literatures to look at and to suggest some helpful sources; you will need to search for additional sources on your own.”

“The Lee Library provides access to several excellent databases for political science and public affairs research. I suggest using PAIS and Worldwide Poli Sci Abstracts for access to scholarly journals and monographs about policy issues. Worldwide Poli Sci Abstracts and Econlit are great sources for theoretical articles. All can be accessed from the BYU Library website (under “Find Articles by Subject,” then “Political Science” or “Economics”). I suggest LexisNexis for access to newspaper articles (“Find Other Materials,” then “Journals and Magazines,” then “News Sources”). JSTOR, ProQuest, and the internet are wonderful but not enough for most topics!”

“Newsmagazines like Time and Newsweek are generally not good scholarly sources. You should also be extremely careful about websites. Internet sites maintained by well-known institutions or groups (e.g., the WTO or U.S. Treasury) are much more reliable than web sites maintained by groups you are not familiar with (www.ilovefinland.com).” Blogs can be extremely informative, but their content must be put in context and balanced with other corroboration or independent data.

Plagiarism:
“All forms of plagiarism are grave violations at any university–especially this one–and the
consequences for plagiarized work will be severe. Plagiarism includes intentionally attempting to pass off someone else’s ideas or words as your own, as well as inadvertently using someone else’s ideas or words without attribution. It also includes submitting work by another student under your own name, and recycling research papers for multiple classes. See the BYU catalog or Honor Code website (http://campuslife.byu.edu/honorcode/index.htm) for additional details.”

“As a rule of thumb, any direct quotation of three words or longer should be placed in quotation marks and the source should be cited. This of course does not apply to longer phrases that are not particular to a single author, such as “strategic trade policy.” The real issue for when to quote revolves around the distinctiveness of the phrasing. Common phrases or generally known data generally does not need to be quoted, although they may need to be cited when it comes from someone else’s work.

“You should also cite the source for specific ideas that you use from someone else’s work, even if you don’t directly quote the author. If you are referring to the same author’s work throughout a paragraph, you do not need a new citation in every sentence, as long as it is clear that you are continuing to use the author’s ideas rather than your own. For example,

“According to Krugman. . . (citation). He further explains that . . . .”

If you are unsure about how to give appropriate credit to another author, please ask me.

**Turabian-style Parenthetical Referencing:**

“Parenthetical References are short, in-text references that provide the reader with a quick reference to the source of a particular idea or quotation. The reader can then refer to the Works Cited page for full bibliographic details. The Parenthetical Reference is intended to interrupt the sentence’s flow as little as possible. Generally, if the information is already included in the text, it is not placed in the Parenthetical Reference.” For example:

According to one prominent view of nationalism, the particular geographic form of the imagined community results in large part from historical accident (Anderson 1983, 54).

Anderson also suggests that nationalism was crucially facilitated by the spread of the printing press (1983, ch. 3).

Japan played a small but significant role in the Thailand bailout of 1997 (Tett and Bardacke 1997).

Cohen (1993) analyzes both historical and modern currency unions to see what they might tell us about European Monetary Union. In contrast, Cohen (1997) discusses the less formally institutionalized phenomenon of currency regions.”

---

1 This paragraph is taken from an old Political Science 200 course packet.
Sample Works Cited Page Entries: (note spacing and capitalization)


For MESA Students:

- Tale the Arabic for Capstone Students course
- Three Arabic language sources (at least) must be utilized in your research
- You may need to adjust your topic so that you can utilize Arabic source materials
- Professors Belnap and Parkinson are skilled at helping students find appropriate Arabic source materials.
- You will need to transliterate Arabic sources properly. IJMES style is preferred. Consult sheet on transliteration style (Prof Bowen hand-out).
- Your graduation portfolio should be assembled and handed in during this course.

Possible paper topics:

- US versus European definitions of and responses to the war on terror
- Shi’a factions in post-war Iraq
- Iraqi-Iranian relations
- Insurgencies and dealing with insurgencies.
- The second gulf war as a “just” war
- Parallels between the British and US experiences in Iraq
- Comparisons of the status of Iraqi groups (Kurds, Christians, women) before, during and after Saddam.
- Iraqi Kurdish autonomy
- Iraqi political institutions under the new constitution
- The impact of democratization on women’s status
- Regional newspaper accounts on aspects of the politics, invasions and wars fought by and
against Iraq

Last year, student papers included the following topics:

- Saddam Hussein: The symbol of the new myth of Iraq through monuments and architecture
- The Impact of Sanctions on Iraqi Women’s Rights and Health
- Saddam’s Increase in Power after Economic Sanctions
- Muqtada al-Sadr: The Practical Rebel
- Constitutional Crises in Kirkuk
- Affective Disorders in Iraqi Refugees
- The Status of Iraqi Women Before and After Saddam Hussein
- Sectarian Media in Iraq and the Question of Iran
- Organized Crime in Transitional Iraq
- Freedom of the Press in Post-Saddam Iraq
- Religious, Historical and Political References in Saddam Hussein’s Rhetoric Surrounding the 2003 Invasion
- The Wrong and Unnecessary De-Baathification
- Iraq: The Preventive War

Guidelines for Writing Papers

Learning to write well is probably the most important skill you can learn at BYU. I personally believe that good writing is key to effective thinking and effective communication, and is probably the single most important factor in ensuring you success in your future work. To that end, I thought it worthwhile to spell out some guidelines for successful papers.

In Political Science, although you find too much bad, jargon-ridden, language, our goal is to convey information in a direct and straightforward manner. We do not like padding, redundancy or circling around topics. Think through your topic well, outline your approach and determine your thesis, or central argument. If you have delineated your thesis well, you’ll see that you can tell from the thesis exactly what information you need to include in your paper. If your thesis is muddy, too inclusive or too self-evident, you’ll have trouble deciding how to proceed from that point.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you write. They aren’t in any particular order of importance.

- Make sure your writing is your own work. Give credit when you take words or ideas from others. Learn to use citations correctly. There is a sheet on basic Turabian citation patterns enclosed which gives most of the citations you need for this class. If you’ve learned MLA or another style and are not a pol sci major, don’t panic. Use the system you’re used to and tell me what you’re doing so I don’t grade you down.

- Avoid quotations if anything else is possible. Paraphrase (citing the source) statements unless the original words are so powerful or unique that they convey extra meaning.
• Get your thesis right up front and make sure it is clearly stated in the first page.

• Use sub-headings to organize your paper. Their use cuts out the need to write in transitions.

• Organize your paper so that it flows well from point to point. Again, a well-stated thesis will make this possible. Don’t circle back to previous points.

• Learn to write fluently. Writing should be as natural as speaking, although I find when editing a transcript of a lecture that my speaking has to be cleaned up. Learn to use different sentence patterns; avoid choppy language. One good test is to read your paper out loud. I catch many mistakes when I read out loud that slip by unnoticed if I read silently. If it doesn’t sound right, it probably isn’t good language. Correct it.

• Avoid colloquial language. Aim your writing at the level of a briefing paper for a U.S. senator. Overly formal language can seem stilted, but overly informal language is generally offensive.

• Cut out the jargon (even if you pulled it from some political science text). Be clear, direct, and to-the-point.

• Examples help more than you’d ever think. Use an example to illuminate your specific argument. It brings your paper to life.

• Tell a story. Most of the time, in writing, as in speaking, we are trying to make our point by making sense of a subject or analyzing a set of data. Can you show how all the parts relate?

• “Shun the Passive.” This has become a political science catch phrase. Avoid the passive voice whenever possible. Passive voice hides the actor (“The door was opened”) -- something that is useful every so often when you want to be mysterious or don’t know who the actor is, but highly annoying and misleading in papers. Use active verbs that bring life to your argument.

• In general, cut out all extraneous words. Bad writing is wordy. Get to the point.

• Learn the rules of grammar and use spell check. There is no excuse for spelling errors these days. I react to typos by subtracting one point a typo when I get annoyed, so watch out. A particular bête noir (pain) of mine is improper use of the possessive. Learn the difference between its and it’s. Use the possessive properly.

• When you get stuck and can’t think of anything to write, corner your roommate or spouse or a friend or even an enemy. Tell them about the problem you’re writing on. Somehow, magically, as you talk about your topic, the ideas will start to flow. Have a piece of paper
nearby to catch them before you forget. You’ll pick up on connections and other ideas that you had no idea were in your sub-conscious. Talking helps you think, and if you can think clearly, you can write clearly.

• There are plenty of different ways to write an A paper. Don’t feel like there is a magic template somewhere that you need to follow. Work out your thesis, pay attention to basic standards, muster your information, think logically, write well, and write with fluency and elegance.

I’ve included the evaluation sheet that I use to grade your papers. Take a look at it and get a sense of what I look for when I read your paper. Also read through the grading standards sheet. If you’ve always wondered why one paper gets an A and another paper gets a C, this sheet will tell you.

**Important point.** The ability to write well grants you power. As the author, you have the power to structure your argument as you wish, the power to include or exclude data to best present your argument, the power to persuade your audience through your logic, skill, and fluent language. Use this power well.

**Oral Presentation Rubric**
Rubric adapted from Louisiana Voices Rubric for Oral Presentations at http://www.crt.state.la.us/folklife/edu_unit3_rubric_for_oral.html
## Grading Rubric—oral presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Possible pts.</th>
<th>Actual pts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Significantly increases understanding and knowledge of topic. Convinces audience to recognize validity of a point of view.</td>
<td>Raises audience understanding and awareness of most points. Clear point of view, but development or support is inconclusive or incomplete.</td>
<td>Raises audience understanding and awareness on some points. Point of view may be clear, but noticeably lacks development or support.</td>
<td>13 points</td>
<td>high-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>proficient-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>adequate-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength of Material and Organization</strong></td>
<td>Clear purpose and point. Pertinent examples from project. Conclusions are supported by evidence. Audience has full understanding of presenter’s position with strong conclusion.</td>
<td>Has some success defining purpose and point. Gives some supporting examples. Some evidence supports the conclusion. Doesn’t give adequate summary.</td>
<td>Attempts to define purpose and point. Examples do not adequately support the main point. Weak support for conclusions. Lack of summary and audience has only a vague idea to remember.</td>
<td>12 points</td>
<td>high-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>proficient-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>adequate-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery and Poster or Display</strong></td>
<td>Relaxed, self-confident presentation. Keeps attention with audience. Maintains interest with voice. Poster or display is creative and conveys key points.</td>
<td>Quick recovery from minor mistakes. Some audience contact. Satisfactory involvement with voice. Poster or display gives some info.</td>
<td>Some tension or ill ease during presentation. Occasional audience contact. Uneven involvement with voice. Poster or display suggests topic.</td>
<td>25 points</td>
<td>high-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>proficient-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>adequate-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation criteria for Polished Draft and Final Paper

Delineation of the Problem
☐ Is the paper topic laid out, well-defined, narrowed and focused?
☐ Does the paper fulfill the assignment?
☐ Is the paper bland and self-evident or nuanced and complex?
☐ Is the literature review inclusive and does it set up the theoretical background for the paper?

Paper Organization and Development of the Argument
☐ Does the paper begin with a clear and logical (thesis) statement of the major argument?
☐ Are theoretical arguments and literature review referenced?
☐ Does the paper present a coherent argument? Are the variables clearly delineated?
☐ Do the arguments all relate to the thesis?
☐ Are the arguments simply assertions or are they supported with reliable data? Is the data credible?
☐ Does each argument make sense?
☐ Are the paragraphs well set up, each with a topic sentence?
☐ Is the paper well organized?
☐ Are alternate explanations offered?
☐ Does the paper take different views into consideration?
☐ Is the conclusion well stated to summarize the major points of the paper?

Sources
☐ Are the sources well-chosen and reputable?
☐ Are citations and references properly used to credit others’ ideas and writing?

Writing Quality
☐ Are the writing mechanics well done? Are the following – spelling, punctuation, grammar, capitalization, word agreement, use of possessive – all according to standard usage? Are foreign terms italicized or underlined? Are pages numbered?