

# POLS 2311 – AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

*MW: 10:30 – 11:50am in UGLC 106*

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OFFICE HOURS: MW 1:00 pm-5:30 pm, or by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course provides an introduction to the politics of the American system of government. The class will employ methods that are both traditional (lecture-based) and non-traditional (such as simulations and projects) to enable students to explore and analyze institutions and interactions between individuals throughout the American political system.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Over the course of the semester students will have:

- An understanding of the key elements of American politics, including the Constitution, federalism, civil rights, civil liberties, political participation (voting, interest groups, parties), institutions (Congress, the courts, the president), and public opinion.
- An understanding of basic social science theories and be able to apply them to political behavior and processes.
- The skills necessary to understand and evaluate contemporary political events and problems.
- The ability to think analytically about political issues and articulate arguments with (empirical) justification.
- Their own active citizenship skills and be able to influence local and national policies/politics.
- Developed writing skills to communicate their arguments, evaluations, and policies.
- Developed effective teamwork skills for collaborative work while demonstrating respect and value for a diversity of opinions, viewpoints, and perspectives.

## **REQUIRED READING**

- Barbour, Christine, and Gerald Wright. 2016. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, Eighth Edition. CQPress.
- Graham, Bob and Chris Hand. 2017. *America, The Owner's Manual: You Can Fight City Hall—And Win*. Washington, DC: CQPress.

○ For discount on both texts, use Bundle ISBN: 9781506386423

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

- Conrad, Jessamyn. 2016. *What You Should Know About Politics But Don't: A Nonpartisan Guide to the Issues that Matter*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Skyhorse Publishing.
- Zinn, Howard. 2006. *A People's History of the United States: 1492- Present*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- *The Federalist Papers*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation in this course will be based on the following components:

Quizzes and assignments	10%
Self-assessment Log	10%
Student Survey Portfolio	15%
Texas Policy Memo	20%
Lowest Midterm Examination	10%
Midterm Examination	15%
Final Examination	20%

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 and below	F

**Examinations:** There will be 3 multiple-choice examinations during the course, two midterms and a final. The exams are closed book. All exams are **cumulative** and will cover material learned in the class lectures, quizzes, discussion, and the assigned readings. As a general rule, **make up exams will NOT be offered**; although make up exams will be permitted only under the gravest of circumstances, and I reserve the right to determine whether a make up exam is offered to individuals based upon their situation and timely request. I reserve the right to alter the questions for make up exams. Grade challenges must be in written form and submitted within one week of taking the exam.

**Each exam will include a 3-5 essay paper due the day of the exam (typed, double-spaced, hard copy format). This paper will count for 40% of the exam grade** (see rubric page 10-12). These papers must address the topics identified on the syllabus using class materials, textbook themes, and outside research. Each paper must be a persuasive research essay that synthesizes research, critical thinking, and student opinions.

**Quizzes:** Regular quizzes evaluate the reading comprehension of the textbook throughout the semester. These quizzes will cover material from each chapter, and these questions are eligible for exams. As such, these quizzes are designed to help students prepare for exams. **Under no circumstances are students able to make up quizzes.**

**Self-assessment Log:** At the end of each week, students must complete a log reflecting on the week's class based upon the prompts offered on page 9 of syllabus. ***The completed log is due on each exam day and the last day of class. Additionally, a TA may check these logs without announcement during class.*** As such, it is important for students to commit to regularly completing these assignments and to not lose any assignments. I recommend a separate notebook or word document for these weekly logs. Each log submission is graded as exceptional (100%), acceptable (85%), marginally acceptable (65%), or incomplete/unacceptable/absent (0%). Your logs are evaluated based upon completeness, thoroughness, organization/clarity, and thoughtfulness. The purpose of the log is to become aware of how you learn and what study techniques are most effective for you. It will also help you to diagnose any issues in your study

habits. As such, this assignment is designed to help you, so you should honestly and accurately complete each log. For instance, if you spent zero time studying during a week, you should record that. You will not be penalized for recording that you did not study.

*Student Survey Portfolio:* Each student must turn in (in typed, hard copy format) the results from the series of surveys completed throughout the semester. ***The completed log is due on each exam day and the last day of class. Students must complete each survey on time as we will discuss then in class and often work on the portfolio in class. Additionally, a TA may check these logs without announcement during class.***

This portfolio must include the main (usually the first) graphed results of each completed survey from YourMorals.org (or [http://www.yourmorals.org/all\\_morality\\_values\\_quizzes.php](http://www.yourmorals.org/all_morality_values_quizzes.php)) as well as from PoliticalCompass.org. With each survey, ***students must include a brief interpretation of the graphed results and a response as to whether their results surprised them (and why or why not). Students should also include whether they think these results are accurate based upon the methodology of the survey, providing evidence and arguments for why or why not. Did your opinions change at all throughout the semester?*** Printed portfolios do not have to be printed in color but ensure that each survey, graph, and response is clearly and appropriately labeled. A list of assigned surveys are listed below (but may change upon announcement). Please see the schedule for due dates.

- ***Preference for Similarity vs. Difference***
- ***Ethnocentrism Measure***
- ***Comprehensive Justice Scale***
- ***Questions about Justice***
- ***Punishment Attitudes***
- ***Political Compass***
- ***Moral Foundations Questionnaire***
- ***Issue Morality Survey***
- ***Preference for the Merit Principle***
- ***Government Budget and Economic Study***
- ***Foreign Policy Scale***
- ***Belief Traits Inventory***
- ***Attitudes Towards Political Parties***
- ***Media Framing Study 1***
- ***Media Framing Study 2***
- ***Argument Evaluations***
- ***Political Activism Study***

*Texas Policy Memo:* In groups of 4 students each, students must turn in a 1-3 page memo (in hard copy, typed format) addressing a current local problem plaguing Texas/El Paso/UTEP) ***due on March 20<sup>th</sup>***. This paper should a) address and briefly explain this problem, b) explain why it is important, c) propose a policy solution to this problem, d) address why the proposed solution is superior to alternative solutions (identifying what alternative solutions are), and e) address the costs (and problems) associated with implementing your proposed policy. ***You must also identify the correct audience for your memo—meaning that you need to find out to whom would you send your memo if you were actually sending it. As such, you need to provide as much information as necessary to enable their decision.*** This policy proposal will be evaluated on persuasiveness,

research, organization, clarity, spelling, grammatical correctness, references, and thoroughness in evaluation using relevant class themes. (See page 13-17 of syllabus for additional information and samples of policy memos.) References are required but do not count towards the page limits. I welcome the submission of drafts to me prior to the deadline for revisions and feedback.

**The revision of this policy memo is due May 3<sup>rd</sup> along with the graded, original memo.** Memo revisions must adequately address my comments and correct all errors in a new draft (typed, hard-copy). Adequate completion of these revisions will enable students to regain up to half of the points deducted from the original memo. No credit will be regained if the original, graded memo is not turned in along with the new revision.

Groups must notify me **immediately** if there are any group problems with free-riding, non-response, disrespect, etc. If you choose to drop the course, please be courteous and notify your group members (and me) as soon as possible. Individuals who do not sufficiently participate and contribute to the group memo should expect to have their grade deducted.

### **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass). *CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.*

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

**Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated.** The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) and available in the Office of the Dean of Students and the homepage of The Dean of Students at [www.utep.edu/dos](http://www.utep.edu/dos), may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to a failing grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You will be held responsible for all material covered in the textbooks, quizzes, articles, videos, and the class discussions. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the content of that day's information. I will not tolerate disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) reading newspapers, talking during lectures, using cell phones or pagers, and disrespecting classmates or the instructor. Additionally, I expect all students to attend class prepared and to show up on time. It is disrespectful to the instructor and the other students when individuals show up late or are not prepared to participate in the class discussion. I allow the use of laptops and phones for class purposes only; however, should laptop usage become disruptive, I reserve the right to prohibit laptops and other electronic devices.

This class is designed to provide information and challenge students with new, sometimes controversial, ideas, and arguments. This class is designed to be a safe, open environment to express ideas, arguments, and opinions for learning purposes. This class is designed to initiate an open discussion based upon the required readings, encourage critical thinking and application to current events, and enable students to digest difficult material through these discussions. **This class DOES NOT give you knowledge—i.e. knowledge and understanding is not transfused to students by simply sitting in class. Learning is an interactive process and one that is the primary responsibility of each student.**

**Late assignments will receive no credit.**

All grades are earned and reflect your reflect the mastery of material through the adequate completion of assignments by their deadline. As such, they do not reflect level of effort, interest, or intention. **I will not change final grades for the course under any circumstances,** with the single exception of cases of an error on my part.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a list of topics to be covered at each class meeting, and the readings which should be completed in order to fully participate in class that day. I **require** you to read the appropriate material prior to the class since you will be expected to participate in the discussion. Articles will be provided in Blackboard whenever possible. Exam material will consist of assigned readings and information covered during assignments and the class discussion. Finally, while I give specific days on which certain topics will be discussed, the calendar is subject to change. Any alterations to the course schedule will be clearly announced. (As a general rule the course will follow this order of topics, regardless of date changes, unless otherwise announced.)

January	18	Distribute Syllabus and Introduction
	23	Introduction to Politics
	25	Introduction to Politics Graham and Hand Chapter 1
	30	The American Founding and the Constitution
February	1	The American Founding and the Constitution Graham and Hand Chapter 2
	6	Federalism Graham and Hand Chapter 3 <b><i>Due: Texas Policy Memo Topic</i></b>
	8	Civil Liberties
	13	Civil Liberties Class Debate: Gun Regulation Graham and Hand Chapter 4
	15	Civil Rights <b><i>Due: Preference for Similarity vs. Difference Survey</i></b> <b><i>Ethnocentrism Measure Survey</i></b>
	20	Civil Rights Graham and Hand Chapter 5
	22	Review Midterm I Graham and Hand Chapter 6 Group work: Texas Policy Memo
	27	<b>Midterm Exam I</b>

**Essay Due: What is institutionalized racism and does it exist in contemporary America? What evidence supports your stance? What are the social, political, and economic implications of your argument?**

**Weekly Self-assessment Log due**

March	1	Congress
	6	The Presidency Group work: Texas Policy Memo
	8	The Bureaucracy Group work: Texas Policy Memo
	<b>13-15</b>	<b>Spring Break (NO CLASSES)</b>
	20	The Federal Judiciary <b>Due: Texas Policy Memo</b>
	22	The Federal Judiciary and Criminal Justice Debate <b><i>Due: Comprehensive Justice Scale Survey</i></b> <b><i>Questions about Justice Survey</i></b> <b><i>Punishment Attitudes Survey</i></b>
	27	Review Midterm II Graham and Hand Chapter 7 Group work: Texas Policy Memo
	29	<b>Midterm Exam II</b> <b><u>Essay due:</u> How can individuals instill political change? What problems must be overcome? What strategies are most effective at catalyzing political change at the local, state, and national level?</b>

**Weekly Self-assessment Log due**

April	3	Public Opinion <b><i>Due: Political Compass Survey</i></b> <b><i>Moral Foundations Questionnaire Survey</i></b>
	5	Public Opinion <b><i>Due: Issue Morality Survey</i></b> <b><i>Preference for the Merit Principle Survey</i></b>

***Government Budget and Economic Study Survey***  
***Foreign Policy Scale Survey***

	10	Political Parties <b><i>Due: Belief Traits Inventory</i></b> <b><i>Attitudes towards Political Parties</i></b>
	12	Political Parties Graham and Hand Chapter 8
	17	Interest Groups and Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
	19	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections Graham and Hand Chapter 9
	24	The Media <b><i>Due: Media Framing Study 1</i></b> <b><i>Media Framing Study 2</i></b> <b><i>Argument Evaluations</i></b>
	26	Texas Politics Graham and Hand Chapter 10
May	1	Texas Politics and Political Activism Group Work: Texas Memo <b><i>Due: Political Activism Study</i></b>
	3	Review for Final Exam (Last Day of Class)  <b><i><u>Weekly Self-assessment Log due</u></i></b>  <b>Due: Texas Policy Memo Revision</b>
	8-12	<b>Final Exam Week</b>

### **Weekly Self-assessment Log Questions**

- 1) What did I learn this week?
- 2) What questions do I still have about what we did in class this week?
- 3) How does the new information I have learned relate to other things I know?
- 4) What helped me learn this week?
- 5) What got in the way of my learning?
- 6) How much time did I devote to studying and completing class assignments this week?
- 7) What study techniques did I enjoy or prove effective?
- 8) What study techniques did not work well for me?

## Grading Rubric for Written Assignments

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Course: \_\_\_\_\_

4=A    3=B    2=C    1=D    0=F

Writing Characteristic	Performance Descriptions	Performance Level
<b>Follows Directions</b>	4= responds fully and appropriately to the assignment in timely fashion 3= responds reasonably well to assignment in timely fashion 2= responds acceptably to assignment in timely fashion 1= some significant failure to respond to assignment, or untimely 0= wholly fails to respond to assignment, and/or untimely	
<b>Thesis</b>	4= easily identifiable, clear and concise, insightful, and appropriate for assignment 3= identifiable, clear, and appropriate 2= somewhat difficult to identify, unclear, and/or slightly inappropriate for assignment 1= very difficult to identify, unclear, and/or inappropriate for assignment 0= unidentifiably, unclear, and/or wholly inappropriate for assignment	
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	4= appropriate source information (typically primary) used to support thesis and buttress all arguments made in essay, excellent integration of quoted/paraphrased material into writing. 3= appropriate source information used to support thesis and to buttress most arguments, good integration of sources into writing 2= sometimes weak use of source information (excessively secondary), inadequately supports thesis and/or sub-arguments, weak integration of quoted/paraphrased material into writing 1= very weak use of source information (excessively secondary), fails to support thesis and/or sub-arguments, very weak integration of material into writing 0= wholly failures to use sources appropriately	
<b>Analysis, Logic and Argumentation</b>	4= all ideas progress logically from an identifiable thesis, compelling justifications are offered to support thesis, counter-arguments are anticipated and addressed, appropriate connections are made to outside material 3= thesis is generally supported by logically compelling assertions and appropriate connections 2= insufficient support for some arguments, assertions are vague or lack focus, support offered is sometimes irrelevant, tangential or repetitive 1= lacks support for arguments, unfocused, uses irrelevant information to support thesis 0= wholly fails to related evidence to thesis statement	
<b>Organization</b>	4= coherent and clear, all paragraphs support thesis statement, each paragraph supports its topic sentence, excellent transitions 3= mostly coherent, generally supports thesis, good transitions 2= often lacks coherence, mixed support for thesis, transitions often missing or weak 1= incoherent, lacks support for thesis, transitions weak and often missing 0= wholly incoherent, unsupportive of thesis and lacking in transitions	
<b>Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Language Usage, Sentence Structure, Citation Format)</b>	4= excellent command of language, proper use of grammar/writing conventions, few to no misspelled words, correct word choice, excellent variety and complexity of sentence structure, uses proper citation format 3= good command of language, generally proper use of grammar/writing conventions, minimal misspelled words, largely good word choice, some variety and complexity in sentence structure, generally uses proper citation format 2= generally proper use of grammar/writing conventions, but with simple sentences generally lacking variety/complexity in structure, acceptable citation format 1= weak use of language, poor grammar, and numerous mechanical errors undermine coherence, weak citation format 0= extremely weak use of language/poor grammar, and pervasive errors seriously undermine coherence, improper citation format	
<b>Grade</b>		/24
<b>Additional Comments:</b>		

## Understanding Letter Grades on Essay Assignments

### A papers excel in each of the following categories:

<b>Follows Directions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responds fully and appropriately to the assignment in timely fashion</li> </ul>
<b>Thesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>easily identifiable, clear and concise, insightful, and appropriate for assignment</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>appropriate source information (typically primary) used to support thesis and buttress all arguments made in essay, excellent integration of quoted/paraphrased material into writing.</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis, Logic and Argumentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all ideas progress logically from an identifiable thesis, compelling justifications are offered to support thesis, counter-arguments are anticipated and addressed, appropriate connections are made to outside material</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coherent and clear, all paragraphs support thesis statement, each paragraph supports its topic sentence, excellent transitions</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Language Usage, Sentence Structure, Citation Format)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>excellent command of language, proper use of grammar/writing conventions, few to no misspelled words, correct word choice, excellent variety and complexity of sentence structure, uses proper citation format</li> </ul>

### B papers do a generally good job in each of the following categories:

<b>Follows Directions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responds reasonably well to assignment in timely fashion</li> </ul>
<b>Thesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifiable, clear, and appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>appropriate source information used to support thesis and to buttress most arguments, good integration of sources into writing</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis, Logic and Argumentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thesis is generally supported by logically compelling assertions and appropriate connections</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mostly coherent, generally supports thesis, good transitions</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Language Usage, Sentence Structure, Citation Format)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>good command of language, generally proper use of grammar/writing conventions, minimal misspelled words, largely good word choice, some variety and complexity in sentence structure, generally uses proper citation format</li> </ul>

**C papers are acceptable, but lack strength, in each of the following categories:**

<b>Follows Directions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responds acceptably to assignment in a timely fashion</li> </ul>
<b>Thesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• somewhat difficult to identify, unclear, and/or slightly inappropriate for assignment</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sometimes weak use of source information (excessively secondary), inadequately supports thesis and/or sub-arguments, weak integration of quoted/paraphrased material into writing</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis, Logic and Argumentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• insufficient support for some arguments, assertions are vague or lack focus, support offered is sometimes irrelevant, tangential or repetitive</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• often lacks coherence, mixed support for thesis, transitions often missing or weak</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Language Usage, Sentence Structure, Citation Format)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally proper use of grammar/writing conventions, but with simple sentences generally lacking variety/complexity in structure, acceptable citation format</li> </ul>

**D papers are weak in each of the following categories:**

<b>Follows Directions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some significant failure to respond to assignment or untimely</li> </ul>
<b>Thesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very difficult to identify, unclear, and/or inappropriate for assignment</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very weak use of source information (excessively secondary), fails to support thesis and/or sub-arguments, very weak integration of material into writing</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis, Logic and Argumentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lacks support for arguments, unfocused, uses irrelevant information to support thesis</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• incoherent, lacks support for thesis, transitions weak and often missing</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Language Usage, Sentence Structure, Citation Format)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• weak use of language, poor grammar, and numerous mechanical errors undermine coherence, weak citation format</li> </ul>

**F papers are unacceptable, failing in each of the following categories:**

<b>Follows Directions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wholly fails to respond to assignment given, and/or untimely</li> </ul>
<b>Thesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unidentifiably, unclear, and/or wholly inappropriate for assignment</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wholly failures to use sources appropriately</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis, Logic and Argumentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wholly fails to related evidence to thesis statement</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wholly incoherent, unresponsive of thesis and lacking in transitions</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Language Usage, Sentence Structure, Citation Format)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extremely weak use of language/poor grammar, and pervasive errors seriously undermine coherence, improper citation format</li> </ul>

## How to write a policy memo

A policy memo is a document that provides analysis and recommendations for a particular audience regarding a particular situation or problem. A well-written policy memo reflects attention to purpose; it is well organized; and it has a clear, concise style.

### Determining and responding to your audience

In most cases, you will know the audience for your work because (1) you have been hired by that individual or organization or (2) your instructor provides that information to you. Think carefully about the needs and expectations of your audience. For example, if your audience is an elected official seeking analysis on a highly technical matter, you should generally assume that the official lacks substantial technical expertise. You will need to define technical terms and provide enough background about the situation you are discussing that such a “lay” audience can grasp your arguments. On the other hand, if you are writing for a technically trained audience, you will waste time and energy providing background information that your readers already know.

### Organizing an effective policy memo

#### Introduction

One distinguishing characteristic of a policy memo is that a summary of the document’s conclusion(s) and recommendation(s) is placed right at the beginning of the memo. Remember that the purpose of the document is generally to provide your audience advice about a particular decision, project, or policy stance. Thus, you open the memo by summarizing the problem or situation about which you are writing, and by providing a very brief summary of the conclusions/recommendations you have reached during your analysis. The rest of the memo is designed to support the conclusions or recommendations you present.

#### Background

Keeping in mind that different audiences need different amounts of background information (see above), follow your introduction with a concise summary of any historical or technical that your audience needs to understand the arguments you are building. (It may be that no background information is needed at all.)

#### Supporting arguments or analysis

Once you have set the stage for your audience, show how this information leads logically to the conclusions/recommendations you have provided.

## Style and format

Your prose should be simple, clear, and easy to read; you will confuse, not impress, your readers with sophisticated vocabulary. Your reader should be able to describe your conclusions and the general arguments you used to reach them after only one reading of your memo.

Some tips on achieving an effective writing style:

1. Choose the simplest words available to express your ideas. When discussing technical information, avoid the use of jargon--or at least define your terms clearly.
2. Make your sentences "active"; avoid phrases such as "there are" or "it is."
3. Use one paragraph to develop one idea or argument. Make that idea or argument explicit within the first one or two sentences of the paragraph.
4. PROOFREAD CAREFULLY. Don't distract your readers from the content of your memo with poor spelling or grammar.

The format of the memo should be as follows:

1. Memos must be typed on 8.5 X 11" with margins of one inch on all sides.
2. Paragraphs should be single-spaced and should be separated by a double space.
3. You may use any standard conventions for the layout of your memo, including numbering, bullets, indentation, etc. Do address the memo to your audience at the top of the page. See the attached sample for a suggested layout.

## Length

The length of your policy memo assignment is no more than 3 pages. Do not exceed this length limit! I am enforcing this rule for several reasons:

1. You will likely continue to write persuasive documents for clients and/or colleagues in the future. Like you, most of these people are busy. They rarely have time to review lengthy documents; these generally wind up unread in a filing cabinet or the trash. I'm hoping to help you craft documents that are concise and of use to your clients or colleagues.
2. Confining yourself to a particular page limit encourages careful editing, establishing priorities, and paring your arguments down. In general, these practices also improve the flow and impact of your writing.
3. Tightly written policy memos have a much better chance of influencing others toward a particular point of view.

## Revisions and suggestions

Despite their length, **memos contain the same amount of work and research as a full-length research paper**. As such, most memos often start as a research paper, which is edited down to its most important components. As such, I recommend treating the memo project as a research paper with additional editing requirements to make it incredibly concise and well-organized.

I strongly recommend that you exchange your memos with other students in the class for proofreading and editing before you submit them. You can help one another with suggestions for clarity and content of your assignments.

## **(Sample) MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** President of the United States  
**FROM:** [names]  
**SUBJECT: Re-organizing the Government to Combat the WMD Threat**  
**DATE:** xx / xx / xxxx

The proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons is the most serious threat to U.S. security today, and will remain so far into the future. Whereas combating proliferation is an inherently government-wide mission, the existing national security architecture has resulted in a series of agency-specific efforts that are often poorly coordinated and fail to take advantage of important synergies. Re-organizing the government to meet the WMD threat therefore requires reforms that strengthen White House management of nonproliferation programs, expand interagency counterproliferation capabilities, and improve WMD-related intelligence.

### **Strengthen White House Management of Nonproliferation Programs**

The Departments of Energy (DOE), State, Defense (DOD), Commerce, and Homeland Security (DHS) all contribute to U.S. nonproliferation efforts, but receive insufficient top-level program guidance and coordination. For example, DOE did not learn of Libya's decision to abandon its nuclear program until it was revealed in the press. Moreover, DOE had no plan in place to dismantle Libya's nuclear assets despite its central role in performing such activities. Finally, proliferation detection R&D projects are currently managed by a community of end users that have overlapping needs but rarely communicate with each other.

To prevent future interagency breakdowns, the White House should designate a new senior-level Nonproliferation Policy and Program Director (NPD) to oversee all U.S. government nonproliferation programs. The NPD will chair a new National Security Council Policy Coordinating Committee on Nonproliferation (PCC) that will set overarching nonproliferation goals and priorities, develop an interagency strategic plan to achieve those goals and priorities, identify and assign missions and responsibilities to appropriate agencies, and coordinate program execution. To improve proliferation detection R&D, the NPD and PCC will also design an interagency technology development plan that will integrate and prioritize the needs of various technology end users across the government with the capabilities of the U.S. national laboratory system, private industry, and top universities. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will work with the new NPD and PCC to develop a multi-year interagency nonproliferation program budget, and will apply performance measures to monitor program management and implementation.

Although the NPD and the PCC will require little additional funding, past attempts at White House policy coordination – such as the Office of Homeland Security – have sunk into irrelevance because of agency resistance. To avoid suffering a similar fate, the NPD and PCC must possess clearly delineated authority and high level backing. In particular, the NPD should enjoy unambiguous control over nonproliferation policy and program budgets. The PCC should require agency participation at the Under Secretary level. Most important, the NPD and PCC must receive consistent, visible support from the President.

### **Expand Interagency Counterproliferation Capabilities**

The U.S. military and homeland security communities must be able to rapidly respond to proliferation emergencies. To provide this capability, the United States should create and train “Proliferation Risk Mitigation Teams” – akin to the Department of Homeland Security's Nuclear Emergency Search Teams

(NEST) – comprised of DOD special operations forces (SOF), CIA operatives, and DOE technical specialists. These teams will be capable of securing nuclear storage facilities and other sensitive infrastructure during combat operations or in response to the collapse of central authority in states that possess nuclear assets that are attractive to terrorists. They will also provide logistical and operational support to the Energy Department’s “Global Cleanout” program that seeks to return stockpiles of weapons-usable highly enriched uranium to Russia and the United States. Finally, they will engage in extensive “red-teaming” simulations in order to foster better situation awareness and preparedness.

Operational control of Proliferation Risk Mitigation Teams will pose a major challenge. Congress may object to placing the teams under CIA control in light of the agency’s past abuses. Moreover, DOD will be reluctant to assign SOF personnel to the teams if they will be placed under the command authority of a different agency. Given the types of operations in which the teams are likely to engage, DOD operational control would therefore seem most appropriate. The teams will cost approximately \$500 million annually to train and equip. To provide the necessary funding, the United States should cancel the Missile Defense Agency’s Airborne Laser program, which has been plagued by cost overruns and schedule delays.

### **Improve WMD Intelligence**

The effectiveness of U.S. nonproliferation and counterproliferation efforts ultimately depends on the quality of WMD intelligence. Unfortunately, the U.S. intelligence community has a poor track record of detecting both state-level and sub-state WMD proliferation. It failed to anticipate India’s nuclear test in 1998, produced flawed assessments of the threat from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, and only belatedly uncovered the nuclear black market smuggling ring of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan. In addition, the intelligence community remains unable to provide reliable information on the status of nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran.

To improve community-wide WMD intelligence collection and analysis, the United States should, per the recommendation of the recent WMD commission, create a new National Counter Proliferation Center (NCPC). The Center would report directly to the new Director for National Intelligence and set requirements for WMD-related human, imagery, and signals collection for the entire intelligence community. It would also house an analytical division that would provide high-quality, actionable intelligence assessments to customers across the U.S. government, including the new White House NPD.

The NCPC will require approximately \$1 billion in annual funding. Given this price tag, Congress may resist creation of the NCPC until it can determine whether recent legislation will effectively address current intelligence community deficiencies. Moreover, CIA already operates an analytical unit devoted to WMD intelligence (WINPAC) that will fiercely resist encroachment upon its turf. The NCPC should therefore function as both a consumer and independent reviewer of WINPAC intelligence products while avoiding disruptive turf battles. Competition between WINPAC and the NCPC could result in higher-quality intelligence products from both.

## Contact Your Representative

### Senate

([https://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm?State=TX](https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=TX))

Cornyn, John - (R - TX)

517 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

(202) 224-2934

Contact: [www.cornyn.senate.gov/contact](http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/contact)

Cruz, Ted - (R - TX)

404 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

(202) 224-5922

Contact: [www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=email\\_senator](http://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=email_senator)

## **Contact Your Representative**

### **House of Representatives**

(<https://www.txdirectory.com/online/txhouse/> or  
<http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/County.aspx?CountyCode=141&CountyName=E1%20Paso>)

The Mailing Address for all Representatives in Austin is:

P.O. Box 2910

Austin, Texas 78768-2910

FAX: (512) 463-5896

Email: [firstname.lastname@house.state.tx.us](mailto:firstname.lastname@house.state.tx.us)

### **Texas U.S. Representatives**

Congressional District 16--Congressman Beto O'Rourke

[Texas Congressional Member Websites](#)

Congressional District 23--Congressman Will Hurd

[Texas Congressional Member Websites](#)

### **Texas State Senator**

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Capitol Office: EXT E1.610

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Texas State House District 78--[Representative Joseph E. Moody](#)  
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District Address: 5675 Woodrow Bean, Suite 12  
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Phone: (915) 751-2700

Texas State House District 79--[Representative Joe C. Pickett](#)  
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District Address: 1790 Lee Trevino, #307  
El Paso TX 79936  
Phone: (915) 590-4349

### **Texas State Board of Education Member**

Texas State SBOE District 1--Ms. Martha M. Dominguez  
[State Board of Education Member Websites](#)

## Appendix: Recommended Reading

- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.
- Winkler, Adam. 2011. *Gun Fight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America*.
- McCoy, Alfred W. 2006. *The Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror*.
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- Caine, Susan. 2012. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*.
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- Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*.
- Fenno, Jr., Richard. 1978. *Homestyle*.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*.
- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties?*
- Olson, M. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*.