

Case assignment #2: Airline crashes and the administration of transportation policy

The questions on the next page will organize our discussion of Cobb and Primo's *The Plane Truth* on Thursday, March 3. Your assignment is to prepare answers to these questions for that class meeting. Because our class discussion will flow directly from these questions and your answers to them, it is essential that you complete your answers before arriving in class that day.

1. Guidelines

- **Answers must be typed.** This will make it easier on me when I read your assignment. It also will force you to be more precise in your preparation.
- How much should you write? Ideally, shoot for $\frac{1}{2}$ **page single-spaced for each question . . . BUT NO MORE THAN THAT!** One goal of this assignment is to get you to focus on key details and concepts, so the best answers will be rich in content, but not long (or too short).
- Do your best to **refer to specific page numbers** from the text. That will help us to zero in on key passages during our discussion. It will also save you the time of typing up direct quotes.
- The **format** you use to develop your answers is up to you. For example, you might actually type out an answer as a complete paragraph; or, perhaps develop a bulleted list of specific points that provide you with enough information to jog your memory when we talk about the book. **IMPORTANT:** If you take the bulleted list approach, be sure I am able to identify the 4 key things that I note in the next section.

2. Grading

The assignment will account for 5% of your semester grade. Late assignments aren't able to contribute to the discussion, so I will deduct 1 percentage point (i.e., $5/5 \rightarrow 4/5$) from assignments for each day that they are late.

A note on teamwork: To provide you with a chance to test your own understanding of the concepts we have explored and the Cobb and Primo book, all students must hand in their own unique responses to the discussion questions. However, feel free to talk with one another as you think through your answers.

In grading your responses I will be looking for 4 key things:

- **Empirical content:** Do answers draw explicitly on specific details from the Cobb and Primo book?
- **Theoretical content:** Are answers informed by explicit use of general course concepts?
- **Extension questions:** Do the answers include explicitly stated follow-up questions that could push the discussion into new, interesting directions?
- **Focus:** Does each answer run roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ page single-spaced?

3. Questions

Answer ALL . . .

1. Cobb and Primo seem to suggest that presidents and Congress engage in relatively limited oversight of the FAA and NTSB. Does that seem surprising to you? Why or why not?
2. Essentially the same interest groups monitor the FAA and the NTSB. Does that mean that administrators in these agencies can adopt essentially the same strategies for dealing with these interest groups? Why or why not?
3. Which agency, the FAA or NTSB, seems most effective to you? To what extent does knowledge about politics and public administration help to explain why one of these agencies seems to be more effective than the other one?

Answer EITHER #4 or #5 . . .

4. Consider how the increasing emphasis on airline *security* versus airline *safety* might produce political challenges that will influence the ability of the FAA and NTSB to do their jobs. Will the growing emphasis on security affect one of these agencies more than the other, or will the security emphasis generate similar political challenges for them both?
5. To improve the administration of airline transportation policy, in their concluding chapter Cobb and Primo suggest creating a new "Airline Safety Agency," separate from the FAA and the NTSB. An alternative proposal would be to combine the FAA and NTSB into a single agency. To what extent would combining the FAA and NTSB address some of the political constraints they face and, thus, improve the administrative performance of them both?