

## Final Essay

This capstone paper asks you to think analytically and creatively about several different issues we have explored in the course. The essay is not intended to be a research paper, which means you are not required to (but may, if you would like) use readings beyond the course syllabus.

### 1. Nuts and bolts

#### *Due date and handing in the paper*

The paper is due no later than Tuesday, November 23 at 5pm.

Please turn in the paper to me in hard copy form (no emailed papers) in my office or put it in my Morton Hall mailbox.

Late papers will be assessed a one-third grade penalty for each day (including weekend days) they are late. For example, a B+ paper that is 1 day late will be scored a B.

#### *Formatting*

The paper should run 5 to 6 double-spaced pages, not including the title page. (A ballpark estimate would be around 1,500 to 1,800 words.) Please DO NOT spill over into page 7.

Include a separate title page where you record your name, class section (9am or 10am), paper title, and the number of the specific question you are addressing. If you have written your own question or modified one of the topics offered in the assignment, be sure to type out your question in its entirety on the title page.

Use one inch margins on all sides (top, bottom, left, right), set your font to 12 point, and use Times New Roman, Garamond, or something similar.

Number your pages.

#### *Documenting your sources*

**Citations.** Use in-line parenthetical citations to attribute ideas to authors or to document direct quotes. Here are some examples; additional ones are on the course Blackboard site.

- Wilson (1989, chapter 13) identifies several key ways that Congress influences government agencies.
- When agencies agree on their critical tasks they are more likely to operate with a coherent mission (Wilson 1989).
- When agencies have "a culture that is widely shared and warmly endorsed by operators and managers alike" (Wilson 1989, p. 95) agency members are likely to possess similar ideas about the agency's mission.

**Bibliographies.** You DO NOT need to include a separate bibliography if you simply cite readings from the syllabus. You DO need to include a bibliography or detailed footnote to fully

document sources you cite that do not appear on the course syllabus. A complete citation provides enough information for a reader to track down these sources.

**Web sites.** If you cite a web site, include the site in your bibliography or in a footnote (noting at least the name of the site, the web address, and the date you accessed it); also, from a web browser, print out the key section of the page you are citing, and hand in that printout with the paper.

## 2. Grading

I will base grades on the following criteria.

*Thesis, focus, and responsiveness to the question.* The essay contains on the first page a clearly identifiable, specific, crisply-stated thesis. Overall, the thesis and ensuing paragraphs in the essay clearly address the question without flying off onto unrelated tangents.

*Theoretical concepts.* The essay is firmly grounded in key concepts we have explored in class, and integrates the theoretical readings in an analytically sharp, accurate, and explicit way.

*Concrete examples.* The essay makes frequent use of concrete examples, which help to reveal and clarify the meaning of the theoretical concepts.

*Clarity of the prose.* The essay's language is clear, direct, and concise. The voice of the author dictates the essay's tempo, rather than lengthy direct quotations or extensive summaries from the readings. It is clear that the essay has been read carefully to eliminate grammatical and spelling errors.

### 3. Topics

1. Across the course, we have discussed how national culture, structure, and decisionmakers' cognitive limits are always operating to influence public policy in some way. Does that mean all of these factors are equally important all of the time?
2. The American policy system is hugely complex and sometimes overwhelming for individuals who try to navigate it. If the system is so complicated, is it simply naïve folk wisdom and not a reflection of reality, then, when observers claim that in the policymaking world "one person can make a difference"?
3. If the American policy system produces results based on compromise, is it inevitable that we will never be able to tackle some of our most challenging public problems, which on their face appear to demand bold (not watered-down) policy solutions?
4. Third party or independent candidates for president, such as Ross Perot and Ralph Nader, frequently claim that if they were to win the presidency they would be able to achieve significant policy accomplishments in areas where leaders from the major parties have failed. If elected, would these so-called political outsiders have the major policy impacts that they assert? (Note: Perot and Nader are provided as examples; you are not required to discuss them in your answer.)
5. What key issues should policymakers weigh when they consider using policy tools that attempt to leverage markets or market-like forces to solve public problems? What consequences would follow if policymakers ignored these key issues you have identified?
6. Propose a revision to one of the topics listed above, which you discuss and clear with me in office hours no later than Friday, November 12.
7. Propose an entirely new topic, which you discuss and clear with me in office hours no later than Friday, November 12.