

Political Science 250: European Politics
DePaul University
Winter 2016
T/Th 2:40-4:10 PM
Levan 301

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Course Overview and Objectives

This course examines the contemporary politics of the major states of Europe. As part of the comparative politics curriculum, we will examine the major political institutions, processes, and policy outcomes of various European states. Additionally, the course covers some of the major controversies and challenges facing Europe today, including debates over the European Union and globalization, immigration, terrorism, and right-wing populism. The course is organized thematically, meaning that we will proceed by studying major topics and controversies. We will examine specific states within the context of each topic in order to develop substantive knowledge, apply evidence to theoretical arguments, and examine various political processes and their outcomes.

The course is organized around two major themes. The first is an examination of competing visions of representative democracy. Using the theme of “values, structures, outcomes,” we will seek to understand how different European states have arranged political institutions in order to achieve certain goals of representation or policy—and what the consequences and tradeoffs of these arrangements have been. The second theme is “Europe pulling in two directions.” While the modern nation-state developed in Europe, it now faces challenges from immigration and from European integration.

As part of the Political Science curriculum and a “Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Inquiry” offering, this course has the following learning objectives:

1. Students will enhance their understanding of *power* by describing and evaluating how it is allocated in the political systems of major Western European states.
2. Students will develop their ability to describe and evaluate different forms of *democracy* and how it affects various political outcomes.
3. Students will improve their understanding of *diversity* and *identity* by examining how European states cope with the challenges of multi-national societies, immigration, and nationalism.
4. Students will develop their ability to articulate and evaluate arguments based on theory and evidence in writing.

Course Organization

As with most Political Science courses, your success requires that you be prepared to read assigned material, conduct individual research, and regularly attend class. Readings will come from a variety of sources—academic and popular. You are also required to watch two films outside of class. Class meetings will include a mixture of lecture, discussion, small-group work, quizzes, and an in-class simulation.

NOTE: Readings and class meetings are complements, not substitutes. In practice, this means that we will not always discuss assigned readings directly in class (though we often will). I will still expect you to read them carefully, and they will be a subject for quizzes! I am always happy to answer questions at the start of class, in office hours, or via email about the readings.

Grading

Your grade will be determined by your performance on several paper assignments, an in-class simulation, and weekly quizzes.

Quizzes & In-Class Work	15%	
Simulation Performance	15%	
Research Paper	40%	
First Draft		7.5%
Peer Reviews		7.5%
Final Version		25%
Final Take-Home Exam	30%	

Quizzes & In-Class Work: At the end of most class meetings, there will be a brief quiz or writing assignment designed to assess student progress. Each is designed to assess your knowledge of core facts and concepts and your ability to apply ideas from this course. Class discussions and readings are equally “fair game.” These quizzes may also be cumulative.

Simulation Performance: Over the course of two class meetings, we will conduct a simulation of party politics in a multiparty parliamentary system typical of many European states. Over the course of several class meetings, students will participate in a simulation of a parliamentary election and government formation process. Students will be given a background assignment, which they must use to determine the party that they should join. Once assembled, the several parties will work individually outside of class and collectively during class to design strategies for campaigning, debating, negotiating, and voting within the parliamentary context. Students are expected to be present for each simulation activity, to participate constructively in all simulation activities, and to contribute equally to their group’s work. Student grades will be determined by an evaluation of each student’s participation during the in-class simulation activities, a report submitted by each student on the involvement of fellow party members, and three memos that students will submit prior to specific simulation activities. More details on the simulation will be provided in a separate handout.

Research Paper: Students will write a research paper that analyzes the political system of a specific European state. To aid students in the process of developing ideas, students will prepare a first draft and will participate in a peer-review process. More details are available at the end of the syllabus.

First Draft: Students will complete a first draft of the paper following the guidelines at the end of the syllabus. These papers will be submitted to the group lockers for the peer review process. I will evaluate them to determine if they fit the assignment and reflect an adequate level of preparation using a scale of 100 (good), 80 (satisfactory), 50 (unsatisfactory), or 0 (unacceptable/not submitted).

Research Paper Peer Reviews: Students will be divided into groups of 3 or 4 (using the “Groups” function in D2L), in which they will read and write reviews of the second stage of each other’s research paper. Students will write reviews and upload them to D2L, in which they offer constructive criticism designed to help the author improve the final version of the paper. More details and requirements will be provided in a separate handout.

Grading Scale: Letter grades for the course will be determined accordingly: A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (74-76), C- (70-73), D+ (67-69), D (64-66), D- (60-63), F (59 and below). Any student taking the course Pass/Fail must receive a 74 or higher to pass.

Notes:

1. I try to balance the desire for detailed feedback with the need to return graded assignments

- promptly. I am always happy to provide further feedback via email or during office hours.
2. The deadline for all assignments is the start of class! This is a strict, no-exceptions, deadline. As you should already be present in the classroom by the start of class, I do not allow any exceptions for last-minute emergencies with uploading the assignment to D2L. Late assignments are penalized a minimum of 10 points for each 24 hours past the deadline.

Readings

The required readings for this course consist of articles and book chapters, which are available through the Library's E-Reserve system or directly accessible online (see the Course Schedule for details). You should read these carefully prior to the class date for which they are assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them. Note that some readings are long and/or complex; take the time to read each assignment carefully and thoughtfully. Finally, you are required to view two movies outside of class. I will schedule a screening of each movie outside of class hours. In addition, each movie is available at the library in DVD format to be watched on their equipment.

I do not assign a textbook for this course. I find most textbooks to be a poor use of your money. If you would like advice about finding a textbook (or something similar) to provide another perspective or addition material on a topic, please come see me during office hours or email me!

Policies and Procedures

Instructor Contact: I hold regular weekly office hours at the times listed at the top of the first page of the syllabus. Please drop by at any time during these hours; you do not need to make an appointment or let me know in advance. If you cannot drop by during office hours, I am happy to schedule another time that works for both of us. I hope that you will consider coming by at least once during the quarter; I enjoy talking to students and want to help each of you do well in this course. You are urged to drop by *as soon as possible* if you have questions or concerns about course material, your performance, my expectations, etc. However, I also encourage students to drop by just to discuss interests, course options, etc.

Social Media: I maintain a (mostly) professional presence on Twitter on which I post links to interesting articles and commentaries on European and US politics (you can follow me @ertillman). These include occasional blogs and commentaries that I write. I encourage you to follow. This is strictly voluntary, and it is meant purely as a supplement to the course (both during and after the quarter) for those of you who are interested in following my perspective on European politics more closely. It will not affect your grade in any way. Also note that I respect your privacy and protect my own. I will not follow you on Twitter while you are enrolled at DePaul.

Disabilities: Students who believe that they need accommodations for a disability should contact me privately as early as possible during the quarter. I take these concerns seriously and will do what I can according to university policy to help. All discussions will remain confidential. In order to receive the most appropriate accommodations, you must also contact either the PluS Program (for LD, AD/HD) or the Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677 (Student Center #370).

Academic Integrity: In academia, ideas are everything, so presenting the words or ideas of others as your own is theft. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result *at a minimum* in a grade of 0 on the assignment and a report to the Academic Affairs Office. ***Academic dishonesty on any assignment worth 20% or more of the final grade will result in a failing grade for the course, regardless of student performance on other assignments!*** Any work that you submit must be your own, and you must cite the sources of ideas or words that are not your own. If you have doubt about what constitutes a violation, you should consult the *Code of Student Responsibility* in the Student Handbook and/or consult me. In any case, ignorance is not an excuse. Be aware of the following: making slight changes to the wording of another person's work without citing it is plagiarism; rules about plagiarism

apply both to published and unpublished works; and submitting work that you have prepared for another course at DePaul or elsewhere in whole or part constitutes cheating.

Decorum: As one of many students enrolled in this course, you have a shared responsibility to foster a constructive learning environment and to refrain from behavior that would hinder the ability of those around you to learn. These guidelines are for your own good, but they are also a matter of you having a broader obligation to your classmates. Students who fail to adhere to these expectations will have points deducted from their grade. At a minimum, you are expected to:

- Arrive on time, stay in class until the end, and wait until the end of class to put away materials
- Turn off the ringer on your mobile phone and put it away for the duration of class
- Refrain from eating food, talking, reading the paper, etc
- Refrain from disrespectful or demeaning behavior towards your classmates. Disagreements and debates are part of a healthy academic environment, but keep the focus on an open and honest exchange of ideas. This is equally true in the classroom and online.

*****You are not allowed to use laptops, tablet computers, or smart phones during class*****

This policy is in place for two reasons. First, study after study shows that “multi-tasking” substantially reduces cognitive performance. In other words, you are not capable of thinking or learning properly if you are distracted. Second, and more importantly, the classroom is a shared learning environment in which you play a crucial role. Anything that detracts from that environment harms it for everyone else in the class—and makes it less likely that we will have a productive class meeting.

I will lower your final course grade by up to two “fractions” (i.e., from a B+ to B-) if you do not observe these guidelines.

Late Assignments: Due dates for assignments are firm, and they are there to provide a fair environment for all students. If you fail to complete the assignment by then, you will receive a 0. Late assignments will be penalized a minimum of 10 points (i.e., one letter grade) for each 24 hours that it is late. ***Unless otherwise noted, assignments must be submitted on D2L by the start of class on the date noted in the course schedule!***

Student Responsibility: It is your responsibility as a student to be aware of and understand all requirements, due dates, policies, and announcements that I provide in this syllabus, announce in class, or post on Desire2Learn—whether you were in attendance on a given day (including the first day of class!) or not. **Understand that all course requirements, policies, and due dates listed in this syllabus apply to you universally whether I specifically mention it to you or not!** Finally, please do not wait until the last minute to deal with any concerns or problems with the course. Talk to me early!

Schedule of Classes

January 5 (Tu): Course Overview/History of West Europe

January 7 (Th): Patterns of State Development

- Charles Tilly. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In*. New York: Cambridge UP. [E-Reserves]
- Francis Fukuyama. 2014. *Political Order and Political Decay*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux. Chapter 12 (pp. 185-97). [Available on D2L]

January 12 (Tu): State Development in the European Peripheries

- Francis Fukuyama. 2014. *Political Order and Political Decay*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux. Chapter 6 (pp. 94-107). [Available on D2L]
- Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail*. New York: Crown Business. Pages 213-31. [E-Reserves]

January 14 (Th): Visions of Democracy

- Arend Lijphart. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy*, 2nd edition. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pages 9-20, 30-40. [E-Reserves]
- **Screening of *Good Bye Lenin!* from 4:30-6:30 PM in Levan 308**

January 19 (Tu): The Post-Communist Legacy

- *Good Bye Lenin!* Film (2003), directed by Wolfgang Becker. In German, with English subtitles.

January 21 (Th): Executive-Legislative Relations

- Gary Cox. 1987. *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the development of Political Parties in Victorian England*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pages 45-67 (Chapter 6: "The origin of the efficient secret"). [E-Reserves]
- Introduction to Simulation

January 26 (Tu): Electoral Systems

- Alina Rocha Menocal. 2011. "Why Electoral Systems Matter: An Analysis of Their Incentives and Effects on Key Areas of Governance." Overseas Development Institute. Available at: <http://www.odi.org/publications/6057-electoral-systems-incentives-governance> (Access directly)

January 28 (Th): Elections & Voting Behavior

- Russell J. Dalton. 2008. *Citizen Politics*, 5th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Chapter 4 ("Who Participates?"), pp. 57-76. [E-Reserves]
- **Simulation Memo #1 due today in Dropbox**

February 2 (Tu): Multi-National States

- Eve Hepburn. "The 'domino effect' from Scotland's referendum is increasing demands for independence in Italian regions." *LSE: British Politics and Policy*. September 13, 2014. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-domino-effect-from-scotlands-referendum-is-increasing-demands-for-independence-in-italian-regions/> (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)
- Sebastian Balfour. "Catalonia is facing a deeply uncertain future—whether inside or outside of Spain." *LSE EUROPP: European Politics and Policy*. October 6, 2015. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/10/06/catalonia-is-facing-a-deeply-uncertain-future-whether-inside-or-outside-of-spain/> (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)

February 4 (Th): The Post-Communist Context: Still Relevant?

- Zselyke Csaky. “Despite shifts in public opinion, there is still an ‘east-west divide’ on LGBT rights in Europe.” *LSE EUROPP: European Politics and Policy*. September 16, 2014. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2014/09/16/despite-shifts-in-public-opinion-there-is-still-an-east-west-divide-on-lgbt-rights-in-europe/> (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)
- Jan Culik. “Meet Milos Zeman: The Czech Republic’s Answer to Donald Trump.” *The Conversation UK*. December 9, 2015. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/meet-milos-zeman-the-czech-republics-answer-to-donald-trump-52036> (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)

February 9 (Tu): Simulation

- **Simulation Memo #2 due today in D2L Group Locker**

February 11 (Th): Simulation

- **Simulation Memo #3 due today in D2L Group Locker**

February 16 (Tu): The Welfare State

- Jonas Pontusson. 2005. *Inequality and Prosperity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 2 (“Varieties of Capitalism”) [E-Reserves]
- **Simulation Evaluations due on D2L Dropbox**

February 18 (Th): The Welfare State

- Robert Kuttner. 2008. “The Copenhagen Consensus.” *Foreign Affairs* 87 (2): 78-94. [E-Reserves]
- “Women Nudged out of German Workforce.” *New York Times* June 28, 2011. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-FFgermany29.html?pagewanted=1&r=3&src=rechp> [E-Reserves]
- “Inside the Miracle.” *The Economist* March 13, 2010, Special report on Germany, pp. 5-7.
- **First Draft (Research Paper) due (in Group Locker)**

February 23 (Tu): The European Union

- The Schuman Declaration. Available at: <http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration/>
- Gary Marks, Carole J. Wilson, & Leonard Ray. 2002. “National Political Parties and European Integration.” *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (3): 585-94. [E-Reserves]

February 25 (Th): Research Paper Workshop

- **Research Paper Peer Reviews due (in Group Locker)**
- **Screening of *The Class* from 4:30-6:30 PM this evening in Levan 308**

March 1 (Tu): Immigration & Identity

- Ruud Koopmans. 2013. “Fundamentalism and Out-Group Hostility: Muslim Immigrants and Christian Natives in Western Europe.” Available at: https://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/u6/koopmans_englisch_ed.pdf (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)
- Maximilian Popp, Özlem Gezer, & Christoph Scheurmann. “At Home in a Foreign Country.” *Der Spiegel Online*, November 2, 2011. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/at-home-in-a-foreign-country-german-turks-struggle-to-find-their-identity-a-795299.html> [E-Reserves]
- *The Class (Entre les Murs)*. 2008. Directed by Laurent Cantet. In French, with English subtitles.

March 3 (Th): The Radical Right

- Robert Ford & Matthew Goodwin. 2014. *Revolt on the Right: Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 3 (“Origins: A Long Time Coming”), pp. 107-42 [E-Reserves]
- Geoffrey Evans & Jonathan Mellon. 2015. “Working-class votes and Conservative losses: Solving the UKIP puzzle.” *LSE: British Politics and Policy*. April 30, 2015. Available at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/working-class-votes-and-conservative-losses-solving-the-ukip-puzzle/?utm_content=buffer3c9ad&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)

March 8 (Tu): Europe’s Challenges

- George Packer. “The Other France: Are the Suburbs of Paris Incubators of Terrorism?” *The New Yorker*. August 31, 2015. Available at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-other-france> (Access directly; not on E-Reserves)

March 10 (Th): Wrap-Up & Distribute Take-Home Final Exam

- **Research Paper due today!**

Final Exam due on Tuesday, March 15 at 5:00 PM

Research Paper Assignment

This essay of 8-10 pages builds upon course material and independent research to consider the process of democratic representation as it is practiced in various West European societies. The assignment is as follows:

Choose one of the following European states: *Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, or Portugal*. Research the political system of that state. Familiarize yourself with the following details of its political system:

- Executive-legislative relations: is it a parliamentary system, a presidential system, or what? Who is the head of state and what (if any) powers does s/he have?
- Vertical division of power: is it federal or unitary? Is any power devolved to local/regional governments?
- Legislature: is it unicameral or bicameral? If it is bicameral, how are the members of the upper house chosen, and who/what do they represent?
- Electoral system: how are members of the legislature and executive elected?
- Party system: what are the major parties? What ideology and/or constituencies do they represent? Have there been any new parties that have entered the scene in the past 10-20 years? How have patterns of party support changed recently?
- Most recent election: what happened? Who won and lost? What were the major issues?
- Current government: which parties are included? What policies has it attempted to carry out?

Consider the majoritarian and consensus visions of democracy that we have studied. Describe the main criteria and goals of these rival visions. Drawing upon course material and readings, as well as your independent research, write an essay that addresses the following questions:

- What are the main criteria and goals of these two visions?
- Describe and analyze the degree to which the political system of the state that you have chosen performs in terms of fulfilling the criteria of these respective visions of democracy.
- In what ways does the state's political system fulfill each vision of democracy *in practice* and in what ways does it fall short?
- Make sure that you are clear about what institutions you are describing. In keeping with our theme of "values, structures, outcomes", be clear on which you are discussing. Which are the institutions, and which are the outcomes of those institutions?
- How have recent events shown this system to fulfill the goals of each vision? Consider recent elections, major political debates or crises, or legislative/policy debates or accomplishments. How well is the system handling social and economic change?
- Be clear and concise in describing relevant institutions, elections, and events.

Your paper should be organized in the following fashion:

- Introduction and thesis statement. The thesis should be your assessment of the degree to which the state fulfills one or both visions of democracy.
- Your thesis statement should be modeled on the following: "The political system of state X more closely resembles the consensus vision of democracy, but it has several majoritarian features as well."
- Description of the two visions of democracy and the criteria you will use to evaluate the state (i.e., how will you know if it is consensus or majoritarian?).
- Description of the major institutions, parties, and recent events in that state.
- Assessment in which you link the previous two sections together by evaluating the state in terms of the visions of democracy.
- Conclusion

Deadlines

To aid you in writing a strong essay, I require that you submit a first draft and participate in a peer review process. The purpose of these preliminary assignments is to give you an opportunity to receive feedback and to encourage you to begin working early. Take advantage of these opportunities to do good work!

First draft: You will write a complete first draft of the essay. This must be a complete and well-written version of the paper that is ready for evaluation by me and by your classmates. It must include a bibliography of at least five sources at this stage (the final version must include eight). This paper will receive feedback from the instructor and from at least two classmates via the peer review process.

I will also evaluate this first draft to determine if they fit the requirements of the assignment and reflect an adequate level of preparation using a scale of 100 (good), 80 (satisfactory), 50 (unsatisfactory), or 0 (unacceptable/not submitted). Any paper that merits a grade of C- or lower will receive a grade of unsatisfactory. I will also provide feedback on your draft. This grade is worth 7.5% of your final grade.

Research Paper Workshop & Peer Reviews: Students will be divided into groups of 3-4 in which they will present, discuss, and provide oral and written feedback on each other's papers. On the due date for the first draft, each student should upload his/her paper to the D2L Group Locker. This proceeds in two stages.

- First, students will provide written reviews (of 1-2 pages) of each group member's papers. These reviews should be uploaded to the D2L Group Locker. They are due before the start of class on the day of the workshop.
- During the workshop, each member of the group will provide a brief presentation of his/her paper of about 5-7 minutes to the other group members. The group will then discuss the paper, providing feedback based on the reviews and constructive suggestions for improvement. Each student will present his/her paper in turn.

Your participation in this workshop and completion of the peer reviews is worth 7.5% of your final grade.

Final version: Students will revise the first draft based on feedback from the instructor and the peer reviews to produce a final research paper that describes and evaluates a West European state's political systems in light of the normative and institutional criteria of the two visions of democracy. This paper is due in the D2L Dropbox at the start of the final day of class.

Requirements for the final essay:

- The paper may be a **maximum** of 10 pages of text, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins (not including the bibliography). There is no minimum page length, though 7 pages is recommended.
- Do not include a cover sheet. Number pages in the bottom right-hand corner.
- This final essay requires independent research. You must cite at least **eight** outside sources from appropriate academic or journalist media (meaning books, journal articles, or articles from reputable news magazines like *The Economist* or *Der Spiegel*). Entries from Wikipedia, blogs, etc, do not count towards this total.
- You should also cite assigned course readings, though these do not count towards the required sources. Do not cite course lectures or slideshows! If you need to cite a fact or evidence presented in a lecture or slideshow, find it independently.
- Use assigned course materials as a starting point to think about the assignment. Build your arguments and research off of this basic knowledge.

Grading & Style Guide

Each paper will be graded according to the following criteria:

Argumentation (40%):

- Does the paper have a clearly stated thesis in the opening paragraph that addresses the prompt?
- Is the thesis logical and relevant to the assigned prompt?
- Does the body of the paper provide logical arguments that make a convincing case in support of the thesis?
- Is the development of the argument internally cohesive, or are there contradictions in the author's own logic?
- Is the argument fully developed to address the prompt or topic in depth? (see the 2nd guideline below)
- Does the author consider possible rival arguments or objections to the paper's thesis and attempt either to respond to those objections or to acknowledge limitations to the thesis?
- Does the paper show evidence that the author has thought carefully and critically about the prompt?

Analysis & evidence (40%):

- Does the paper draw upon a wide range of appropriate evidence to support the thesis?
- Does the paper employ evidence appropriately (i.e., facts are used in the correct context)?
- Does the evidence presented actually support the paper's thesis?
- Does the paper show evidence of critical thinking about the evidence—for example, that the author has made a thorough and balanced assessment of the evidence—or are there obvious rejoinders or counter-arguments to the evidence presented?
- Does the paper show a clear understanding and appropriate application of concepts drawn from course materials?
- Does the author draw upon credible sources of evidence, such as reputable media sources or academic journals and presses? If using potentially flawed sources such as blogs or Wikipedia, does the author consider the possibility of unreliability?

Quality of writing (20%):

- Is the paper well written and free of errors of grammar and spelling?
- Does the author write using language and tone appropriate for a formal essay, avoiding colloquial language, contractions, slang, or “storytelling” language (e.g., writing as though you were talking)?
- Are individual sentences easy to read and understand?
- Is the paper organized into paragraphs that develop a specific point or argument?
- Do sentences and paragraphs “flow” in such a way that the reader can follow the development of the essay's argument and supporting evidence?
- Does the author cite sources using an appropriate method for the social sciences, providing the necessary information for a reader to verify the source information?
- Does the author number the pages?
- Does the author attach a bibliography containing full reference information organized in an appropriate format?

The grading scale for each dimension is as follows:

- A Excellent work (i.e., I can answer “yes” to nearly all of the questions)
- B Above average work (I can answer “yes” to most of the questions)
- C Satisfactory work (I can answer “yes” to some questions and give a qualified “yes” to some others)
- D Passing, but barely acceptable (I can only give a qualified “yes” to most questions and a

- “yes” to a few questions)
F Unacceptable (At best, I can give a qualified “yes” to any of the questions)

Guidelines:

- Get started early! There is no substitute for time and effort thinking, writing, and editing.
- Think fully and critical about your argument and how to develop it and support it with evidence. If your thesis is “education makes people more likely to participate in politics”, then you need to do two things. First, explain the reasons *why* education has this effect. Is it because education makes people more self-confident, or more aware of politics, or does it simply give them more financial resources and time to get involved? Each of these is a distinct argument; which one are you making? Second, think about the different forms of evidence you could use to support your argument. For example, there are many ways one can participate in politics—voting, volunteering for campaigns, donating money to campaigns or organizations, etc. Can you find evidence on each of these different types of participation?
- Get to the point! Do not spend space summarizing class materials.
- Be precise! Be clear about what you are arguing or what evidence you use to support your argument.
- Provide evidence to support your claims!
- Consider different points of view! Think about how a reader would respond to your arguments.
- In the social sciences, no single thesis is ever 100% correct. That is fine. Acknowledge the limitations to your argument and evidence. Do not ignore obvious objections to your argument.
- “Research” does not solely involve the sources that you cite. You should expect to do a lot of background reading—some of which you will not cite—to learn more about the topic and develop some ideas. It also does not mean simply citing the first five readings you come across.
- Organize your paper! Each paragraph should serve a specific purpose—usually to make a specific argument and support it with some combination of logic and evidence. Treat the first sentence as a “mini-thesis” for that paragraph.
- Proofread! Not only does sloppy writing make it harder to understand an author’s argument, but it also takes away from the credibility of one’s arguments.
- Write professionally! Do not use contractions, slang, or casual language. Do not write like you speak!
- In all of this, remember that you are attempting to demonstrate (through your paper) your knowledge, understanding, and ability to think critically and comprehensively.
- When compiling your bibliography, understand the difference between the publication (i.e., the journal in which the article was published) and online repository in which the contents of the journal is housed (e.g., JSTOR, Academic Search Premier). Cite the journal, not the repository!