

Draft Syllabus

Analyzing American Government

EDPD 501 6F6/CRN 83971

Professor: Catherine E. Rudder

Schlar School of Public Policy and Government

George Mason University

Location: Room 403, Stone Bridge High School, Ashburn, VA

September 13-December 13, 2016 (no class on Nov. 22)



Contact Information

rudder@gmu.edu

202-255-0405 (cell)

202-966-0203 (home)

Office hours: via appointment

I am available for appointments before and after class and by phone and email. Feel free to contact me any time before 10 pm. The Arlington Librarian for Public Policy and Public and International Affairs is **Helen McManus**, 703-993-8268, hmcmanus@gmu.edu. I have found her invariably helpful and knowledgeable. In addition, the GMU Library system is comprehensive. Through it, students have access to scholarship, news and much else in both digital and print form. Go to library@gmu.edu and begin exploring and teaching yourself how to take advantage of this superb resource. I especially recommend your investigating <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/politics>, which will point you toward much of what you will need to complete this course successfully.

Course Description

This graduate course is designed to prepare students to teach introductory American Government at the college level. This objective shapes the decisions I have made regarding assigned reading, other assignments and class discussions. A second feature of the semester is that we will compare American institutions with those in other stable democracies. Underlying this decision is the fact that analyzing a political system in isolation of alternatives can be an arid and meaningless enterprise. As the eminent political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset once observed, “Someone who knows only one country, knows no country.”

Third, the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence will provide the platform from which we will assess the work of U.S. governmental institutions. Fourth, we will employ key concepts that will provide an additional theoretical basis to consider how American politics works. Fifth, we will focus on the policy impact of the functioning of contemporary American government and dilemmas facing democracies today with a particular focus on money and politics and polarization of political parties. My goal is to help you develop the foundation you need to teach introductory American Government at the college level with confidence.

We will meet in seminar fashion supplemented by lectures. Each student will have read the week's assigned reading prior to class and be prepared to discuss it. A student will present one or more ideas of how to teach to college students one of the topics for that week's class.

Every class participant will choose one of the following countries on which to become familiar: Canada, Britain, France, Mexico, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, and Norway. Country experts will know the basic facts about their countries' political systems with a focus on how democracy developed in that nation, how the electoral system works, how the legislature and executive bodies are structured and interact, and the most important problems facing the country; students shall be prepared to compare their countries' political systems and institutions with those of the U.S., to identify the similarities and differences, and to explain the impact of those differences. In addition, members of the class will focus on a specific, pressing policy problem of their choice and analyze how and how well the U.S. political system is dealing with that dilemma in comparison with their chosen country and the likely reasons for the differences.

Course Requirements

*Prepare for one class (TBA) a brief presentation on creative ways to present one or more of the week's topics to unengaged, under informed and perhaps disenchanted college students. The underlying purpose of this pedagogical exercise is to find ways to engage students in American politics and infuse in them a desire to stay informed, participate, use reliable evidence and logic for arguments, see U.S. politics in comparative perspective, be open to others' ideas, be tolerant and empathetic, be careful about sources of information, understand the need for compromise and patience, and in general be good citizens. (10% of grade)

*Write one short paper of 750-800 words (3-4 double spaced pages) elaborating on the assigned reading. For example, if the text says that trust in government has declined in the U.S., the student might find a well-sourced table that shows the decline of trust in U.S. political institutions over time and then find similar data on trust-levels for other professions and for other countries. Then the student would discuss the differences or similarities among these data and hypothesize what might be the source of those similarities and differences. What other evidence might be needed to confirm the hypothesis? In the first class students will be assigned a specific week to present their ideas and hand in their papers. Date due: TBA. (20% of grade)

*For the midterm assignment, due October 25: Write one paper of 1,800 to 2,000 words (7-9 double spaced pages) comparing two or three relevant aspects of the American political system with those of the country on which you are an expert. How are these differences played out? What is the impact of these differences in how the country operates? In this assignment students must demonstrate their command of how institutions work in the U.S. and in the other country. (25% of grade)

* For the final assignment, due December 13, students will choose between two options:

1. Each member of the class choosing this option will focus on a specific policy problem (distinct from that chosen by other students) and analyze in a paper of 2,000 to 2,500 words (9 to 12 double spaced pages) how and how well the U.S. political system is dealing with that dilemma in comparison with the chosen nation-state and convincingly analyze the sources of the differences.
2. Write a paper (same length) assessing the polarization that marks the U.S. political system today. What is its impact on the functioning of American political institutions? Is the level of polarization unique historically and cross-nationally? What is the source of polarization? How did it develop? What might cause it to abate?
(30% of grade)

*Every student is expected to attend and actively participate in each class session. If an emergency should arise necessitating your missing a session, please email me before the date and inform me of the circumstance. Also, for assignments with firm deadlines, if an exigency should arise that precludes turning in the work on time, please be in touch with me directly so that an alternative arrangement can be made. (15% of grade)

Assigned Reading

Books

Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer. 2015. *We the People*. 10th Essentials Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Crick, Bernard. 2002. *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McCarty, Nolan M., Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America : The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Articles

Specific articles are indicated within this syllabus in each weekly session.

Recommended Reading

Smith, Raymond A. 2011. *The American Anomaly: U.S. Politics and Government in Comparative Perspective*, 2nd ed., New York: Routledge.

Other books and articles are indicated within this syllabus in each weekly session.

Weekly Schedule

1. September 13, Introduction of the course and of the idea and development of democracy

Each week please read assignments prior to class. Read Bernard Crick's *Democracy* (2002) for this session

Introduction of students and professor, overview of course, and discussion of assigned reading for today.

Recommended reading:

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53 (1): 69–105.

———. 1994. "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address." *American Sociological Review* 59 (1): 1–22.

2. September 20, Foundations of American government: Some historical context and a consideration the enduring impact of the fundamental documents of the United States

Read *We the People*, pp. 1-61 for this class session. (Don't be daunted by the number of pages I assign from this text each week. You are likely to be quite familiar with the material in *We the People*, as it is an introductory American government text designed for first year college students. We are using this book to prepare you to teach from it or some volume similar to it. I am also assigning some more challenging material that is appropriate for graduate-level study.) Also read the U.S. Constitution in *We the People* (pp. A11-A31) and the Declaration of Independence (pp. A1-A4).

What surprised you in what you read this week? How might you engage a student in this material? What is the importance of the Constitution historically and today? What are the significant differences between the Constitution and the Declaration? To what degree

does the Constitution fit the requirements of a democratic republic? Every democracy is different. Why?

Recommended reading:

Wood, Gordon S. 2011. *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press.

3. **September 27, The U.S. Constitution and federalism: The enduring impact of federalism**

Read selections from *The Federalist Papers* (pp. A33-A50), and Chapter 3 on federalism (pp. 62-90).

What difficulties did the creation of a federalist structure by the Founders address? What difficulties has this structure caused? How does federalism shape American politics? What are some of the advantages of federalism? What are the advantages of a unitary structure?

Recommended reading:

Van Horn, Carl E. 2005. *The State of the States*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005.

4. **October 4, Civil Rights and Liberties**

Read *We the People*, Chapter 4, pp. 92-139; “Know Your Rights” at www.eff.org; “Franklin D. Roosevelt: State of the Union Message to Congress.” 2016. Accessed September 3. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16518>; and Carter, Ian. 2016. “Positive and Negative Liberty.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>.

Consider the ongoing importance of civil rights debates: Voting rights, speech rights, gun rights, privacy rights, equal protection and religious rights. Find the names of the most recent decisions on two of these issues and at least one neutral analysis of each of the two. Where is the right to privacy found in the Constitution? In what way does the First Amendment protect the right to make unlimited campaign contributions? What voting rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and where are they to be found?

ScotusBlog.com is a particularly useful online source for discussion and Cornell Law School’s Legal Information Institute (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/>) for texts of decisions, concurrences, dissents and *amicus curiae* submissions.

Recommended reading:

Solove, Daniel. *Nothing to Hide: The False Tradeoff between Privacy and Security*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011.

Eisgruber, Christopher. *Religious Freedom and the Constitution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Greenberg, Jack. *Crusades in the Courts: How a Dedicated Band of Lawyers Fought for the Civil Rights Revolution*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

“Winning the Vote: A History of Voting Rights | The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.” 2012. July 26. <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/government-and-civics/essays/winning-vote-history-voting-rights>.

Rutenberg, Jim. 2015. “A Dream Undone.” *The New York Times*, July 29. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/magazine/voting-rights-act-dream-undone.html>.

Liptak, Adam. 2016. “Supreme Court Blocks North Carolina From Restoring Strict Voting Law - NYTimes.com.” Accessed September 3.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/01/us/politics/north-carolina-supreme-court-voting-rights-act.html?nytmobile=0>.

5. October 11, Public Opinion and the Media

Read pp. 140-101 of *We the People*. Go to FOIA.gov and review its sections. Be prepared to discuss the Freedom of Information Act, its importance and ways to make use of this act. Read Barthel, Michael. 2016. “Newspapers: Fact Sheet.” *Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project*. June 15.

<http://www.journalism.org/2016/06/15/newspapers-fact-sheet/>; Mitchell, Amy, and Jesse Holcomb. 2016. “State of the News Media 2016.” *Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project*. June 15. <http://www.journalism.org/2016/06/15/state-of-the-news-media-2016/>;

and Jim Rutenberg. 2016. “Pursuit of the News Can Survive As the Newspaper Fades Away,” *Wall Street Journal*. September 5 [Use GMU Library to find this article.]

What difference do these changes make for American democracy? How have the changes affected the public’s ability to exercise its First Amendment rights? Is there a “right to know” included within the Constitution?

Go to Center for Investigative Journalism and ProPublica to see two professional, non-profit outlets for investigative journalism.

Recommended reading:

Center for Internet and Society at Stanford Law School’s Fair Use Project at <http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/> (go to Our Work and click on Projects). Scott London. 2016. “How the Media Frames Political Issues.” 2016. Accessed September 3.

“The Transformation of Network News.” 2016. Accessed September 3.

<http://niemanreports.org/articles/the-transformation-of-network-news/>.

“Whatever Happened to the News? | Center for Media Literacy.” 2016. Accessed September 3. <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/whatever-happened-news>.

6. **October 18, Public Opinion and the Media: Polarization in America (a continuing theme)**

Read Ch. 1 and 2 in *Polarized America*. Do not worry about understanding the details of the statistics; instead, try to get a grasp of the general method and follow the authors' main points. Consider the implications for American democracy of these findings.

Also read fivethirtyeight.com. 2016. "The Polarization Of Red And Blue States From McGovern To Trump, In One Chart." Accessed September 2. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polarization-of-red-and-blue-states-from-mcgovern-to-trump-in-one-chart/>; Hill, Seth, and Chris Tausanovitch. 2016. "No, Americans Have Not Become More Ideologically Polarized." *Washington Post*. Accessed September 4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/13/no-americans-have-not-become-more-ideologically-polarized/>; and Irwin, Neil. 2016. "How a Quest by Elites Is Driving 'Brexit' and Trump - NYTimes.com." Accessed September 5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/upshot/how-a-quest-by-elites-is-driving-brexit-and-trump.html?nytmobile=0>.

What do you conclude from these discussions?

Recommended reading:

Mann, Thomas E., and Norman J. Ornstein. 2012. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books.

See resources from [ScotusBlog.com](http://www.scotusblog.com) on *Citizens United* at <http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/citizens-united-v-federal-election-commission/>

7. October 25: **Midterm paper due.**

Discussion of findings.

Review of the concepts of pluralism, collective action, political cleavages, realignment and party change, and ecological fallacies.

8. November 1: **Parties, Participation, Elections, and Interest Groups**

Read *We the People*, pp. 198-168 and *Polarized America*, Chapter 3.

Elections are administered by the states and their localities. What are the implications of this fact? How and why are states moving to restrict and to extend voting rights? How are districts drawn? What is the meaning of one-person-one-vote? Is gerrymandering permissible? What difference does it make if districts are drawn by non-partisan commissions? What measures might increase political participation? What is a political

party and what is its importance theoretically, historically and in contemporary politics? To what degree are candidates tied to their party labels? What divides parties? Why have parties become more polarized? How important are race and class in American politics today? What are the implications for American democracy and prospects for the future?

How can individuals make a difference in politics? Why should they try? What motivates political activists? Are activists advantaged or disadvantaged by current developments?

Why does the number of political parties vary across democracies? What difference does the number of parties make?

Recommended reading:

Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sorauf, Frank Joseph. 1964. *Political Parties in the American System*. Little, Brown and Company.

9. November 8: Congress

Read *We the People*, pp. 270-309, Chapter 5 of *Polarized America*, and Pacewicz, Josh. 2016. "The Republican Party's Civil War Actually Began Decades Ago." *Washington Post*. Accessed September 3. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/01/the-republican-partys-civil-war-actually-began-decades-ago/>.

Review Federalist #10 and Article 1 of the Constitution.

What are the powers of Congress? How does an idea become a law? Where do those ideas come from? What are the major changes in legislative process in recent years?

How well is Congress performing today? Is Congress adequately staffed? What might account for deficiencies in staffing? What difficulties does the Congress face? Might collective action theory be applicable here?

Is Congress unduly influenced by corporate money?

When has Congress performed well in the past? What aspects were different then?

Recommended reading:

Sinclair, Barbara. 2016. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 5th ed. Los Angeles : Washington, D.C: SAGE ; CQ Press.

Dodd, Lawrence C., and Bruce Ia Oppenheimer, eds. 2013. *Congress Reconsidered*. Tenth edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage/CQ Press.

10. November 15: The Presidency and Bureaucracy

Read *We the People*, pp. 310-367 and Huang, Daniel. 2016. "Trying to Serve More Veterans Faster, VA Opens Door to Disability Fraud." *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, sec. US. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/trying-to-serve-more-veterans-faster-va-opens-door-to-disability-fraud-1468511504>; Dudley, Susan. 2016. "Exploring Regulatory Capture's Unanswered Questions | RegBlog." Accessed September 5. <http://www.regblog.org/2016/07/04/dudley-exploring-regulatory-captures-unanswered-questions/>; Ciaramella, C. J. 2016. "The Freedom of Information Act—and the Hero Who Pioneered It – Pacific Standard." *Medium*. June 29. <https://psmag.com/the-freedom-of-information-act-and-the-hero-who-pioneered-it-868e5b55e7b6#.ukddm4ci9>.

What are the powers of the president? How have they changed over time? What accounts for the changes? What is the Office of the President? What is included in this designation?

Under what circumstances does the president work well with Congress? What is divided party government and how does its existence affect policy outcomes?

What exactly is the executive branch? Is the Federal bureaucracy too large? What holds the bureaucracy accountable? What is rule making and what is its importance? What kinds of organizations exist within the executive branch?

What is red tape? What kinds of conflicts do agencies typically confront in carrying out their missions?

Recommended reading:

Corwin, Edward Samuel. 1976. *Presidential Power and the Constitution: Essays*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Neustadt, Richard E., and Richard E. Neustadt. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: Free Press.
Wood, B. Dan. 1994. *Bureaucratic Dynamics: The Role of Bureaucracy in a Democracy*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994.

Kettl, Donald F. *System Under Stress: The Challenge to 21st Century Governance*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2014.

November 22: No class tonight. Happy Thanksgiving!

11. November 29: The Federal Courts

Read pp. 368-395 of *We the People* and “Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission.” 2016. *SCOTUSblog*. Accessed September 3.
<http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/citizens-united-v-federal-election-commission/>.

Why is the court evenly divided, 4-4? What are the implications of this situation?

How is the U.S. court system structured? How are judges selected at all levels? What difference does the selection process make? What is the importance of judicial review? What holds the courts accountable?

What is due process of law and what is its importance in a democracy? Why are African Americans and civil libertarians unhappy with the courts and the police in the application of force and the incarceration of African Americans? Are judges neutral? What difference does the composition of the Supreme Court make?

What are the most pressing issues facing the Supreme Court today? Can they be resolved?

Recommended reading:

Epstein, Lee. 2007. *Constitutional Law for a Changing America*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Collins, Ronald. 2013. “Foreword: Exceptional Freedom – The Roberts Court, the First Amendment, and the New Absolutism,” 76 *Albany L. Rev.* 409.

12. December 6: Domestic and Foreign Policy

Read *We the People*, pp. 400-461 and Chapter 6 of *Polarized America*.

What are various techniques employed in public policy to ensure compliance with the law? What is redistributive policy? Why are so many spending programs embedded in the tax system and what is the impact on fairness? What is the difference between fiscal and monetary policy? What programs are growing in size and why?

What are the tools of American foreign policy and how effective are they? What is the right balance between security and individual rights? Who decides? Who should decide?

Recommended reading:

Majone, Giandomenico. 1989. *Evidence, Argument, & Persuasion in the Policy Process*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

See “For Further Reading” in *We the People*, pp. 434-435 and 461 for specific policy areas.

13. December 13: Conclusion and Summary

Final paper due.

Recommended reading:

Keller, Josh, and Adam Pearce. 2016. "This Small Indiana County Sends More People to Prison than San Francisco and Durham, N.C., Combined. Why? - NYTimes.com." Accessed September 5. http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/upshot/new-geography-of-prisons.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_up_20160902&nl=upshot&nl_art=0&nlid=4085589&ref=headline&te=1&r=0&referer=.

On Writing and Presentation: Expectations and Ground Rules

"The difference between a right word and an almost right word is the difference between a lightning bug and lightning."

Mark Twain paraphrase

I care very much about the quality of writing and the professionalism of written and oral presentation. **There is no more important skill in professional work than the ability to write coherently, analytically, succinctly, grammatically, and professionally.**

One aspect of professional, convincing presentation is **to use and cite sources appropriately**. The GMU Library provides an Infoguide on citation tools.

All written assignments should be double-spaced with ample margins. Quality of content and writing is what is important, not the amount. In fact, briefer is much better as long as you fulfill the terms of the assignment. **Page and word limits should be followed carefully**, as I do not read beyond the limit set (nor will most of your superiors at work). Please provide a word count at the end of each paper. **Deadlines are firm**. The reason for this rule is that successful professionals meet deadlines.

Editing and Revising

Consider the following thoughts expressed by some excellent writers:

"I have never thought of myself as a good writer. Anyone who wants reassurance of that should read one of my first drafts. But I'm one of the world's great rewriters."

James A. Michener

"There is no great writing, only great rewriting."

Justice Brandeis

"There are days when the result is so bad that no fewer than five revisions are required. In contrast, when I'm greatly inspired, only four revisions are needed."

John Kenneth Galbraith

"...[N]ever...assume that your first draft is right. The first draft, when you're writing, involves the terrible problem of thought combined with the terrible problem of composition. And it is only in the second and third and fourth drafts that you really escape that original pain and have the opportunity to get it right."

John Kenneth Galbraith

As you can see, one key to writing an outstanding paper is to write multiple drafts of it. Expect the first draft to be much too long and to need substantial revision. For a useful exposition of the value of crummy first drafts, see Anne Lamott's essay at <http://buddha-rat.squarespace.com/shitty-first-drafts/>.

Writing Assistance

If you need help in improving your writing skills, be sure to study the front section of the latest edition of **Diana Hacker's** *A Pocket Manual of Style*. Another help, "Grammar Tips" by **Cynthia Harrison**, can be found at the end of this syllabus. You should commit it to memory.

For citations and references, use Chicago author-date system. You will set Zotero's style option to this option. Remember that consistency is the key to proper citation: select a style and stick to it.

About Turning in Your Written Assignments

All assignments are due by the beginning of class and must be turned in to the instructor in printed form and to a location I will identify to you. Simply leave your completed assignments at the front desk as you enter the classroom. **Be sure to keep your assignments available in digital form should the instructor request a digital copy of your work.**

If a paper is more than one page long, do *not* use both sides of a single sheet of paper. When you hand in multiple sheets of paper, please number and staple them. Also, please remember to indent your paragraphs.

Citations with page numbers, indicating the precise location that the idea you are citing can be found, should be provided in the proper form.

When writing your papers...

Assume **your audience** is a reasonably well-educated person with no prior knowledge of the subject matter you are addressing.

University Honor Code [selections; verbatim]

No cheating, plagiarizing, or other unprofessional conduct will be tolerated. (Please see SPP statement below.) These are defined in the University Catalog as follows:

A. **Cheating** encompasses the following:

1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students
2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information
3. Attempted cheating

B. **Plagiarism** encompasses the following:

1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment
2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment

C. **Lying** encompasses the following: The willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Lying to administration and faculty members
2. Falsifying any university document by mutilation, addition, or deletion...

SPP Policy on Plagiarism [verbatim]

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field

of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Academic Accommodation for a Disability

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please email and then make an appointment to see Professor Rudder and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

WRITING TIPS

By

Cynthia Harrison

George Washington University

[Please read and commit to memory.]

1. Use active verbs – have the subject of the sentence perform the action. Use “to be” in all its forms sparingly.

Passive voice: “Class time was devoted principally to discussion of the readings. All students were expected to read thoughtfully and to share their insights and observations with the class.”

Active voice: “This class devoted meeting time principally to discussion of the readings. Students shared insights and observations with the class.”

Note that “passive voice” and “past tense” are different.

“He threw the ball” uses an active verb in the past tense.

“The ball is thrown” uses a passive verb in the present tense.

In the first sentence you know who is performing the action; you don’t know who is throwing the ball in the second sentence.

2. Avoid using “this” as pronoun; follow it with a noun to eliminate confusion about what you mean.

Vague: “Despite data to the contrary, the American public believes that women receiving welfare have a higher birth rate than non-recipients. This is because the media focus on women who do not represent the average welfare mother accurately.”

Clearer: “Despite data to the contrary, the American public believes that women receiving welfare have a higher birth rate than non-recipients. This misperception comes from a media focus on women who do not represent the average welfare mother accurately.”

NEVER use the phrase “This is because” It is both vague and syntactically irregular. (“This is so because” fixes the syntactical problem but it remains vague.)

3. Avoid labels, jargon, slang, colloquialisms. Use the word “incredible” only when you mean the person genuinely can’t be believed.
4. Quotations: Whenever you use someone else’s words, you must enclose them in double quotation marks. (If the selection is longer than five lines, indent *instead of* using quotation marks. Don’t use italics to indicate a quote. Italics denote foreign phrases, court cases, and titles; they are also used for emphasis.) You must also include a citation to the source, including a page number. You should use direct quotations from sources rarely – only when the precise wording is essential to your point. Otherwise, synthesize and paraphrase. However, when you do quote from either a secondary or a primary source, you must introduce the quoted material in the text explaining who the speaker is, not just drop it in without warning.

Examples of introductions:

As historian Alice Kessler-Harris noted: “. . .” [or]
 In the words of political scientist Cynthia Burack, “. . . . “
 “. . . .”

In addition, quotations must fit syntactically in the sentence. Add words in brackets or delete words and use ellipses, if necessary. **NOTE: A quotation within a quotation requires single quotation marks; quoted material within the body of an indented quotation requires double quotation marks.**

5. Ellipses: Omit ellipses at the beginning and end of quotations. Use three periods, each separated by a space [. . .], for omissions within sentences and four periods [. . . .] for omissions that include the end of a sentence. (Do not include the brackets.)
6. Don't repeat yourself. Vary your choice of words. (See examples of introductions to quotations, above.)
7. Spell out numbers of one or two words; use numerals for others, except at the beginning of a sentence. If you must use a number as the first word in a sentence, spell it out. Use numerals with “percent” and spell “percent” rather than using the percent sign.
8. Use apostrophes to denote possession EXCEPT for “its.” “It's” means ONLY “It is.” The possessive form of “its” has no apostrophe. Plurals do not use apostrophes unless they are being used as a possessive. E.g. “The Harrisons came to dinner.” But: “This is Professor Harrison's class.” And: “This is the Harrisons' car.”
9. Avoid the word “things,” as in “Things changed rapidly.” Use a specific phrase: “The political context changed rapidly.”
10. Avoid the first person in formal writing (“I think the evidence fails to support the thesis”). The statement “The evidence fails to support the thesis” suffices. If you must include your own response, use the third person: “This reader finds that the evidence fails to support the thesis.”
11. Avoid contractions in formal writing.