

Syllabus for PLSC 425, Section 001
Government and Politics of the American States
Fall 2022
TTh 3:05 am – 4:20 pm, Olmsted C-212

Professor: Dr. Daniel J. Mallinson

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Class Hashtag	#plsc425
Course Webpage	Link

Course Description: While our attention is most often drawn to the political happenings in Washington, D.C., a great deal of the policymaking that impacts our daily lives occurs in statehouses across the 50 states. Indeed, state governments legislate on issues including welfare, healthcare, social policies, education, infrastructure, and many others. Understanding how state institutions and behavior shape policy outcomes is substantively interesting, but the states also provide political scientists with leverage over larger questions, including power, representation, and responsiveness. They do so by providing a comparative context for testing how variation in institutions and political behavior relate to these broader concepts. This course will address both how the states themselves are substantively interesting, as well as how they are used to understand broader issues in political science.

Prerequisites: There are no specific prerequisites for this course, however it will be very helpful to have a basic understanding of the structure and function of government in the United States.

Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Goal 1: Students will learn how and why state governments differ
 - Objective 1.A: Students will be able to identify basic differences in state institutions
- Goal 2: Students will learn how to critically evaluate how variation in political institutions influences political outcomes in the states
 - Objective 2.A: Students will be able to read and interpret scholarly articles that use the states for comparative analysis

- Objective 2.B: Students will be able to analyze, synthesize, and report differences in state policy and their causes and effects
- Goal 3: Students will build oral and written communication skills
 - Objective 3.A: Students will be able to research a policy problem that is personally important to them and relevant to Pennsylvania and write a policy briefing for submission to a state official
 - Objective 3.B: Students will present a briefing to the class on their topic and field questions from their peers about their policy proposals

Methods for Learning and Teaching: This course will contain a mix of lecture and class discussion. It is vital for your own comprehension of the course material that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings and any relevant happenings in the news. Assignments will test your comprehension of the course material and a policy briefing and comparative policy paper will help you develop important writing skills that have practical “on the job” application.

Reaching Our Goals

Nearpod: We will be using Nearpod in each class throughout the semester. It will be the means for delivering slides and facilitating participation in the course. Each day I will take attendance through Nearpod and there will be interactive activities in most classes. Nearpod can be used on any device connected to the Internet (laptop, smartphone, iPad). Please let me know right away if you are unable to access the Nearpod [website](#) or app ([Apple](#), [Google Play](#)).

Attendance: Your attendance in class is always expected. Attending class will allow you to keep up with the course and provide for meaningful discussion as a class. I will be taking attendance in order to grade participation, but also as a way to get to know you. Please contact me via [e-mail](#) if you are unable to attend class. I will follow the University’s attendance policy when it comes to excused absences. See <https://handbook.psu.edu/content/class-attendance>.

Preparation and Participation: I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read. Contributing to class discussion will make the course more interesting and will enhance your understanding of the material. Furthermore, it is helpful to keep up with current policy debates in the news, since they will be useful for reinforcing the concepts discussed in class.

Discussion Ground Rule #1 is Respect: We will be discussing some tough public policy problems in this course. There will inevitably be divergent opinions, some of them

very strong, amongst the class. It is important that you be respectful of your peers and their opinions, lived experiences, and beliefs.

Do Not Suffer in Silence: Please do not suffer in silence throughout the course if you are struggling. Instead, let me know — as soon as possible — what things are not making sense and we can work it out. If you are having a problem of any kind in the course, please talk to me about it as soon as possible.

Be Flexible: While the syllabus represents an agreement between us, I reserve the right to revise and modify it throughout the course, if it is necessary to achieve our goals. Situations beyond either of our control can also emerge that require changes to the course. I will notify you right away when any changes are made.

Current Events: Politics happens in real time and the material we cover in class relates to these events. This is a great opportunity to become informed about national, state, and local policy developments. We will regularly discuss current events that are related to the class. Please be aware of what is going on, particularly as it relates to government bureaucracy. I will regularly tweet news stories relevant to our class using the hashtag #plsc425. If you don't know where to start in finding news, just ask me.

E-mail Policy: I will work to respond to e-mails by the next business day. This means that e-mails sent on the weekends will be responded to by Monday.

Readings

The following book is required for the course:

Simon, Christopher, Brent S. Steel, and Nicholas P. Lovrich. 2018. *State and Local Government and Politics: Prespects for Sustainability*. Open Textbook Library. CC-BY-NC-SA. <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/862>.

Additional required readings that are not from the Simon et al. book will be made available on Canvas.

Lecture Slides

I will be using lecture slides throughout the course. These will be uploaded to the [course website](#) and Canvas prior to each class period.

Assessing Your Progress Towards Our Goals

The following assessments will be used to track your progress towards meeting our course goals: topical essays, a written and oral policy briefing, a comparative policy paper, attendance, and participation. Each component represents the following percentage of your final grade:

Comparative Policy Paper	25%
Oral Policy Briefing	20%
Written Policy Brief	30%
Reflection Questions	20%
Participation, Discussion, and Attendance	5%

We will use the following grade scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	77 to 79
C	73 to 76
C-	70 to 72
D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

State Policy Projects: For this course, you will be choosing a policy problem of personal interest. You will choose this early on in the course and will use it to complete several assignments.

Comparative Policy Paper: The first assignment that you will complete on your chosen policy topic is a longer research-style paper about the nature and scope of the problem; how that problem affects Pennsylvania; the potential options that have been proposed for solving that problem; and the experiences a comparison to at least one other state that has the same problem/policy. This will provide a base of information for crafting your own proposal for solving the problem.

Policy Brief: Throughout the remainder of the semester, you will craft a shorter policy brief in which you will make practical, implementable, recommendations for solving the problem in Pennsylvania.

Legislative Hearing: Towards the end of the course we will spend two weeks holding legislative hearings where you will be placed on a panel with other students and provide a brief statement (5–10 minutes) on your policy topic and recommendation(s). The rest of the class will act like a legislative committee and ask you questions about your proposal. They will also provide me feedback on your presentation, which will not determine your presentation grade, but will be one factor. I will share this feedback with you for the purpose of helping you improve your final policy brief.

Details for all three policy assignments can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Deadlines	
Assignment	Due Date
Policy Topic	September 8
Comparative Policy Paper	October 6
Hearings	December 6 and 8
Final Policy Brief	December 13

Reflection Questions: Many weeks I will be posting reflection questions on Canvas based on our readings and Tuesday’s class material. The questions should be answered on Canvas and we’ll draw from them during Thursday classes. All sets of questions are required, but students have two tokens they can use during the semester to receive full credit on questions that they do not want to or do not have time to answer. Simply submit “I am using one of my tokens” to receive credit for that week. This gives everyone some flexibility in completing their work.

Participation: Attending class is incredibly important. It not only enriches the learning experience for yourself and your classmates, but also prepares you for succeeding in the working world. Thus, attendance and participation will represent 5 percent of your final score. See [Appendix B](#) for participation grading guidelines.

Students also have an obligation to notify me within the first three weeks of the semester if they will miss any class session due to a religious observance. I am pleased to do this, but will need notification in order to plan make-up work.

Make-Up Grades: You are allowed to make-up academic work only in the case of excused absences. These absences may include missing class for a [University-sanctioned activity \(with proper documentation\)](#), [illness](#), [religious observance](#), or [family responsibilities](#). If you know in advance that you are going to miss class, please contact me before the absence to make arrangements for completing the work. If you are absent for an unexpected reason, please check in with me as soon as possible. You will have one week from the day of your return to class to make up a missed assignment.

Illness: If you are not feeling well or if you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, DO NOT COME TO CLASS. I cannot stress this strongly enough. We are counting on you to help contain the spread of the virus (and other illnesses) on campus by self-isolating if you have a fever, feel unwell, or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive or is showing symptoms.

Academic Integrity Academic dishonesty is not limited to simply cheating on an exam or assignment. The following is quoted directly from the *PSU Faculty Senate Policies for Students* regarding academic integrity and academic dishonesty: “Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.”

All University and Penn State Harrisburg policies regarding academic integrity/academic dishonesty apply to this course and the students enrolled in this course. Refer to the following URL for further details on the academic integrity policy of Penn State Harrisburg: <https://harrisburg.psu.edu/academics/academic-guidelines-and-policies>. Each student in this course is expected to work entirely on her/his own while taking any exam, to complete assignments on her/his own effort without the assistance of others unless directed otherwise by the instructor, and to abide by University and Penn State Harrisburg policies about academic integrity and academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty can result in an assignment of “F” or “XF” as the final grade for the student.

Disability Access

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. Penn State values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. Every Penn State campus has a Student Disability Resources office. Student Disability Resources at Penn State Harrisburg is located in the Student Enrichment Center Room 205. The Assistant Director of Student Disability Resources, Alan Babcock, can be reached via email at aub15@psu.edu or phone 717-948-6025.

To receive consideration for accommodations, please contact Student Disability Resources (SDR), participate in an intake interview, provide documentation of your disability, and complete an online Introductory Questionnaire. Please know that you are not required to already have documentation to begin the process with SDR, as SDR can assist with the process of requesting accommodations. Additional information is available on the (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/student-disability-resources>). If the documentation supports

requests for reasonable accommodations, SDR will provide you with an accommodations letter, which you can then give to your professors. Please know that requests for accommodations and support must be initiated by the student and communication with professors regarding the approved accommodations must be initiated by the student. You will receive accommodations after you give your accommodations letter to your professors. It is recommended that you share your accommodations letters with your professors as early in the semester as possible. Professors do not provide accommodations retroactively.

Counseling Services

Success in college depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Please recognize that some stress and anxiety is a normal part of life and the college experience, and it can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Penn State Harrisburg has a number of support options listed in this syllabus.

If you are experiencing issues that feel unmanageable, you reach the point that you have difficulty concentrating and/or feeling motivated, or have anxiety or feelings of depression that interfere with your ability to take care of yourself or your daily responsibilities, please consider talking with someone in CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services). We have a range of services to help you navigate issues that are impacting your ability to be healthy, well, and productive at college.

You can learn more about the confidential mental health services available on campus by visiting the [Counseling and Psychological Services website](#) or by calling (717) 948-6025 Monday through Friday 8am to 5pm. CAPS is located on the 2nd floor of the Student Enrichment Center, Suite 205. You can access crisis services 24/7/365 by calling 1-877-229-6400 or by texting “LIONS” to 741741. Find us on Instagram or on [Facebook](#).

Educational Equity

Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and/or incivility due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity at the Report Bias site: <https://equity.psu.edu/reportbias>. Penn State’s Code of Conduct can be found at the following link: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>.

Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Penn State Harrisburg at 717-948-6016, and to Equity & Compliance at 717-948-4381 or in person in Olmsted E125.

Mandated Reporting

Penn State is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, or physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University's educational mission, and will not be tolerated. Gender-based and sexual harassment, including sexual violence, are forms of gender discrimination in that they deny or limit an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from University programs or activities. For reporting resources, and support, please visit titleix.psu.edu.

Penn State strongly encourages all members of the campus community to take appropriate action by providing support and encouraging those impacted by such incidents to submit a report to the Title IX Coordinator. You may also submit a report online by using the Incident Report Form found here: Office of Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response Incident Report Form. If the University Title IX staff receives information about an incident, they will reach out to offer information about resources, rights, and procedural options available to you.

At Penn State Harrisburg, your point of contact is:

Nicholas Paesano Sexual Misconduct Resource Person Penn State Harrisburg E-126 Olmsted Building 717-948-4385

Penn State's Title IX Coordinator is: Suzanne Adair, Interim Title IX Coordinator 222 Boucke Building University Park, PA 16802 814-867-0099 titleix@psu.edu

Other resources that are available include:

- Penn State Harrisburg Counseling and Psychological Services, SEC 205 - 717-948-6025
- Department of Safety & Police
 - Campus Police: 717-979-7976
 - Local Police: 717-543-2200 or 911
- YWCA Confidential Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services: 1-800-654-1221 (available 24/7)

- Contact Helpline: 800-932-4616 (24-hour community crisis hotline)
- Pinnacle Health Harrisburg: 717-782-3131
- Penn State Harrisburg Student Health Services, 220 Capital Union Building: 717-948-61015
- Penn State Hotline: 800-560-1637 (Anonymous reporting)

In Case of Emergency In the event of a University-wide emergency, course requirements, classes, deadlines, and grading schemes are subject to changes that may include alternative delivery methods, alternative methods of interaction with the instructor, class materials, and/or classmates, and a revised semester calendar and/or grading scheme.

For more general information about the emergency situation, please refer to:

- Penn State Harrisburg's home page at <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/>
- PSUAlert (<http://psualert.psu.edu/psualert/>). This is a service designed to alert the Penn State community via text messages to cell phones when situations arise on campus that affect the ability of the campus - students, faculty and staff - to function normally. Everyone is encouraged to sign up to receive the text alerts.
- Messages will be placed at the 717-948-6000 campus phone number

In the case of a University-wide emergency, please refer to the following about changes in this course:

- Canvas: <https://psu.instructure.com/courses/2116052>
- Instructor's email: mallinson@psu.edu

Basic Needs Statement

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Office of Student Affairs (syw10@psu.edu, 717-948-6180) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable him to provide any resources that he may possess.

Writing Tutoring and Other Academic Support

The Russell E. Horn Sr. Learning Center may have a tutor who can assist you with this course. An appointment is recommended. Appointments are available in-person or on Zoom, depending on your preference.

To make an appointment:

Visit: Student Enrichment Center Room 201 Or go to: starfish.psu.edu and click on “My Success Network” Or call: 717-948-6475 Or email: PSHLearningCtr@psu.edu

The Learning Center can help you in a variety of ways:

Academic Success Coaches Get help with time management, organization, test-taking, study skills, as well as speech and presentation preparation and delivery.

Subject Area Tutoring Courses including accounting, biological and behavioral science, computer science, economics, finance, mathematics, physical sciences, statistics, engineering, and some world languages are supported by peer and professional tutoring.

Writing Get help with the development of essays, papers, resumes, cover letters, scholarship applications and much more. We can help at any stage from brainstorming ideas to citing sources to polishing your final product.

The Lambert Undergraduate Advising Center can assist you with exploring majors and minors, understanding academic policies, and planning courses for future semesters.

Drop-in Quick Question Advising is available during the semester both in-person and online (no appointment necessary!). See dates, times, and locations at: bit.ly/whatsnextbgb

To contact the Advising Center:

Visit: Student Enrichment Center Room 204 Or call: 717-948-6604 Or email: HBGAdvisingCenter@psu.edu

Course Schedule

We will attempt to follow this schedule as closely as possible, but we may take more time on some concepts and less time on others. For this reason, a digital version of this syllabus can be found on [my website](#). Slides used in class will also be posted on the online syllabus and Canvas before class. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class or via e-mail and the online syllabus will be constantly up-to-date. Required course readings are listed and due dates for assignments are in bold. Links to some additional readings are included in the syllabus on my website, others will be uploaded to Canvas. If you have trouble, please do not hesitate to [e-mail](#) me.

Week 1: Introduction

- August 23: Introduction to the class and each other
 - No reading
- August 25: Sustainable Governance
 - Simon [Chapter 1](#)
- August 27: **Last Day of Add/Drop**

Week 2: Federalism

- August 30: Federalism
 - Simon [Chapter 2](#)
- September 1: Federalism Today
 - Konisky, David M. and Paul Nolette. 2022. “[The State of American Federalism 2021-2022: Federal Courts, State Legislatures, and the Conservative Turn in the Law.](#)” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 52(3): 353-381.
 - **Federalism Questions Due by Class**

Week 3: Trust, Social Capital, and Political Culture

- September 6: Concepts and Sustainability
 - Simon [Chapter 3](#)

- September 8: Application
 - Pew Research Center. “[Public Trust in Government: 1958-2022](#)”
 - Sawhill, Isabel V. 2020. *[Social Capital: Why We Need It and How We Can Create More of It](#)*. Brookings Institution.
 - **Policy Topic Due**
 - **Sustainability Questions Due by Class**

Week 4: Key Actors and APSA

- September 13: Key Actors
 - Simon [Chapter 4](#)
- September 15: APSA
 - No in-person class
 - Work on comparative policy research

Week 5: Constitutions

- September 20: Comparing Constitutions
 - Simon [Chapter 5](#)
- September 22: Stigma Research Conference
 - No in-person class
 - **Actors and Constitutions Questions Due by Class**

Week 6: Legislatures

- September 27: Comparing Legislatures
 - Simon [Chapter 6](#)
- September 29: Legislative Challenges
 - FiveThirtyEight. 2022. “[What Redistricting Looks Like in Every State.](#)”

- Thomson-DeVeaux, Amelia and Nathaniel Rakich. 2022. “[What It Would Mean if the Supreme Court Embraces and Extreme Legal Theory.](#)” *FiveThirtyEight*. July 7.
- Herenstein, Ethan and Thomas Wolf. 2022. “[The Independent State Legislature Theory Explained.](#)” *The Brennan Center for Justice*. June 6.
- **Legislatures Questions Due by Class**

Week 7: Executives

- October 4: Direct Democracy
 - Listen to this [When the People Decide](#) podcast and complete questions on Canvas before Thursday’s class
- October 6: Comparing Governors
 - Simon [Chapter 7](#)
 - **Comparative Policy Paper Due**

Week 8: Courts

- October 11: Courts of Last Resort
 - Simon [Chapter 8](#)
- October 13: Court Debate
 - Bonneau, Chris. 2018. *[The Case for Partisan Judicial Elections.](#)* The Federalist Society.
 - Lambda Legal. “[The Problem With Judicial Elections.](#)”
 - Shepherd, Joanna and Michael S. Kang. “[Partisan Justice: How Campaign Money Politicizes Judicial Decisionmaking in Election Cases.](#)” American Constitution Society.

Week 9: Public Administration

- October 18: Comparing Administration
 - Simon [Chapter 9](#)

- October 20: Contemporary Challenges
 - National Academy of Public Administration. Read about each of the “[Grand Challenges in Public Administration](#).”
 - **Administration Questions Due by Class**

Week 10: Budgeting

- October 25: The Budget Task
 - Simon [Chapter 10](#)
- October 27: The California Budget Simulation
 - We will complete in class

Week 11: Entitlements

- November 1: Entitlements
 - Simon [Chapter 11](#)
- November 3: Contemporary Challenges
 - Kaiser Family Foundation. 2022. “[Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions: Interactive Map](#).” July 21.
 - Go to Google’s [video search website](#) and type in “entitlements.” There are many videos of elected officials, commentators, and interest groups of all ideological orientations. Try to identify videos of different perspectives, watch a couple, then see what you think of the various perspectives. Many of the videos will argue that entitlements are not sustainable with the upcoming retirement of many “baby boomers” (the generation born in the middle of the twentieth century).
 - **Entitlements Questions Due by Class**

Week 12: Other Services

- November 8: Traditional and Visible Services
 - Simon [Chapter 12](#)

- November 10: Mass Incarceration
 - Sawyer, Wendy and Peter Wagner. 2022. “[Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie](#).” Prison Policy Initiative. March 14.

Week 13: Pulling It All Together

- November 15: Marijuana Politics
 - Zhang, Mona and Paul Demko. 2022. “[Where Cannabis Legalization Efforts Stand Across the Country](#).” *Politico*. August 3, 2022.
- November 17: Marijuana Politics
 - **Cannabis Questions Due by Class**

Week 14: Thanksgiving

- November 22
 - No Class
- November 24
 - No Class

Week 15: Choose Your Own Adventure

- November 29: TBD
 - TBD
- December 1: TBD
 - TBD

Week 16: Legislative Hearings

- December 6: Hearing Day 1
 - Read Smith Chapter 9 (see Canvas) to prepare

- December 8: Hearing Day 2
 - Read Smith Chapter 9 (see Canvas) to prepare

Week 17: Finals Week

- December 13: Policy Brief due by 5:00 pm via Canvas dropbox

Appendices

A Policy Assignments

A.1 Comparative Policy Paper

This assignment will help you familiarize yourself with the state policy problem that you will be studying throughout the semester. This is a medium-sized research-style paper which should address the following things:

1. A general description of the nature and scope of the policy problem.
2. How the problem affects Pennsylvania.
3. How at least one other state has tackled the problem.
4. Whether there are other actors in the federal system that must work with Pennsylvania to solve the problem. Examples include the federal government and neighboring states.
5. A description of the proposals, as well as the sources of those proposals, that have been made in Pennsylvania to solve the problem and how those proposals could be informed by policy in other states.
6. An evaluation of the barriers to and opportunities for successful passage of these proposals.

Due Date: October 6

A.2 Legislative Hearings

Members of the public and private sectors that work on complex policy problems not only have to present their ideas in writing, they often have to also present them orally. This assignment will help you build skills in presenting a complicated policy problem and a proposed solution in a manner that is clear to the listener. It will also help you learn how to field questions from your audience.

Students will be assigned to panels that will present an oral version of their draft policy brief to the class. This presentation must not exceed 5 minutes. PowerPoint is optional. The hearings will be held December 6 and 8. Students in the class will ask questions as if they were members of a legislative committee considering the proposals.

Students will be graded using the following criteria:

1. Presentation of the topic/problem (20 points)
2. Presentation of proposed solutions – not just your chosen solution (30 points)
3. Presentation of your recommendation(s) (40 points)
4. Style and clarity (5 points)
5. Time management (5 points)

A.3 Policy Brief

A policy brief is a “short, neutral summary of what is known about a particular issue or problem. Policy briefs are a form of report designed to facilitate policy-making.”¹ Writing clear and accurate briefs is an essential skill of successful professionals in the political and business realms. A skillfully crafted brief has many advantages, including (1) improving the reader’s understanding of the topic, (2) saving time by making the information available to many people at once, (3) providing the basis for securing an agreement among contending people, and (4) providing a written record that may become important in reviewing the history of decisions made within the organization.

In this course, you will write a brief on a policy problem of interest to you. It should be the same problem that you write about in your comparative policy paper. Each brief must be no longer than two pages, single-spaced with double columns. Exceeding this limit will result in a one letter grade deduction for the assignment. The brief should have one inch margins and 12 point font. See the following [link](#) for an example brief. Do not include any University logos in your brief.

You will select the topic for your brief and need to inform me of your selection by **September 8**. Finally, you will be required to brief the class on your policy recommendations during our week of legislative hearings (December 6 and 8). More instructions on this will be given later.

Your grades will be based on meeting the requirements of the brief and upon the evaluation of content, form, and grammar. Remember that polished, persuasive writing is expected. Feel free to use quotations, examples and data as well; just be sure to stay within the two-page limit.²

Due Date: December 13

¹Eisele, F. Preparing a Policy Brief Issue [PDF Document]. Retrieved from https://www.courses.psu.edu/hpa/hpa301_fre1/IBInstructions_fa02.PDF

²Adapted from Dr. Christine Kelleher Palus

B Participation Grading Guidelines

A = A student earning an A comes to nearly all classes prepared and can demonstrate superior comprehension of the material. They contribute to the class conversation, but don't dominate it. They make thoughtful contributions that advance conversation, showing interest in and respect for others views. They are demonstrably engaged in course material and content.

B = A student earning a B misses only a few classes, but attends having completed the readings and is able to demonstrate comprehension of the readings, perhaps lacking fully integrated views toward the material. They make thoughtful comments when called upon, show respect and interest in other students views, and occasionally contribute without prompting. This student is making a good-faith effort to participate in class, but may not have the integration of ideas of an A student or may not participate as often.

C = A student earning a C misses several classes, but arrives having completed the readings and able to discuss their most basic tenets. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class and gives only minimal answers when called upon. They are putting forward some effort, but appear to be uninterested in the material and do not participate much without prompting.

D = A student earning a D misses close to half of the classes, and when present has difficulty positively contributing. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class, and when prompted, gives responses that may be off-topic and demonstrate a lack of knowledge or preparedness. They are putting forth less than average effort in the course and may be having a negative impact on others.

F = A student earning an F misses over half of the classes, and when present, cannot demonstrate they have read the material or thought about the concepts. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class and does not give answers related to the question being asked when prompted. They do not appear to be interested in the content of the class and are putting forth a very minimal level of effort.³

³Adapted from [Dr. Zachary Baumann](#).