

# Public Policy

## Research Essay

In a 12-14+ page essay, written in 12-point Times New Roman font, following either Turabian or APA citations styles as well as the conventional expectations of grammar, logic and rhetoric, write a research essay on either the origins of a certain policy, or an assessment of a policy. Follow the general outline, and submit the essay in phases, due on Moodle. The following outline is only my suggestion, so feel free to diverge from it. Though each essay should include a discussion of both current scholarly sources and original historic or political science sources.

### Option 1 Origins of a Policy

#### Topic Selected – Friday, February 5

- Write a brief summary of the topic you're interested in and submit it through Moodle.

#### Phase I – Due Friday, February 19

- **Introduction.** Give a general overview of the policy you are studying – whether a federal, state or local law. Why is it important for American life? (1-2 paragraphs). Then include:
  - A review of the current scholarship. What have recent scholars in academic books and journals said? What are their theses? (1 paragraph each)
  - Your proposed thesis (or possible theses, if you're unsure) in one short paragraph.

#### Phase II – Due Friday, April 2

- **Problem Assessment.** Explain what the problem was that lawmakers felt the need to address – an ongoing problem, or looming crisis? Who were the key legislators or executives involved – whether supporters or critics? Who were the key interest groups? (2-3 paragraphs)
- **Policy Formation.** What was the proposed bill? How did it make its way through the legislature? What was the executive's response (presidential signing statements, etc.)? (2-3 paragraphs based on primary sources)

#### Final Draft – Due Friday, April 23

- **Policy Administration.** How was the law implemented? How was it administered? (2-3 paragraphs based on primary sources)
- **Conclusion.** Sum everything up and restate your thesis. What does this teach us about the policy-making process? In your opinion, was this policy successful in pursuing the common good? If it failed, what did it get wrong? (1-2 paragraphs)

### Option 2 Policy Assessment

#### Topic Selected – Friday, February 5

- Write a brief summary of the topic you're interested in and submit it through Moodle.

#### Phase I – Due Friday, February 19

- **Introduction.** Give a general overview of the policy you are studying – whether a federal, state or local law. Why is it important for American life? (1-2 paragraphs). Then include:
  - A review of the current scholarship. What have recent scholars in academic books and journals said? What are their theses? (1 paragraph each)
  - Your proposed thesis (or possible theses, if you're unsure) in one short paragraph.

#### Phase II – Due Friday, April 2

- **Origins.** Explain the circumstances in which the policy was made. Who were its major supporters and critics, whether legislative or executive? How was it first administered? (2-3 paragraphs based on primary sources)
- **Reception.** What was the public reaction to the new law, whether in the media or public opinion? How was it viewed by later officials, pundits, academics or interest groups? (2-3 paragraphs based on primary sources)

#### Final Draft – Due Friday, April 23

- **Impact.** How did the policy shape American life over a certain period (e.g., five years after it was implemented, or more recently)? How was it criticized? How was it praised? (2-3 paragraphs based on primary sources)
- **Conclusion.** Sum everything up and restate your thesis. In your opinion, was this policy successful in pursuing the common good? If it failed, what did it get wrong? (1-2 paragraphs)

### Essay Rubric

**Content (60%).** Engagement with the research.

- **Thesis.** The main argument is clearly stated, ideally in a single-sentence paragraph. (E.g., “In this essay, I argue...”)
- **Academic Sources.** There is an adequate discussion of at least two academic sources in the introduction.
- **Primary Sources.** All claims are supported with well-integrated quotes from the primary source research.

**Writing (30%).** The essay is well-written.

- **Grammar.** It shows correct use of grammar, punctuation, and word-choice.
- **Logic.** The thesis is clearly supported with persuasive logical arguments based on quotes from the sources.
- **Rhetoric.** The essay is written in a clear and persuasive style that conveys the author’s meaning.

**Form (10%).** The essay is organized, and follows all citation methods.

- **Structure.** The essay is well-structured and orderly.
- **Citations.** All quotes are cited using MLA format. There is no need to cite basic facts.
- **Bibliography.** All academic sources are listed in bibliographic form. (No need to list primary sources, e.g., newspaper clippings, speeches, letters, etc.)