Prompt & Guidelines for Reflection Papers, POLS 200, American Political System – HYBRID

The writing and reflection component of this section of POLS 200 includes completion of three Reflections Papers. Per the syllabus, each paper is worth 6% of your Final Course Grade.

Students will complete THREE reflection papers (3-4) pages in length. The papers will be based on course readings and the in-class lecture meetings. These papers are due ONE WEEK AFTER class (by the following Friday at noon, via email to your T.A.). Late assignments of these Reflection Papers are not accepted.

Written assignments in this course are to be typed, double-spaced, with the pages numbered. Margins should be 1” on the top, bottom, and left-hand side of the page, and 1 ½” on the right-hand side. A 12-point font should be used (this memo is typed with a 12-point font). Where appropriate, documentation of sources is required. Please note that the Political Science Department requires the use of the Chicago (also called Turabian) citation format. This is the style presented in Kate Turabian’s, A Manual for Writers, 7th Edition. It is strongly recommended that you purchase a copy of this manual especially if you are a Political Science major.

Professors assign reflection papers so they can see how much your thinking moves from Point A to Point B. Therefore, a reflection paper, from a writing standpoint, can be a challenge. In this handout, we demonstrate some ways to do well on this assignment. Here are some scenarios:

- Your class readings challenged you to think (or feel) a different way;
- The lecture and/or materials challenged you in a particular manner;
- Be critical of what you are told, not negative, but inquisitive. How so? Explain, reflect.

The Pre-Game: Structuring Your Paper & Before You Write…

To structure your paper, consider some of the ideas below:

- Begin with the most important facet of the lecture or reading related to some aspect of the reading or course materials and how you moved from point A to point B;
- Focus your paper on the thesis of this movement (for example, “From this presentation, we learned how important it is for ….to. . . .”);
- Explain that movement using examples;
- Weave in the readings or materials, as appropriate, from class (don’t leave these out!);”
- Respond in a professional manner—respectful of others’ point of view;
- As needed, speak with the Professor, your T.A. or the SSU Writing Center at: (https://www.sonoma.edu/writingcenter/) if you experience difficulty writing.
After Structuring Your Paper, Actually Writing Reflection Papers

If you’ve done the reading and attended the lectures, you are bound to have some opinions and thoughts about the materials presented. You may even have learned something. Ideally, this will be something about the course material and/or about your own reflections on what was presented. Now, really think here – what insights do you have after having completed these activities? THIS is what we want to read.

A reflection paper is not about venting, telling your secrets, or simply detailing why you feel X. Rather, this is about sharing a discovery of something significant. These papers can: foster greater understanding of an experience, help you apply concepts and course learning, make the ideas more concrete and prove to faculty that you understand and can integrate the course material.

The “So What” you attach to your paper is what makes all the difference. When writing your paper, first hone in on a thesis. What is the significance of the experience you are reflecting on? Why is it important? Why is it worth writing about? Why is it worth knowing or learning about here? Try to write as vividly as you can about the people, events, places, readings you did and how they relate to the course material & lecture. Write actively. Organize your thoughts. Proofread carefully. Avoid things like, “I feel…; I think; I believe;” and in the passive voice. Further guidelines are below.

POL 200
Spring 2018
Sample Essay Outline Template – Guide for Your Writing

Introduction – What is your point?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Thesis Statement (introduce three major points)
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

1st Major Point
Topic Sentence:_______________________________________________________________________
1. ______________________________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________________________
Conclusion & Transition:______________________________________________________________

Repeat above for 2nd & 3rd Major Points

Conclusion (restate thesis in a different way)
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________