

Independent Study (PS 399-002)
University of Pennsylvania
Washington Semester Program
Spring 2004

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Office hours: Wednesdays from 6:30 – 7:30 PM (or later, as needed) and by appointment

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Course Overview:

This class provides you with the opportunity to pursue your own academic research in Washington and write about it in either one in-depth research paper or two shorter excursion papers. Excursion papers combine hands-on activities with traditional research.

Although you choose the research question(s) and the techniques you will use, your study must take advantage of resources available to you only in Washington. Your internship is one source of topic ideas for your research question. As you consider topics, evaluate whether there is an aspect of your internship experience that could serve as the basis of your study.

Techniques for a research paper may include interviewing political operatives, attending events and meetings, and reviewing documents from Washington resources such as the National Archives and Library of Congress. As you explore research topics, consider whether there are issues, institutions, organizations, individuals, or processes that sincerely interest you. For example, there may be a public problem you are concerned with and you want to analyze policy solutions. Your research could include a review of related legislation and interviews with political operatives and interest groups. Perhaps there is an individual, advocacy group, or think tank that interests you. Your research could evaluate the individual or organization's role in the policy process.

Excursion papers are grounded in an experience, like attending a House or Senate committee hearing, political event, art exhibit, theatrical performance, oral argument at the Supreme Court, or touring a monument or government agency. The description of the excursion is just a brief portion of the excursion paper. The bulk of the paper should relate one aspect of the event to your research question. For example, a trip to a federal agency could lead to an analysis of whether the agency's role should be updated. Attending a House committee hearing could lead to an analysis of the merits of the policy under discussion or the role of those giving testimony. Attending a theater event could spark a study of federal funding for the arts.

As a participant in an independent study, you are responsible for charting the course of your project and ensuring that your work is submitted by the due date. My role is to provide you with guidance and feedback and to grade your work.

Assignments: Chose **EITHER** Option 1 or Option 2

OPTION 1: One research paper	OPTION 2: Two excursion papers
<p><i>Research Paper:</i> By selecting this option, you are responsible for writing one 30-page research paper that takes advantage of resources available only in Washington.</p>	<p><i>Excursion papers:</i> By selecting this option, you are responsible for writing two 15-page excursion papers that combine Washington experiences with traditional research.</p>
<p><i>Stages:</i> The first step in your research is selecting a general topic and then studying the topic to refine your specific question. Identify previous research in your area of interest to help you hone the thesis of your paper.</p> <p>The next step is to develop a research question and prepare a brief (1-2 page) prospectus. Your prospectus describes your study area and specific question. Submit a prospectus to me by February 4.</p> <p>Once your prospectus is approved, you should develop a plan for answering your research question. Identify which articles, reports and books you will need to read, who you should interview, what events you should attend, and what places you should visit to support your study. Make sure your research techniques are feasible (e.g., that you are likely to be able to get the interviews you propose, have access to the places you need to visit, etc.). Submit a brief statement on your research plan and draft bibliography by February 18.</p> <p>At this point, draft an outline of your paper and fill in the sections as you complete stages of your research.</p> <p>Finally, as you write-up the final version of your study, review the writing tips included in the grading section on page 3. The final paper is due April 21.</p>	<p><i>Stages:</i> The first step in your research is selecting your TWO excursions and identifying the aspect of the experiences that will be the focus of each paper. Your excursion topics may or may not be related. Submit a brief (1-2 page) description of your planned excursions by January 28.</p> <p>After you have gone on your excursion, conduct a literature review for scholarly work relevant to your focus.</p> <p>When writing your paper, begin with a brief (two pages, at most) summary of the excursion (e.g., issue, relevant operatives, procedures, outcome, etc.) and define its relationship to the angle you are addressing in your paper. Follow this discussion with an examination of scholarly literature related to your focus (the remaining 13 pages of your paper). As you write your paper, review the writing tips included in the grading section on page 3.</p> <p>Submit paper #1 by March 3 and paper #2 by April 21.</p>
<p><i>Length:</i> One paper, 30 pages, double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman and one inch margins on all sides.</p>	<p><i>Length:</i> Two papers, 15 pages per paper, double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman and one inch margins on all sides.</p>
<p><i>Timeline:</i> Select a research question and submit a prospectus by February 4. Submit a brief statement on your research approach and your bibliography by February 18. Submit your final paper by April 21.</p> <p>I would be happy to review a complete draft of your paper and provide you with feedback for the final version. If you would like me to review your complete draft, submit it by April 7. I cannot accept late drafts.</p>	<p><i>Timeline:</i> Select excursions and submit descriptions by January 28. Submit paper #1 by March 3. Submit paper #2 by April 21.</p> <p>I would be happy to review drafts of your papers and provide you with feedback for the final version. If you would like me to review your draft, submit it two weeks before the paper due date (February 18 for paper #1 and April 7 for paper #2). I cannot accept late drafts.</p>
<p><i>Grade:</i> If you submit a draft, the draft is worth 25% and the final paper is worth 75% of your grade. If you do not choose to submit a draft, the final paper is worth 100% of your grade. A half grade will be deducted each day the paper is late. No exceptions. Review page 3 for more information on grading.</p>	<p><i>Grade:</i> Each completed paper is worth 50% of your grade. If you submit a draft for a paper, the draft is worth 25% of the paper grade and the final paper is worth 75% of your paper grade. A half grade will be deducted each day a paper is late. No exceptions. Review page 3 for more information on grading.</p>

Logistics:

Since this is an independent study, there will not be regularly scheduled class meetings. I will hold office hours each week. I encourage you to come regularly. As a participant in this class, you must take the initiative in conducting your research and coming to see me when you want to discuss any aspect of your work. My regular office hours are Wednesdays from 6:30 – 7:30 PM (and later, as need be). I am also available by appointment.

Between meetings, you can email or call with questions, or set up an appointment. I strongly encourage you to contact me anytime you would like to discuss your work or have any questions about an assignment.

Grading:

All papers will be graded for substance, organization, presentation, and adherence to the assignment requirements. A substantive paper will (1) make a clear and compelling argument built around a strong thesis; (2) use rigorous methods to address the research question; and (3) wrap-up with a solid conclusion that identifies any unmet need for research on the topic.

A well-organized paper will (1) start with a focused introduction that states the research question and provides the reader with a description of the direction the paper will go; (2) follow that direction; (3) avoid sections that are confusing or that interrupt the flow of the argument; (4) avoid repetition; (5) use footnotes, when needed; and (6) include a bibliography. Bibliographies should include work cited *and* all other work you reviewed for the paper.

A well-presented paper will be carefully proofread to avoid common errors. Be careful to (1) check spelling; (2) watch use of capital letters (presidency, President Bush, presidents, etc.); (3) put quotes in context; (4) use the active voice; (5) watch use of punctuation; (6) double-space; (7) observe the page limits (give or take a page); (8) use 12 point Times New Roman; (9) set margins to one inch on each side; (10) avoid using slang, jargon, or sexist language; (11) avoid run-on sentences; (12) avoid split infinitives; and (13) avoid contractions (don't, won't, etc.).

Papers will also be graded for their consistency with the assignment. To avoid losing points on an assignment remember to:

- (1) Check the syllabus for the requirements for each assignment. If you have questions, contact me well in advance of the due date.
- (2) Be sure that the link between your research and Washington, D.C. is evident. All papers are required to take advantage of resources available only in Washington.
- (3) Submit your assignments on time. Assignments are due at 6:30 PM on the due date. A half grade will be deducted each day the paper is late. Hand your papers to me directly during my office hours.

I look forward to a productive and interesting semester.