

PLSC 471: American Constitutional Law

Course Paper Description

In this class, you may elect to write a course paper. The paper will be a research effort of no fewer than twelve typed, double-spaced pages, addressing an issue of relevance to the course.

The paper will constitute 40% of your grade for this course, distributed as follows: Proposal, 4%; Bibliography, 6%; First draft, 10%; Final paper, 20%.

Paper Schedule

- **September 23, 2025: Paper proposals due.** This should be a one paragraph description of the topic your paper will discuss. Also on that date, you will schedule an appointment to meet with me to discuss your paper topic.
- **October 21, 2025: Annotated bibliography due.** You will submit a list of *no fewer than eight* sources that will be used in your paper, including a full citation and brief (2-3 sentence) description of the contents of each. Solely internet-based sources are fine, but no more than one third (33 percent) of all your sources may be solely from the internet. For internet cites, be sure to include the URL.
- **November 18, 2025: First draft due.** On this day you will turn in a completed first draft of your paper, which I will read and critique, and return to you for revision.
- **December 11, 2025: Final draft due.** You will turn in the final draft of your research paper.

Three Helpful Hints

- *Turn in proposals, etc. on time.* Each part of the paper process (proposal, bibliography, first draft, final paper) will be graded separately; grades on any part will be reduced by one full letter for each day they are late.
- *Talk to the instructor.* I will be happy to discuss any stage of the paper process with you at any time, including help with selecting a topic, finding resources, and outlining a paper plan. Also, if you wish to do more than one rough draft, I will read and give comments on any version of your paper, no matter how preliminary, at any time it is presented to me.
- *Do not wait until the last minute.* Procrastination is a killer on assignments such as this. I can and will recognize a paper thrown together the night before a deadline.