

## PLSC 541: American Political Institutions

Fall 2022

### Course Project Guidelines

A requirement of this course is the completion of a course project paper or “project.” This paper/project is worth 55 percent of your grade in the course (550 points). The purposes of the project, in rough rank order of their importance, are:

- To demonstrate your ability to successfully conduct original research on law, courts, and judicial politics;
- To demonstrate your understanding of some part of the literature addressed in the course;
- To address a political phenomenon related to law, courts, and/or judicial politics in an empirical fashion.

Several approaches to the project are possible. The paper may be a replication and extension of previously published work, a retesting of previously examined hypotheses on new or different data, or a piece of completely original research. While – owing to the short timeline for its completion – such a paper will necessarily be attenuated relative to a more standard article-length paper, with a corresponding adjustment in expectations when it is evaluated.

In terms of format, one option is to write a paper akin to a “research note” or “short article,” as are commonly published in some social science journals (e.g., the *Journal of Politics*, *Political Behavior*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, etc.). Total length should not exceed 5000 words of text (that’s about 15 pages), but feel free to include as many references, tables and figures as you deem necessary. Alternatively, you may present your project as a research poster; see, e.g., the github repository for PLSC 503 for an [example](#) of how to create a poster using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X. While you are welcome to collect your own data for the project, time and effort constraints will very likely make doing so infeasible, and you are encouraged to coopt others’ data to your own ends; on that point, be aware that many researchers make their data available on their personal homepages. **The paper or poster is due in PDF format at 11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, May 6, 2022;** please plan accordingly. Finally, if you have questions about the project, feel free to talk to the instructor, either in person or via phone, e-mail, etc.