2024 Session Research Paper Assignment
New York State Assembly Intern Program

Introduction [Reprised from paper proposal assignment]

The research-based policy paper is designed to expose students to the complex process that bills undergo in the NYS Legislature. Your objective is to select a current bill that addresses a rich policy area for which there is substantial information and debate. You might think of this as an extended policy memo where you are thoroughly informing your member about your chosen bill through the lenses of the policymaking process, the political atmosphere, and the potential democratic ends it might serve (as well as how democratic you assess the process the bill has gone through has been).

In the process of writing this paper there are two broad things to keep in mind: (1) don't forget about the bill! It is easy to become so focused on the larger policy area and lose sight of the actual bill that has been proposed; (2) you will want to employ a wide variety of resources to support your analysis (note this is analysis NOT personal opinion). This means you should provide empirical evidence for empirical claims, and you should also include scholarly research to buttress your analysis.

Assume there are two main audiences of this paper: (1) an Assemblymember who might have to vote on the bill, and (2) a reader generally interested in public policy matters. Assume the reader is smart and engaged but does not have technical or subject matter expertise.

Due Date

Please submit your research paper package to your professor by April 16 2024, at 11:59 pm.

The research paper package consists of

- Your paper in Word format or, if acceptable to your professor, in pdf format;
- Your bill in pdf format. If you are writing about an amended version of the bill (e.g., an A print or B print) be sure to submit a pdf of that version;
- The sponsor's memo in pdf format. If the sponsor's memo does not reflect the bill as amended, make note of that.

Make sure to have pdfs of all works you cite in a computer folder that you can make available to your professor on request (e.g., via Dropbox or Google Drive). The only exception is a cited work that is not available in pdf form, such as a book. Professors may request a copy of the folder at the time you submit your paper.

Late paper packages will only be accepted under extraordinary circumstances and with documentation (e.g., medical, legal, and military obligations). Unexcused late research papers

will be penalized one letter grade for each day late. No late research papers (including excused papers) will be eligible for an Intern Paper Award.

Grading

The research paper counts for 25% of your overall grade. Professors will grade the paper on a 100-point scale (a 100 would give you the full 25%). The three major elements of the paper: Policy Analysis, Political Analysis, and Democratic Analysis will have equal weight.

Research Paper Technical Requirements

The paper should have:

- 15-25 double-spaced typewritten pages (not including the table of contents, illustrations, graphics, maps, references, appendices, etc.)
- one-inch margins
- 12-point font print
- appropriate in-text parenthetical citations; no footnote citations. Include a works-cited section in APA format. See the section on the research proposal assignment, *APA Style Reference Guide Examples*.

Papers not following the format above will be returned and will be considered late and penalized.

Style, Sources, and Tools

This is a research paper. You are providing policy, political, and democratic analysis of the underlying issue and the bill and doing your best to be critical and objective. You may have chosen the bill because you care deeply about it, pro or con, but for purposes of the paper you are not advocating for or against the bill. Examining issues and legislation critically and understanding deeply the arguments made by people who are for or against the legislation will help you in areas of your life and work where you are an advocate.

Your writing should be direct, concise, and clear. There are many excellent sources with advice on how to do this, including:

- Purdue Online Writing Lab
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center
- Cornell University Research Guides
- University of California at Santa Cruz Library Guides

You should rely on and cite high-quality sources. UC Berkeley has a concise guide to evaluating the quality of sources. Do not use Wikipedia or artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT) in your papers!

You should get advice about your spelling, grammar, and writing style from tools such as Word's spelling and grammar checker or Grammarly. However, they are wrong occasionally so examine recommended changes critically. Make sure the words of your paper are your own – do not try to use these or other tools to write sections of your paper. **You are responsible for the quality of your paper.**

Word's heading styles, navigation pane, and outlining tools can make organizing and writing a paper much easier.

You may find it helpful to use bibliographic software such as Endnote or Zotero.

Research Paper Structure

Structure the paper as shown below. Everything but the Summary, Works Cited, and Appendices (if any) counts toward the minimum and maximum paper lengths. Each major section has a suggested page-length range. Use your own judgment on how long each section should be, based on what is important for your audiences to know.

Each major item after the title page (i.e., Summary, Introduction, …, Conclusion) should get a section heading. Use subheadings to make section lengths more manageable and to show the structure of the paper more clearly.

See the final section of this assignment, *Appendix: Examples of Questions to Consider*, for ideas about possible questions to consider in each major section of the paper. You cannot possibly address well all questions contained in this appendix in a 15-25 page paper, so do not try. Choose the ones that best support your work.

Title Page

Include the paper title, your name, the Assembly Intern Program, your institution, and the date you submitted the paper. For example:

A.1234: The Medical Aid in Dying Act

Student X

New York State Assembly Intern Program

University at ABC

April xx, 2024

Summary (Maximum of one full page)

Many readers in a professional setting, such as the legislature, are busy and may not have time to read a 15-25-page paper. A one-page summary is often appreciated.. Write a summary in narrative form that gives the short title, the Assembly and Senate bill numbers, and lead sponsor in each house, and succinctly summarizes the main issue, what the bill would do, and

the most important facts and analysis, based on your research, that an Assemblymember who might have to vote on the bill needs to know.

Introduction (Up to 1 page)

Start on a new page. Provide an introduction to the discussion that follows.

Policy Analysis (suggested 4-7 pages)

Describe the issue or problem the bill proposes to address. Describe how the bill would address the issue. Explain whether there are legal or administrative issues that might hinder implementation. Will there be legal or administrative challenges in implementing the bill? What are the fiscal implications of the bill? Are there alternative policies that might better address the underlying issue? How can the impact of the bill be evaluated?

Political Analysis (suggested 4-7 pages)

This section is about agenda setting and the legislative process. What is the legislative history of the bill? Who introduced it this year and why? Who are the stakeholders on different sides of the legislation, and how have they reacted to the bill or how are they likely to react? What are the prospects for passage? Are there geographic or place-specific factors that may influence a member's likelihood to support or oppose the passage of this legislation? If so, discuss the political dynamics on a regional level (for example, upstate, downstate, rural, suburban, etc.).

Democracy Analysis (suggested 4-7 pages)

Is the proposal and the process through which it will be decided democratic? In order to arrive at some conclusions, you will need to select a model or models of democracy against which to assess the process and potential ends it might serve (you will learn about several of these in the section on democracy, but you can also do an online search for models of democracy). What would you expect to see if the process is democratic under this model? For example, what kinds of interest group activities, elite-group activities, behaviors by other players, legislative actions, and outcomes would you expect to see under the model you chose? What do you see? Provide evidence. Do the activities, behaviors, and outcomes you see suggest the bill and process are democratic under the model you chose? Why or why not? Is the model you chose normative (i.e. aspirational) or descriptive? If descriptive, what evidence can you provide that the model you chose accurately reflects the U.S.? Reflect on the process.

Conclusion (Up to 1 page)

Give your key conclusions about the proposal based on your research. Make your main points and keep it brief. Do not advocate for or against.

Works Cited

Start on a new page. List works you cited, in APA format, in appropriate order: see the APA style guide and the examples in the research proposal assignment. Unlike the research proposal, this is not an annotated bibliography – you just need to list the works, appropriately cited.

Appendices (if any)

Put information that is essential but too technical or long for the main report here. **You do not need appendices and should strive to avoid them.**

Appendix: Examples of Questions to Consider

The following are examples of questions you might address in each major section of your paper. Choose from the below, or alternative questions, that you think are the most important. Do not try to answer every question or your report will be a mile wide and an inch deep.

Policy Analysis

The Catalyst

- What problem, conflict or catalyst precipitated the bill (immediate causes and root causes)? Did a specific problem suddenly emerge or has the problem been building up gradually?
- Is the problem serious? Is it a current problem or a potential problem (i.e., averting a disaster)?

Policy Development

- Who will benefit from the proposed legislation, who will bear the cost, and to what degree?
- What indirect benefits and costs might result from the bill?
- What are the fiscal implications of the bill?
- Will the policy work if implemented? Will it eliminate the problem or only treat the symptoms? Can the feasibility of the policy be determined with the existing data and studies conducted?
- What alternative policies should be considered to achieve similar goals? Have similar policies been implemented in the U.S., in New York, in other states and in other countries; and if so, what were the results? Has the proposed policy been considered elsewhere and rejected? If so, why?
- Is there a more economical solution to the problem even if it is less effective?
- What values (i.e., fairness, justice, equality, liberty, economic utility, the common good, rights, culture, public opinion, etc.) should be considered and what values indeed are considered?
- What different demographics must be considered?
- Are there any possible unintended consequences and known externalities? Will the policy be hindered by other existing policies, which are being considered?
- As written, are there any problems with the wording -- ambiguities, vagueness, contradictions, loopholes, or unaddressed circumstances?
- Are there federal or state constitutional issues or possible conflicts with federal law with the proposed policy?
- Is the policy expected to yield serious results immediately, in a few months, before the next election, a few years or in generations to come?
- How enduring will the outcomes be?
- How well have the staffs of the legislature (Assembly and Senate) analyzed the pros and cons of the legislation?
- How do policymakers translate their preferred solutions into an agenda that others take seriously?
- How do policymakers take political action to advance this agenda?

Implementation

- How will this policy be implemented? Will it require the cooperation of state and local governments?
- Will incentives be necessary? If so, what are these incentives—tax breaks, penalties,

grants, etc.?
- Who will implement this policy? State agencies? Municipalities? Institutions (schools, hospitals, corporations, prisons, etc.)? Street bureaucrats (teachers, nurses, police, etc.)?
- What are some obstacles that might prevent the proper implementation of this policy?

Evaluation

- Once the policy is implemented, can it be accurately evaluated and if so how?
- What would be considered successful results? Has success been defined?
- What might impede proper evaluation?

Political Analysis

- Who introduced the bill and why?
- Does the bill have a political history extending back to previous sessions? If so, what is it?
- What are the various political actors in the process, including legislators, legislative leaders, the Governor, the Attorney General, the Comptroller, state agencies, political parties, citizens, lobbyists, policy entrepreneurs, and the media?
- Who supports the bill, who opposes it, and why? Which Assemblymembers and Senators support or oppose it, and to what degree? Are there Assemblymembers and/or Senators on the fence (undecided or uncommitted)?
- Of these groups, which are politically influential and in what way?
- Are there other bills on the agenda that may affect the policy in question?
- Is the bill partisan? Is the division between support and opposition along party lines?
- Is this bill being reintroduced? If so, what is its history? Where had it failed— committee, Assembly floor, Senate floor, Governor? Will things be different this session and if so, why? Has the bill been amended? And if so, how and why?
- If the bill is not moving out of committee in the Assembly or the Senate, why not?
- Does the leadership support or oppose the bill and how might this affect the bill?
- Are there any policy entrepreneurs?
- How does the election this November affect this bill?
- Is this bill high profile? How will this influence the potential for passage of the bill?
- What role does the media, public opinion, interest groups, the two parties, other states, the federal government, etc., play?
- How will the political and cultural diversity of New York State affect this bill?
- What are the political risks?
- What are the built-in relationships and institutional fragmentation of the New York State political system, as well as the constellation of constituent interests, agency rivalries, legislative conflicts and external political factors?
- Will it pass in the Assembly? The Senate? Be signed by the Governor? Why or why not?
- If the bill is not passed or is highly unlikely to be passed, are there specific strategies for either the political or policy process that might enhance the likelihood of this bill passing in the future?
- What are the lessons regarding the intersection of politics and policy around the issue you choose for your paper?
- Are there contextual factors (geographic or historical) that should be considered in the development, passage, or implementation of this legislation?
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Democracy Analysis

- Discuss the model of democracy you are using, e.g., pluralism, communitarianism, , direct

democracy, agonistic democracy, deliberative democracy, social democracy, liberal democracy, etc.
- o Hint: The 2023 Guide to the NYS Legislature offers three models of democracy: Elite/Shumpeterian, Pluralism/Polyarchy, and Market System.
- o Also, see the article in your readings, Gabardi, W. (2001) Contemporary models of democracy. Polity 33(4), 547-568.
- o Be sure to choose a model of democracy that makes sense for New York – for example, the discussion in the 2023 guide (p.47) is about representative (as opposed to direct) liberal democracy, with protected freedoms for individuals which the majority cannot violate. These are accurate assumptions for NY and so can be useful models to examine. It would not make sense to choose a model of direct democracy

- If the process is not democratic, is this good or bad? Why? How can the procedure be made more democratic?