

PUBLIC POLICY 29800

FALL 2007

PUBLIC POLICY B.A. PAPER CHECKLIST

This overview of requirements/helpful hints for your final B.A. papers in Public Policy includes the following sections:

1. Paper Sections
2. Paper Formatting
3. Other Helpful Hints

1. PAPER SECTIONS

Your final B.A. paper should include the following sections. Section titles may vary, but all of the substantive information described below should be covered in your paper. Additional sections may be included if relevant.

Title Page

Abstract (on second page of paper after title page)

- I. Introduction and Problem Statement**
- II. History/ Background**
- III. Methodology/Data**
- IV. Results/Analysis/Discussion**
- V. Policy Recommendations/Conclusions**
- VI. References**

Title Page

This is the first page of your paper. The title of your paper should be centered about 1/3 of the way down the page. Your name, the date, and your reader(s) names(s) should be centered on separate lines at the bottom of the page.

Abstract

This should be one paragraph 50-150 words (no longer!) on one page that succinctly describes the policy question you have identified, the research you've undertaken, and the policy recommendation that concludes your paper. One way to construct an abstract is to have one sentence from each section of your paper. In the future, these abstracts may be available on the Public Policy website for reference by B.A. students who follow you.

I. Introduction and Problem Statement

In this first section of the paper, you must do the following:

- introduce the policy question that your paper will investigate; this question should be posed as a question and it should be apparent to the reader of the paper
- give a statement of the problem, including saying that we don't know the answer or that this study will fill in a gap in the knowledge base. Also say what the consequences are if we miss this.
- explain why this question is important (significant) and worthy of study
- you might consider writing the first paragraph of your paper so that it grabs your reader's attention and underscores why your paper is interesting
- give a quick overview of your entire paper. This should only be a paragraph long and should anticipate your results and policy conclusion. Let the reader know what you'll be arguing throughout the paper.

II. History/Background/Theory

In this section, you describe the history/background of the policy problem. You explain relevant legislation, political personalities, historical events, theoretical perspectives, etc. You should define any terms that are not common usage and establish abbreviations for longer terms (e.g. EPA for Environmental Protection Agency). Be mindful to avoid 'jargon' that will distract your reader. You may want to break this section up into a history and a theory section (or other sections that you deem appropriate). Be sure to give your reader enough history and background to follow along for the rest of the paper. You should also show what previous research about your topic has found, any problems with those works, and how your paper will fit into the scholarly discussion.

III. Methodology/Data

In this section of your paper, you describe the approach that you chose to investigate your policy question (secondary source analysis, survey data, interviews, etc.) Your project may involve different methodologies, if so, be sure to explain each one. In addition, you should justify your choice of methodology and explain why it is superior to other approaches, or why it was the only approach open to you. Depending on your methodology, you may need to include an appendix to your paper that includes the survey or interview questions that you used. Additionally, you need to talk about how you went about gathering your data. How did you choose your interviewees? To whom did you hand out your surveys? If you are using a collected data set, discuss its length. How many people, how were they sampled, what was the response rate? Let your readers know enough about your data so that they can decide whether it's a good source of information.

IV. Results/Analysis/Discussion

In this section, you present the evidence that your research produced and the analysis that you used to interpret this evidence. You may present results in text or table presentation (with discussion). Be mindful of the order that you present your evidence and of the fact that you are building an argument in this section that will lead to your policy analysis. You may choose to break this section up into two or three other sections. Also, remember to add any necessary ‘qualifications’ when you discuss your data. For example, your survey/interviews were not drawn from a representative sample; however you have reason to believe that the data are still indicative of what you might have found with a larger sample, etc. Don’t skimp on your analysis and discussion. You need to show your reader what you want them to see.

V. Policy Recommendation/Conclusion

In this section, you discuss the policy recommendation that you reached as a result of your research. Your recommendation should be feasible. For example, saying that you will “end hunger” or “force Congress to pass legislation” are not realistic policy recommendations. However, explaining a new program to combat hunger, or describing legislation that you think Congress should support, would be feasible recommendations.

Remember that your recommendation should follow from the evidence and argument that you present in your paper and should “close the circle” that you began in the beginning of your paper when you identified the policy question you planned to research. In discussing your recommendation, you might have to describe the pros or cons of other courses of action, or describe changes that you would propose to existing legislation.

People often have a hard time writing conclusions. They feel that they’ve already said everything—what else is there to do? You do need to summarize your paper; readers are likely to forget a lot of the points that you discussed throughout the paper. In addition, you should present the gist of the solution. Tell us again what we should do. Remind us of the larger significance of your paper, but discuss what is still unknown and needed. Be sure to have a statement that recognizes that further research should back up your claims.

2. PAPER FORMATTING

- (1) On ALL pages, 1 INCH MARGINS on all sides of the page.
- (2) In the text of the paper, DOUBLE SPACED TEXT, 12 point font (abstract should be single-spaced)
- (3) FIRST page of the paper must be a cover page with your paper title, your name, the date and the names of your readers.
- (4) SECOND page of the paper must be an ABSTRACT OF NO MORE THAN 150 words succinctly describing the policy question that your paper addresses, the major argument and evidence of your paper and your policy recommendation
- (5) THIRD page of your paper begins the TEXT with the title of the paper centered at the top of this page only
- (6) PAGE NUMBERS begin on the third page of your paper in the upper right-hand corner or the bottom center of each remaining page
- (7) Use proper reference format in your FOOTNOTES as well as in your reference section

3. OTHER HELPFUL HINTS

Avoid plagiarism, when in doubt, cite

Please refer to course reading concerning proper source citation. When in doubt, cite. Bring any questions to your preceptor.

Proofread, proofread, proofread..

Nothing detracts from a good paper like careless typos. Do not turn in your final paper (or your rough draft) until you have thoroughly proofread it. This includes checking spelling and grammar as well as reading the paper through to make sure that *it makes sense!* Reading your paper out loud and having your friends read your paper are good ways to make sure that the paper makes sense. Consider making use of other writing/tutoring resources on campus to improve your writing.

Pay attention to comments

While writing your rough draft, be sure to be mindful of the commentary that you received on your detailed outline (due at the end of the fall quarter). Likewise, while writing your final version, refer to the comments you received on your rough draft. Your preceptors will have office hours and will be available by email during the winter and spring quarters. They are here to help you as you do your research and develop the arguments for your papers.

Use appropriate evidence to support your arguments

Make sure that the evidence that you use to support the arguments that you make in your paper is relevant. Refer to Craft (old book) for helpful reminders.

Use topic sentences and transitions to tell your story/make your argument

Remember that you are telling a story in your B.A. paper. First you identify the policy question you are writing about, you explain why it is important, and how you plan to go about answering the question. You then present relevant background information about the policy issue. This could include historical information, legislative information, and theoretical perspectives that

you think help to answer your question. You then begin to build the argument of your paper—your answer to the policy question. You describe the methodology you used in your research and present relevant evidence. This evidence could include tables, excerpts from interviews, and analysis of secondary sources, etc. Present your evidence in a logical order that supports the argument you are making about your policy question. Remember that the basic logical unit in your paper is a sentence. Every sentence should make sense and should contribute to your paper. Transition sentences take the reader through your chain of thought and show how one point logically follows from (or is related to) the previous point. Paragraphs should build upon one another and contribute to an overall section in your paper.

Use footnotes and references in the text of your paper

Footnotes or endnotes should be at the bottom of text pages, or in a separate section at the end of your paper called Endnotes. Footnotes can explain or amplify text or append information presented in a table or a figure.

In general, footnotes should not be used to cite a reference listed in your reference section.