

American Government AP Coverstone

Tips for Writing Well in Political Science

Part of the focus of this course is on developing skills of political analysis that you can demonstrate clearly in the essays and reviews you write. I will encourage you to practice three types of writing over the course of the year. For each of these writing types, a short list of important steps is listed here. As you practice, please keep this sheet handy. If you need help understanding any of the steps in these processes, please see me as soon as confusion develops.

Article Critiques*:

A complete article critique should cover four areas:

1. Thesis Find and clearly state the thesis of the article.
2. Methods How did the author go about his or her investigation of the thesis?
3. Evidence of thesis support Answer the following questions:
 - a. What evidence was presented?
 - b. What are the strengths of the evidence?
 - c. What are the weaknesses of the evidence?
 - d. On balance, how well did the author support the thesis?
4. Recommendations Summarize your reaction to the article, particularly:
 - a. How has this article advanced your understanding of American government?
 - b. How could your awareness of this article improve your contribution to class discussions?
 - c. Clearly state your evaluation of the article in the form of a thesis for your critique.

Issue Reaction Essays*:

Clear essays should contain the following elements:

1. Select a suitable reaction statement.
2. Explain your selection.
3. Clearly define the issue addressed in the statement.
4. Clearly state your position on the issue.
5. Defend your position.
6. Conclude concisely.

AP 25-minute Essays:

Consider the following tips:

1. Each essay is graded on a rubric. Try to construct one as you consider your essay's outline.
2. Get to the point. The questions require clear, concise and direct answers. Avoid long historical introductions.
3. Begin with a clear and complete thesis statement.
4. Perform the tasks you are asked to perform.
5. Make sure to use specific examples and evidence.
6. Say what the law is. You are never asked to advocate a change in the laws.

*Many of the suggestions on this sheet are adapted from, Gregory Scott and Stephen Garrison, *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 3rd edition, 2000).