

**Research on the Political Process**  
**Government 127**  
**Spring 2012**  
**Claremont McKenna College Washington DC Program**

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Even in our new age of blogging, texting, and twittering, the research paper remains the gold standard in written communication. Not only is it the fundamental form of writing in the academy, but so too is it widely used in the “real world.” The lawyer must gather and interpret the facts of a case, just as the investment advisor must research and evaluate a prospective company. The well-timed research monograph is especially important in policy and political debates, where proponents marshal data and make arguments in support of particular positions. This course is designed to sharpen students’ research and composition skills by taking them through the basic steps of writing a research paper in political science. In writing research papers, we read the relevant literature, undertake our own research, develop and refine our views in relation to what others have argued, and communicate our findings and conclusions to a broader audience.

Course Requirements: Students will complete two writing assignments: an 8 to 10 page literature review (covering at least three significant published sources) and a 20 to 25 page research paper that builds on the literature review and includes footnotes and a bibliography. Students will also present their research to the class.

*Government 127 is a course in independent research study. Students are expected to work independently towards selecting a paper topic, reading the literature, and writing the paper. Assigned papers will be penalized one full letter grade for each day they are late.*

**Assigned Reading**

- Joel D. Aberbach, Robert D. Putnam, and Bert A. Rockman, Introduction, *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies* (hand-out)
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, “They Say/I Say” *The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*
- Ralph Lerner, “Prologue: Recovering the Revolution,” *The Thinking Revolutionary* (hand-out)
- Steven B. Smith, “Political Science and Political Philosophy: An Uneasy Relation,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* (hand-out)
- William Zinsser, “Writing English as a Second Language,” *the American Scholar* (hand-out)

## **Course Schedule and Requirements**

January 18: Class Meeting (6:30 PM) – Introduction

January 23: Class Meeting (6:30 PM) – The Research Paper

- Graph and Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say* (pp. 1-99 only)
- Lerner and Aberbach (hand-out)
- Smith (hand-out)
- Zinsser (hand-out)

February 10: Paper topics and thesis statements due (send by e-mail by 1 PM)

March 26: Working papers due (send by e-mail by 1 PM)

Note: Working papers (8 to 10 pages) should take the form of a literature review, covering at least three significant published sources.

April 9 & 10: Class Workshop and Student Presentations (6:30 PM)

April 30: Final papers due (send by e-mail and leave a hard copy in CMC offices)

Note: Final papers should incorporate a revised literature review and should be original pieces of work completed exclusively for this class. Papers should be 20 to 25 pages in length, double-spaced, and should include either footnotes or endnotes (no internal attribution) and a bibliography.