

SECOND EDITION

The
Political Science
Student Writer's
Manual

Gregory M. Scott

Stephen M. Garrison

Foreword by James MacGregor Burns

The Political Science Student Writer's Manual

Second Edition

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To Jill and Melissa

Foreword

This volume provides you with an immense amount of practical information about writing. But it has an even greater value: it sees writing as an expression of thinking, and thinking as crucial to writing. In other words, good writing is not simply putting words together effectively; it is having something important to say. And whether something is important to say turns a lot on the extent to which it reflects problems much more general than the mere technique of writing.

Thus this book is not only about political science writing; it is about political science. It is one of the most imaginative and wide-ranging works of this sort that I have seen—one that tries to bring students close to their work, the work of thinking as well as writing.

For most of us, writing is not easy. After a half-century of earning my living partly from writing, I can say that, like any freshman or novice writer, I stare at my typewriter—not yet a computer!—and fidget and fuss before I get started. Here again, this volume should be helpful in getting under way, and continuing in force, because of its emphasis on substance as well as presentation.

I can promise you a real sense of satisfaction as you get to be a better thinker and writer. I have pursued a number of trades (teaching, administering, soldiering, politicking, and, of course, writing), and I can testify that there is no greater feeling, even compared with playing a good tennis or basketball game, performing a difficult piece of music, or acting in a dramatic play—nothing that gives one quite such a sense of self-esteem as reading back over what one has written, and liking it. Ultimately, writing, no matter how difficult, should be a part of the pursuit of happiness. So, enjoy!

James MacGregor Burns

To the Student

This second edition of *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual* includes many additions and revisions that are necessary for keeping up to date in the constantly changing world of information technology. The basic goals we pursue as students of political science, however, have not changed since the days of Aristotle and Plato. Successful students, like successful political scientists, are competent writers. As students of politics we observe political institutions and behavior. We write to record what we observe, to explain what we record, and to defend what we explain. As citizens we write to take part in making decisions that direct our nation, our community, and our private lives. From the Declaration of Independence to the Emancipation Proclamation, from the United Nations Charter to President Kennedy's inaugural address, writing has brought us the freedom we enjoy today.

The Political Science Student Writer's Manual is designed to help you do two things: (1) improve your writing and (2) learn political science. These two objectives are addressed in the three major sections of this book. The Introduction tells you what political science is all about. Intended for both first-time and experienced political science students, the Introduction offers a basic historical orientation and a challenging account of current issues and analytical techniques. Part One of the book addresses fundamental concerns of all writers, exploring the reasons why we write, describing the writing process itself, and examining those elements of grammar, style, and punctuation that cause the most confusion among writers in general. A vital concern throughout this part, and the rest of the book as well, is the three-way interrelationship among writer, topic, and audience. Our discussion of this relationship aims at building your self-confidence as you clarify your goals. Writing is not a magical process beyond the control of most people. It is instead a series of interconnected skills which any writer can improve with practice, and the end result of this practice is power. Part One of this manual treats the act of writing not as an empty exercise undertaken only to produce a grade but as a powerful learning tool, as well as the primary medium by which political scientists accomplish their goals. Chapter 3 explains the importance of formatting the research paper properly and supplies you with format models for title pages, tables of contents, and so on. Chapter 4 explains how to cite sources and discusses the crucial responsibility of every political science writer to use source material ethically.

Part Two of the manual focuses on research. The first chapter in this part describes the research process in detail, explaining how you can maintain self-confidence by establishing control over your project. Chapter 6 lists and describes major sources of information for political science researchers, including libraries, government agencies, and private research organizations that may provide you with information not available in your library. Chapter 7 provides an introduction to the Internet and explains how to tap this vast resource for information about writing, politics, government, and political science.

The nine chapters in Part Three explain different types of papers common to political science classes. Each chapter begins by exploring the purposes and characteristics of the paper covered. Next, the steps for writing a successful paper are spelled out and typical formats are provided. Each chapter encourages you to use your imagination and resourcefulness in confronting the paper's requirements.

Your professor may give you a specific paper assignment from one of these chapters. If your professor does not make your assignment specific, you may want to select an assignment and discuss your selection with your instructor before proceeding.

This manual is a reference book. It has been written to help you become a better writer than you are now. We wish you all success as you accept a primary challenge of academic and professional life: to write, and write well.

Greg Scott and Steve Garrison

To the Teacher

This book has been updated and improved to help you deal with two problems commonly faced by teachers of political science. First, students often need substantial specific direction to produce a good paper. How many times have you assigned papers in your political science classes and found yourself teaching the class *how to write the paper*—not only content, but form and grammar as well? This text, which may accompany the primary text you assign in any political science class or may stand on its own, allows you to assign one of the papers explained in Part Three with the knowledge that virtually everything the student needs to know, from grammar to sources of information to citing sources, is here within one book. In addition to many updated examples throughout the text, the second edition features the following new chapters and sections:

- Section 4.5 The Student Citation System (SCS)
- Section 5.4 How to Conduct a Literature Review
- Chapter 7 Writing and Politics on the Internet
- Chapter 8 Two Brief Writing Assignments (issue reaction papers and article critiques)
- Section 15.3 How to Read Supreme Court Decisions

As in the first edition, you can direct your students, for example, to “write a position paper according to the directions in Chapter 9, and follow the instructions in Parts One and Two for formatting, grammar, and source citations.” Almost every question a student could ask about the paper is answered in this book, but you will be able to supplement your assignment with special instructions.

This manual combines the latest political science research and writing techniques with a broad spectrum of writing activities, based on a total of twenty-seven years of experience teaching political science and English. Chapter 9, “The Position Paper,” is a unique exercise for beginning students that deserves special attention. Position papers are exercises in logic and problem solving. Whereas other writing assignments in this manual allow the student much flexibility in the writing process, position paper directions follow a precise formula that has

proven to be successful in government, business, academic, and professional presentations throughout the country. Our position paper directions show students how to

1. define precisely an actual existing problem in a government agency
2. identify and evaluate possible solutions to that problem
3. formulate a recommendation for solving the problem.

By completing a position paper, your students will learn to become competent problem solvers, thereby developing skills helpful in every profession.

Some of the chapters are especially suited to specific upper-division courses:

Chapter 12 Political Analysis Papers

Chapter 13 Policy Analysis Papers

Chapter 14 Administrative Case Studies

Chapter 15 Case Briefs in Constitutional and International Law

Chapter 16 Public Opinion Survey Papers

Other chapters are designed for a variety of introductory and upper-division courses:

Chapter 8 Two Brief Writing Assignments (issue reaction papers and article critiques)

Chapter 10 Book Reviews

Chapter 11 Traditional Research Papers

As you know, writing skill is as essential to professional success in political science as it is in other professions. This book is written to assist you in leading students toward that success. But gaining that success, as you probably also know well, is not easy. The second major problem faced by teachers who require written assignments is plagiarism. Although only the most exceptional diligence will eliminate plagiarism entirely, this book will help you to take one of the most effective preventative actions. In an age when whole papers can be downloaded from the Internet, one of the best ways to ensure an original paper is to make your assignment directions very specific. If your direction to students is "Write something on the First Amendment," it is relatively easy for a student to find a paper already prepared. If, on the other hand, you provide a very specific list of instructions, such as those in the chapters in this book, students who might otherwise be tempted to submit work that is not their own will find that it does not meet the requirements of the assignment.

We wish you the best in your endeavors and welcome your comments.

Greg Scott and Steve Garrison

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Introduction: The Discipline of Political Science

Is political science new to you?

If you are about to write your first paper in political science, this Introduction is for you. To write a political science paper, you need to know something about political science, and this section provides a brief overview of the discipline. Reading this Introduction will help you understand what political science is all about and what political scientists are trying to achieve when they write—knowledge that will save you time, effort, and confusion. You may want to read other books about political science before you begin to write, but some of the most important information you will need is right here.

Are you an experienced student of political science who needs to review trends in the discipline?

If you have already studied political science in some detail, you may want to skip this Introduction and read Chapters 1 through 7, which discuss writing and research in general, and then the chapter in Part Three that provides the directions for the specific type of paper you have been assigned. You may find, however, that this Introduction helps to refresh your memory and establish your current writing efforts more firmly within the broader framework of the discipline. Wherever you may be in your progress toward mastering the methods and contributing to the rich tradition of political science, you are encouraged to read this section.

A Brief History

The story of politics and political science is the story of the human race. *Politics* began when the first people, experiencing themselves as different individuals, tried to find a way to get along. *Political science* began when these people, finding it difficult to live with one another, started to consider how they behaved when they acted together and how they might create a more satisfying and harmonious community. Many of the greatest documents in history have been written by political scientists, and the age in which we now live has been shaped by people in times, places, and cultures that seem, on the surface, very different from our own. A brief look at some of these writers and their achievements will help you see the vital social connections that link us to all times and cultures. It also will provide you with a sense of the depth and breadth of the study of politics so that, when you write about politics, you will do so creatively and knowledgeably.

Ancient Students of Politics

In 431 B.C., Pericles, Athenian democrat *par excellence*, general, orator, and primary catalyst of the explosion of creativity known as the Golden Age of Athens, stood thoughtfully before the tomb that had been prepared for the soldiers and sailors recently lost to the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War. Ascending from the tomb to a platform built on the burial ground, Pericles turned to address an expectant citizenry. He faced a dispirited crowd. Mourning those lost in battle against Sparta's fierce battalions, the Athenians were more anxious still about the plague that would soon claim even their courageous leader. Silently anticipating the words that would renew their vision of their historic destiny, they hoped to go forth reformed to face the perils yet to come. Meeting their gaze with words from the heart, Pericles engraved with a verbal chisel the indelible imprint of the Athenian mind on the pages of history. His description of democracy, spoken as part of a funeral oration twenty-four centuries ago, is remarkable because it sounds as if it could have been given by any British prime minister or U.S. president today:

Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors. It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty. And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other. We do not get into a state with our next-door neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks which, though they do no real harm, still do hurt people's feelings. We are free

and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deepest respect. (Thucydides. 1986. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Rex Warner. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 145.)

What does political science study?

From Pericles we learn *what* we experience as political beings and *what* we study as students of politics. He reminds us that the air we breathe is filled with the stuff of politics: influence, persuasion, coercion, debate, competition, cooperation, advantage, antagonism, altruism, generosity, and strife. Political science studies the ways in which these human behaviors create and are in turn shaped by individuals, groups, and the institutions of government. Pericles makes it clear that our innermost aspirations impel us, as students and participants, to grasp the fervor of political life with energy and enthusiasm, entering the world of politics with a natural affinity, or, as Aristotle would later say, like “political animals.”

The greatest philosophical enemy of democracy who ever lived was probably listening to Pericles with the rest of the crowd. This short, balding gadfly named Socrates called himself a philosopher, literally a lover (*philo*) of wisdom (*sophia*). Mocking Pericles and other Athenian democrats, he told a story in which he compared them to hypothetical cave dwellers who were chained together by the neck so that they could see only what was in front of them. Behind these cave dwellers, hidden from their view, were people who manipulated marionettes in front of a fire, so that the shadows reflected on a wall in front of the chained people. To Socrates the democracy of Athens was like this cave—a world of illusions created by great manipulators (the democratic orators of Athens). The citizens of Athens knew no more of reality than the cave dwellers, who could see only the shadows dancing on the darkened wall. Socrates wanted to rescue these democrats from ignorance by providing them with a philosopher-king. This ruler would be a lover of wisdom who would have a superior understanding of the art of governing and would make wise decisions. As Americans, we would have counted ourselves among the democrats. We would have rejected Socrates’ offer because, as Athenian democrats, we would have found it essential to our dignity as human beings to choose our own political fate. Even if someone wiser could make better choices for us, we would still have preferred to make mistakes of our own choosing than to walk a more assured path under the direction of someone else.

Why should we study politics?

Socrates did, nevertheless, give something to those of us who call ourselves political scientists by answering one of the fundamental questions of political science: *Why* should we study politics? Socrates enjoyed proclaiming that “the

unexamined life is not worth living.” This thought is the psychological engine that drives political science and indeed all science. For us as political scientists, the unexamined political life is certainly impoverished, if still worth living, so we examine politics in both large ways and small, from every conceivable angle.

How should we study politics?

We know of Socrates’ ideas mainly because his student Plato formed them into dialogues in which Socrates is the main speaker. Plato also had a most famous student, Aristotle, who is called the father of political science because he provides, in the *Politics*, an answer to the question, *How should we study politics?*

As opposed to Plato, who searched for the ideal form of government through the use of reason, Aristotle based his research method on the observation of political life in all its varieties. He examined political behavior. He reviewed the constitutions and histories of about 350 of the Greek city-states (*polis*), grouped them into categories, and drew conclusions from his observations. He formulated the rudiments of the scientific method and applied them to the political institutions of his day. Aristotle considered political science to be the highest of all intellectual pursuits because its aim was to achieve life’s highest goal: the virtuous society.

As we review the contributions of the greatest thinkers in the ancient tradition that has become the modern discipline of political science, we find many others who have sought answers to the fundamental questions of the field. Cicero, a Roman statesman who recorded political thought a century before the birth of Christ, might deserve to have his picture on our one-dollar bill because his ideas were so influential in shaping the government of the United States. Following a course set by Aristotle, Cicero compared governments ruled by one, by a few, and by many. When they operated in the interest of all the people, Aristotle called these governments, respectively, *monarchies*, *aristocracies*, and *polities*. He reserved the word *democracy* for regimes that ruled in the interest of the most numerous and lower classes only. Cicero found that none of these forms worked well by itself and preferred a combination of the three that he called *mixed government*.

If you read the Constitution of the United States of America, you will find that it creates a mixed government. It has elements of polity (democracy), in that citizens have many opportunities to participate, they vote to elect their representatives, and they enjoy a wide range of rights. There are also some elements of aristocracy in American government. Supreme Court justices, for example, are appointed by the president and serve life terms. The Senate was originally elected by the state legislatures. Other aspects of our government tend to make it look like a monarchy. The president receives ambassadors from other nations in elaborate formal ceremonies and has prerogatives, such as a private jumbo jet, that would be the envy of any king.

Revelation and Politics in the Medieval Period

During the centuries following Cicero, the teachings of Christ unsettled the political world. Periodic official persecution of Christians ended in 325, when the Emperor Constantine announced his conversion to Christianity. The conversion did not impede the fall of his empire, however, and in 410, when Alaric and his Goths stormed Rome, Christianity was blamed. It was said that Christians, who obeyed God rather than the state, were not good citizens and that the empire had been weakened by their focus on another world. In the midst of this chaos, a bishop in the city of Hippo in North Africa wrote a political defense of Christianity. In his lengthy work *The City of God*, Saint Augustine said that good Christians are citizens of the City of God and therefore participate in a rich spiritual life that frees them from the temptations of sin. They also, however, must live and work as responsible citizens of the City of This World. Christian citizens thus fulfill their lives here as well as in the spiritual realm. Making sense of politics in this world requires that we make practical use of what we learn about politics in everyday life.

Where should we look for answers to the problems of politics?

In exploring these issues, Saint Augustine helped to answer the question, Where should we look for answers to the problems of politics? He found the answer in the Bible. Today we find the answer in many places, such as in understanding the way people vote, in forming a picture of the whole political system, and in looking at how nations relate to one another.

At the turn of the year 1000, faced with despair over constant feudal wars and intermittent waves of plague, western Europeans turned hopefully to biblical revelation, which spoke of the passing of a millennium (one thousand years) before the return of Christ. Marching to the hilltops to await his return and leaving in disappointment when he did not appear, the faithful sought reasons to retain their faith. Saint Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, came up with some of them. He became the hero of the medieval church after writing in his voluminous *Summa Theologica* that God has given humanity two compatible sources of knowledge—reason and revelation—with reason helping us to know when to apply the varied particular elements of revelation. Using the newly rediscovered methods of Aristotle, Aquinas had developed a church doctrine that affirmed revelation and reason at the same time. Reason, he said, tells us that the church should exercise its proper authority over the population, an authority superior to that of secular governments.