How My Profession Influences Policy Explainer Assignment Guide & Instructions

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Overview

Most folks who take a course like POLS 1100 will not go on to have careers in American government and politics. Regardless of their future profession, however, government and politics will affect their professional experiences. Moreover, folks in a wide range of careers have important contributions to make to policy-making. It's a key way people contribute to democracy and civic life outside of voting and elections. That said, we don't always prepare future professionals for the ways policy will impact them and the ways they can impact policy. In this 1200-1500 word explainer article, you will explain and provide examples of how folks in your future profession—or a profession you're interested in—influence policy-making. Along the way, you will teach them what they need to know about policy-making to understand your examples.

Assignment Goals

This assignment is designed to assess two of our major course goals, which you can find in the syllabus:

- Students will be able to discuss how individuals and organizations outside the government participate in the democratic process.
- Students will be able to apply knowledge and theories learned in the course to better understand and contribute to the social and political issues you care about.

What should your explainer article include?

Your article must examine two specific examples of your profession in action. Think of these as two separate stories where your field met the government.

For each example, you should walk your reader through:

- **What was the specific policy at stake?** (e.g., a bill, a new regulation or change to existing regulations, a funding decision, a court precedent or case law). Share the context as well—when did this take place? Which level of government, state or federal? Which institution of government?
- **Why are folks in the profession involved?**
- **The Action(s) of the Profession**: What did folks in the profession actually do? (e.g. testify before the legislature; write to members of Congress; write a policy brief; write public comments to a regulation; submit an amicus curiae brief to a federal court).
- **The Outcome/Current Status of the Policy**—what happened? Or, if it's a new issue, what will happen next? Here you are informing your audience of the policy making process.
- **The POLS 1100 Why:** This is where you provide insights into how U.S. government and politics works, **grounded in what we've learned in POLS 1100.** You might suggest an explanation for why the outcome happened or predict what you think the outcome will be. You might provide insights into the choices of policy-makers. You don't need to answer all of these questions, but here are some examples to make this item more concrete:
    - Why is this happening in the states rather than the Federal government? Or vice versa?
    - Why is this happening in a bureaucratic agency rather than Congress? What can an agency do and what can't it do?
    - If this is a court case, how are the courts being used to make or change public policy?

    - Why did a bill succeed or fail to make it out of a specific Committee? Why did it pass in House but not the Senate?
    - Why did the organization choose to write to these specific Members of Congress?

Your piece should also include an introduction and conclusion, to explain to your audience why you are writing this piece and what they should take away from it.

Format, Style, and Tone

I anticipate that most students choose to write an article, but you are welcome to make an audio recording (like a podcast) or a video instead. 1200-1500 words would likely translate to 8-10 minutes of recording.

Your audience of this piece is your peers—other students or early-career professionals in the field you chose (e.g., fellow nursing students, future engineers, or new teachers).

That means that the tone and style will be less formal than an academic paper. Try to be professional, engaging, and practical.

You might read these web pieces to get a sense of this style and tone: Social Work, Explained and What Does an Architect Do?

Relevant Policies:

Citations and Research

- For information that comes from a website, article, organization page, or news source, include a direct link so I can check out the source. That link should be within the text (not only at the end in a works cited page or bibliography), so I can know which specific source information comes from.
- For this assignment, while you need to cite your research, you don't need to use a formal citation style (i.e. APA, MLA, etc).
- No direct link is necessary for information, concepts, or ideas that comes directly from our course materials.

GenAI Usage Guidance

Policy around use of GenAI. This assignment is part of a course-long project, so it falls under that portion of the course GenAI policy. Canvas will run Turnitin on submissions. Please reach out if you aren't sure whether a usage is permitted under the policy.

Some specifics:

- You are welcome to use GenAI tools to support your research, but you cannot cite GenAI as the source for your information. In other words, you can use GenAI to help you find relevant and credible resources.
- Organizations often provide links to the official documents they submitted to an agency, congressional committee, court, etc. These can feel jargon-y and like you've been dropped into the middle of a very long, complex policy discussion. You are welcome to use GenAI tools to help translate these documents into layman's terms.
- That said, you are responsible for the accuracy of information you include in your response. That means, if the GenAI tool misinterprets, gets something wrong, cites a made-up resource, and you repeat it as your answer, it will count as incorrect. Cross-check the output!
- Copying blocks of text generated by an AI tool is **not** a permitted use.

Deadlines & Late Work

This assignment is due on Wednesday, 04/29. Because of the timeline to submit grades to the College, this is a hard deadline. Unless I've granted an extension, a late penalty of 5% per day will be applied to submissions. In the event of an emergency or extenuating circumstances, reach out to me as soon as possible.

Grading Criteria

Before you submit, take one last look at the criteria for success.

- **Connections to Course Material.** Your understanding of policy-making and political institutions in the United States.
- **Case Analysis.** Your analysis of why the profession is involved, the actions it chose, and the impact/outcome.
- **Accurate and Clearly Sourced Information** Did you provide reasonably accurate information and include sources or links for anything outside course materials? (See course policies below)
- **Writing tone and clarity.**
- **Responsiveness to feedback (**Note: you do not have to do everything suggested in the feedback to the Getting Started assignments, but your final submission should reflect that you considered the feedback)