

Semester-Long Texas Advocacy Project

POLS 4000 Active Learning

Policy Issue Proposal – 5%

Due: 2/2

This short, one-page proposal will present the issue you plan to study and advocate around for the semester. Introduce the issue, explain how it is relevant to Texas and the Texas Legislature, and how this topic will work for you as an advocacy project. Cite any citations in APA (but you are not required to have them for this proposal).

Policy Briefing Presentation – 15%

Due: 2/23 & 2/25

During this week, we will hear from each student about their topic. This is a more detailed presentation on the policy issue you are advocating around this semester. This policy presentation will keep you on track with your research and will serve as content that you can incorporate into your final proposal. Things to include:

- **Brief Introduction to the Issue**
- **History** of the issue in Texas – Consider the history of the issue and policy responses.
- **Impact of the Issue** – Answer questions such as: how many people are affected, who is affected, what is the outcome? Be sure to give context by incorporating demographic, percentages, or other statistics available to show the scope of the impact.
- **Legislative Action** – Ways the Texas Legislature is or is not pursuing action on this issue. Here you could also include bills you see as making the issue worse.
- **Environment Assessment** – How are political parties aligning with this issue, how is media coverage framing this issue, and what groups are taking positions on this issue?
- **Brief Statement of Position** – End your presentation with what you believe the Texas Legislature should do on this issue. This could include supporting or being against bills you referenced earlier. You can keep this relatively brief since you will get into detail on this later with your advocacy implementation.
- **Include citations in your presentation.** Think of this assignment as though you are briefing an elected official on this topic. You want it to be as professional as possible and show that you are relying on sound research throughout. It is ok for you to state your position but be sure it is backed by the research you present and is presented as professional policy analysis, more than an impassioned plea (though there is certainly room for that in your advocacy strategy proposal).
- **Format** – You will have 15 minutes to present your policy briefing to us. This will require you to highlight key areas and concisely communicate a large amount of information.

Advocacy Strategy Proposal – 10%

Due: Draft 3/16, Finalized 3/20

In this proposal, you will present the most effective way to create the change you are seeking. You will take political environment, session logistics, public opinion, and theories of change and of policymaking into account as you explain and defend your approach. You will then select a variety of approaches within your full proposal that you will implement before the end of this semester. There is a list of potential ways to engage on Blackboard, but you are not limited to this. As we learn about the varying approaches to lobby, advocate, and organize, you have the freedom to select what you think works best for your project. Some approaches are limited on effort and time, while others are much larger undertakings, so I am not giving you a set number of things you must have. We will discuss this in our check ins to make sure you are on the right track.

Check-Ins on Strategy Implementation

Throughout the semester, we will check in on your project in one-on-ones and in class discussions. Inevitably, the Legislative Session will throw out some surprises, disappointments, and victories that may require you to adjust your approach or make your topic broader or more specific. If/when this occurs, we can brainstorm as a class to assist you as you make needed shifts.

Final Portfolio – 20%

Due: 5/4

In your portfolio, you are going to produce a report on your policy issue and what you engaged in this semester.

Portfolio Sections:

- **Briefing of Your Policy Issue:** including all the information you presented on when you briefed the class and updates since then. You will transform the information from your policy briefing presentation into a written document. Be sure to incorporate citations throughout.
- **Your Advocacy Strategy:** Here you can incorporate your proposal and any updates and suggestions from the initial submission. Be sure you include what you proposed and why you proposed it.
- **What You Implemented:** Here you will explain and show what you engaged in. If you had a meeting with a lawmaker or group, discuss it. If you wrote an opinion editorial, include it. Visuals here are welcome. The goal is to show what you did this semester.
- **Issue Status:** Where is this issue by the end of the semester? If the Governor does not call a special session, we will be close to the end of session when our semester ends. Give an update on the bill(s) or other efforts on this issue and any expectations for change during the remainder of the session.
- **Recommendations for Future Work in this Area and Key Areas of Learning for You**

- Technical: Use APA format for all citations, but otherwise you are not constrained to APA for your formatting. You can be creative and not worry about following rules while showing what you did this semester.

Final Presentation on Portfolio - 10%

Due: 4/27, 4/29 & 5/4

In this presentation you are going to share with us what you did this semester.

- Think of this as giving us an overview of your portfolio. This time you won't go into details on your policy issue since you did that for the class previously. Instead, you will briefly introduce your issue to refresh us, focusing on the basics – why this is an issue, why this matters, and why you've taken the position you have. Then you will present on the other sections of your portfolio. Be as visual as possible with the class so that we can see the work you engaged in.
- Format: 15 to 20 minutes