

PLS 135: U.S. Government & Politics Summer Assignment 2024



Course: PLS 135 / DE U.S. Government & Politics

Instructor: Timothy Scanlon

timothy.scanlon@apsva.us

tjs20056@email.vccs.edu

Overview: Welcome to the class! The purpose of this assignment is to prepare students who are entering PLS 135 / Dual Enrollment U.S. Government & Politics for the 2024-2025 school year. This assignment will serve as a preview and a practice opportunity for the types of assignments that you will be responsible for during this course. This will count as a formative “assignment” grade for MP1. I will not be checking my email daily over the summer, but feel free to email me with any questions and I will respond as soon as I can.

Due Date: The assignment will be due by 11:59 PM on Monday, September 9th. The assignment should be uploaded to the appropriate assignment on NOVA Canvas as a Microsoft Word document.

Rationale: Through this assignment, students will be introduced to two big themes for the beginning of the year. These themes will be important for MP1 and the rest of the year.

- Necessary elements for a democracy: What are the core elements, pillars, structures, or institutions that a country needs to have to be considered a democracy? A “successful” democracy? Besides “having” these in practice, how can one assess whether they are functioning the way they need to be?
- Democratic backsliding: Democratic backsliding can be defined as “[the] process of political change in which countries that enjoy a certain level of democracy become significantly less democratic.”¹ One can also understand this process as “the state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy.”² In recent years, the globe has witnessed this phenomenon in countries in all regions of the world. Why, and how, do countries “backslide” in their levels of democracy and what can individuals, governments, or organizations do to stop this retreat?

¹ Thomas Carothers and Benjamin Press, “Understanding and Responding to Global Democratic Backsliding,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 20, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/10/understanding-and-responding-to-global-democratic-backsliding?lang=en>.

² Bermeo, Nancy. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5-19. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012>.

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Readings (to be completed in order):

- Laws, Norms, and Democratic Backsliding - Council on Foreign Relations
- Understanding and Responding to Global Democratic Backsliding - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- On Democratic Backsliding - Journal of Democracy

Directions: Answer the accompanying questions on and using [this template](#). Make a copy of the document and adjust accordingly. This is the document that you will be uploading to Canvas for your final submission. When you are ready to submit, please download your Google Doc template as a Microsoft Word document before you upload. Please make sure to check Word formatting before you submit.

There are two types of questions included in the assignment:

- “Guiding Questions” should be answered using ONLY that reading. Responses should be 1-2 paragraphs in length.
- “Synthesis Questions” should be answered using ALL the readings. Responses should be 2-3 paragraphs in length,

Every time you begin a new thought, idea, or point, you should begin a new paragraph. Paragraphs should follow the standard structure of:

- Intro / Topic Sentence
- Evidence with a lead-in
- Analysis (explanation)
- Conclusion

All formatting should follow Chicago 17th (NB) style. For assistance with formatting in Chicago style, please visit the [Purdue OWL website](#)

Plagiarism:

Any paper that is plagiarized, even in part, will receive a **zero (0)** for a grade in APS and in NOVA. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, taking credit for another author’s work, using an AI generator, etc. APS administration, NOVA administration, and parents/guardians will also be contacted if this happens.

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Grading: The following rubric will be used to grade the Summer Assignment.

| Criteria | A | B | C | D | E |
|------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| Content Response (75%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response shows evidence that reading was critically analyzed. • Includes thoughtful and insightful details through textual evidence. • Direct and accurate response to all elements of the prompt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response shows evidence that reading was completed. • Includes appropriate details from the text through textual evidence. • Average responses to all elements of the prompt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response implies reading may not have been fully completed and carefully analyzed. • Includes some details from the text through textual evidence. • Unequal response to the various elements of the prompt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response implies reading was not carefully read and analyzed. • Missing appropriate details from the text. • Largely missing a clear and detailed response to all elements of the prompt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post does not show evidence that reading was analyzed or considered. • Response does not include connection to the prompt and/ or not completed. |
| Structure (25%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All responses are presented in organized paragraphs. • No spelling, grammar, or formatting issues. • Proper references and citations. • All direction requirements met. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All responses are presented in organized paragraphs. • Minor issues in spelling, grammar, or formatting that do not distract from comprehension. • Proper references and citations. • All direction requirements met. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All responses are presented in organized paragraphs. • Minor issues in spelling, grammar, or formatting that may begin to distract from comprehension. • Proper references and citations. • All direction requirements met. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most responses are presented in organized paragraphs. • Several issues in spelling, grammar, or formatting that distract from comprehension. • Missing proper references, citation, and/or all direction requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few or no responses are presented in organized paragraphs. • Several issues in spelling, grammar, or formatting that greatly distracts from comprehension. • Missing proper references, citation, and/or all direction requirements. |