

GOVT 2305
Writing Assignment #1

See [instructions on writing and submitting assignments](#) in the course syllabus. A grading rubric is also included here.

PART A (choose only ONE topic from this section and answer all the questions under your chosen topic) – 25 points. MIN 600 words

1. Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances

Explain the governmental principles of *separation of powers* and *checks and balances* (the two are not the same), and provide specific examples (including real-world examples) of checks and balances in the structure and operation of our **national** government.

What are the advantages of having a system of checks and balances? What are its disadvantages? Again, cite examples in contemporary American politics to illustrate your points.

2. Federalism

Define federalism. How is federalism different from unitary and confederal systems?

Briefly describe how the U.S. Constitution distributes powers between the national and state governments, including powers allocated to the national government and those reserved to the states.

What are the advantages of federalism? What are its disadvantages?

Name one issue in American politics today that is influenced by federalism, and explain how.

PART B (choose only ONE topic from this section and answer all the questions under your chosen topic) – 25 points. MIN 600 words

1. Civil Liberties: Freedom of Religion

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects religious freedom in two different ways. What are the establishment clause and the free exercise clause?

Describe some recent controversies surrounding the maintenance of a “wall of separation” between church and state.

What are some recent controversies involving the free exercise of religion and how have they been solved?

3. Civil Rights: Affirmative Action

What are the goals of affirmative action? Why has it been so controversial?

Describe some of the U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have been taken in connection with affirmative action. Be sure to explain how the Court’s position on affirmative action has changed or evolved from its decision in the *University of California at Davis vs. Bakke* case.

Assignment Grading Rubric

Performance Area	Rating = 5	Rating = 4	Rating = 3	Rating = 2
A. Originality and Adherence to Instructor's guidelines.	Student's report is original work and clearly follows instructor's guidelines.	Student's report is original work and adequately follows instructor's guidelines	Student's report is original work but does not follow instructor's guidelines	Student's report is not original work and does not follow instructor's guidelines
B. Structure	Written work has clear and appropriate beginning, development and conclusion. Paragraphing and transitions are also clear and appropriate.	Written work has adequate beginning, development and conclusion. Paragraphing and transitions are also adequate.	Written work has weak beginning, development and conclusion. Paragraphing and transitions are also deficient.	Organizational structure and paragraphing have serious and persistent errors.
C. Mechanics	Written work has no major errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	Written work is relatively free of errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	Written work has several major errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	Written work has serious and persistent errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
D. Content	The length of the written work provides in-depth coverage of the topic, and assertions are clearly supported by evidence.	The length of the written work is sufficient to cover the topic, and assertions are supported by evidence.	Written work does not do an adequate job of covering the assigned topic, and assertions are weakly supported by evidence.	Written work does not cover the assigned topic, and assertions are not supported by evidence.

E. Overall Impression	Written work directly addresses main question or issue, and adds new insight to the subject not provided in lectures, readings, or class discussions. The author has retained nearly all of the knowledge presented in class. He/She is able to synthesize this knowledge in new ways and relate to material not covered in the course.	Written work competently addresses main question or issue, but does not add much new insight into the subject. That said, it is clear that the author has learned a great deal in class and is able to communicate this knowledge to others.	Written work attempts to address main question or issue, but fails. The author has retained some information from the course, but does not fully understand its meaning or context and cannot clearly convey it to others.	Written work does NO address main question or issue, and it is obvious that author has not retained any information from the course.
Maximum Points = 25 Points				