

Legislative Affairs Independent Study LGAF 6290 Paper Options

LGAF 6290 is the independent study class in the Legislative Affairs program. The class affords you the opportunity to examine in greater depth issues and questions that may not be possible in our regularly offered courses.

In an independent study course, a student works with a faculty mentor in a context other than typical classroom instruction. An independent study project provides great flexibility for both teaching and learning. However, an independent study project must be as academically rigorous as any other graduate-level course, and it is the responsibility of the student and faculty mentor to document, in advance, that the independent study course will meet that standard. For reference, a 3-credit independent study project must embrace content comparable to that of a 3-credit traditional class, which typically would feature 37.5 hours of class meetings and 75 to 112.5 hours of non-classroom work

You have three options for the Readings in Legislative Affairs course:

First, you can write an 8,000 word research paper on a topic approved by the program director. The student is required to submit a two-page outline of the paper. The outline should include a strong thesis statement of the fundamental proposition you will examine, as well as a brief background of the topic, and a short explanation of why the topic merits intense study. The outline should also include a proposed structure of the paper. You should plan to check in with me over the course of the semester to update me on your progress or if you have significant questions that arise. The final paper will be due the last week of the semester unless a different due date is negotiated with the program director.

Second, you can write a “collective review” and critical assessment of a minimum of seven (7) books that deal with a particular topic related to the Congress or a prominent policy issue. This work might, for instance, focus on major themes or evolutions of political topics discussed in the works. The review should also offer a critical assessment of the arguments and their presentation, including: discussions of overlap and dissention between the individual works; remaining questions not addressed by the works; and your personal assessment of the arguments and/or theories presented by the authors. This review should be about 8,000 words and should be fully documented. The student will be required to submit an outline of the paper listing the books you will review, the topic you intend to address, and a brief statement on why this topic merits study. The final review will be due the last week of the semester unless a different due date is negotiated with the program director

Third, you can write a bibliographical essay and critical review. This is a comprehensive review of the major works relating to a specific topic where you will sort through the various theoretical questions on the issue and provide a deep, critical assessment of the scholarship. This is a very

intense research project as it requires a command of a significant *corpus* of writing and scholarly inquiry. This option is especially useful for someone intending to write a thesis, wherein this paper will serve as your literature review that outlines the current state of scholarship on the topic, including the identification of gaps within the literature that merit future study. This review must be fully documented. The length is subject to negotiation with me. Students who choose this option are required to submit an outline of the review, including a concise explanation of the topic a statement as to why it merits intense study. The outline should also include a minimum of five (5) recognized sources (articles, books, etc.) on the topic including brief explanations as to their strengths and limitations.

Once you have decided what to research and selected one of the options, you need to submit an outline to the program director within the first two weeks of the semester (ideally sooner). The second step is to submit a working bibliography within the first four weeks of the semester. For summer independent studies, these deadlines will be within the first one (outline) and two weeks (bibliography) of the semester.

As an important reminder, the independent study option grants much more freedom in both time and topics than a typical LGAF course offering. Despite this freedom, this class shouldn't be thought of as any easier than the typical course. The final product must meet graduate level writing and research standards. To be successful, it is incumbent on the student to make consistent progress on the topic throughout the semester and to be proactive in asking questions and meeting deadlines.

With any of the above options, considerable attention will be paid to your writing. The final work must include appropriate citations in APA format, use footnotes (if applicable), and a complete scholarly bibliography (also in APA format). Final papers with insufficient, incomplete, or inaccurate citations will not receive full credit.

Finally, each independent study must be an original work. Every paper submitted will be closely examined for plagiarism. All papers must be submitted as a Word document. It will be logged into the Blackboard SafeAssign system and checked for evidence of plagiarism. It will similarly go into a database. This assures that the paper was not used in a previous or current course and that the paper's content is not used subsequently by you or someone else.

Should you have any questions please email the program director, Casey Burgat, at cburgat@gwu.edu.