

## ***Preparation of Your Term Paper in Southern Politics*** (original credit to Charles S. Bullock, III of the University of Georgia)

The purpose of a term paper is to convey to others the results of the research you have conducted. Consequently the clearer the paper is in conveying information the more successful it will be. Below are some suggestions.

1. A successful paper should have a title. The title should give readers an immediate hint as to what is likely to be encountered in the paper.
2. An introduction in which the author lays out the topics that will be covered in the course of the paper. The introduction should be concise and the objectives of the paper should be clear.
3. A conclusion that recapitulates the major points made in the body of the paper. In the body of the paper, the author should be careful to lead the reader along. Often this can be done successfully by the use of headings and subheadings to alert the reader that the author is moving on to a new topic. If headings and subheadings are not used, then it is imperative to use transitions as new topics are introduced.
4. There is generally no place in a term paper for an encyclopedia. Researchers should be especially careful not to rely upon internet sources such as Wikipedia which can be accessed and modified by anyone as was revealed in late April of 2006 when gubernatorial candidate Cathy Cox fired her campaign manager for having posted negative information into the biography of her opponent Mark Taylor.
5. Remember the rule that you undoubtedly encountered in one or more high school English classes. Each major idea gets its own paragraph. A paragraph should consist of a topic sentence and then supporting sentences. Stringing together multiple ideas in a single paragraph simply causes confusion to the reader.
6. Any of several standard formats are acceptable for indicating references. You may use footnotes, endnotes or in-text citations accompanied by a list of references. Each style requires full information. That is, you should provide the name or names of the authors, the title of the work and the publication in which the work is found. If this is a journal or magazine article, then the dates of the publication and the pages should be included. When referencing articles collected in anthologies, the proper approach is to reference the author of the article and the article title and then indicate the volume in which it appeared and the editors of the volume.
7. For a works cited page or bibliography, items should be arranged alphabetically by the first letter in the last name of the first author. For articles for which the identity of the author is not provided, these should be alphabetized by the first letter in the first major word in the title.
8. Interviews should be treated just as publications are. That is, if using the in-text approach, then the last name of the interviewee and the year in which the interview was conducted will appear in parentheses. In the bibliography, the listing should be as follows:
  - a. Smith, Mark. 2006. In-person interview conducted by the author, April 16.
  - b. If you rely heavily upon newspaper articles, you may find that you are citing more than one article by the same author and published in the same year. The way in which to distinguish these for the in-text citations would be (Smith 2006a), (Smith 2006b), (Smith 2006c), and so forth. On the references pages these would be set up as follows:
    - i. Smith, John. 2006a. "Elections Resolve Zoning Dispute." *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (March 14): p. A10.

- ii. Smith, John. 2006b. "General Public Up in Arms Over Zoning Decision." *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (March 1): p. B1.
  - iii. Smith, John. 2006c. "Opponents Threaten to Sue." *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (April 1) pp. A1, 10.
9. The proposal and the paper should be typed using a 12-point font and double-spaced. Long quotes should be indented and indented quotes do not need to be set off with quotation marks.
  10. There is neither a maximum nor a minimum page requirement for your paper. Past experience indicates that most papers are somewhere between 10 and 15 pages in length. Papers shorter than that usually receive poor grades because they have not been adequately researched.
  11. You will certainly indicate how you will go about gathering the information to be used. Do you plan to do interviews? Will you collect and analyze data, analyze data in existing data sets? Will you rely upon library sources? I will return your proposal with comments on it and that proposal must be attached at the rear of your paper when it is submitted. Virtually any topic relating to Southern Politics is potentially acceptable. This may include but not be limited to state or local elections, diversification in the ranks of public officials; changes in partisan strength; the struggle to desegregate an institution such as a school system or other facility, consequences of partisan or racial change, the consequences of urbanization, and so forth.
  12. Consider using the paper requirement as an opportunity to do original research. Many students have not previously attempted original research but those who have ventured into this area in the past have frequently found it very rewarding. In doing original research you may rely on interviews with political actors and observers (elected officials, lobbyists, political activists, or reporters), data such as election returns, or demographic data.
  13. Both the paper proposal and the term paper must be submitted as hard copies. E-mail attachments are not acceptable and will not be graded.
  14. *A Few Grammatical Pitfalls*
    - a. Nouns such as Democratic or Republican Party, public official, legislature, legislator, committee, and organization are singular. Therefore these nouns should be accompanied by singular verbs and pronouns. Thus "it, he, or she" or "his or her" and not "they" or "their" should be used.
    - b. The past tense of the verb to lead is "led" not lead. When lead is pronounced as led, it means the 82nd element of the periodic table with valences of 2 or 4 and the symbol Pb.

#### **IDEAS FOR TOPICS:**

- Biographies of Notable Modern Southern Politicians
- Discussions of Voting Trends in certain Counties or Cities
- Analyses of the effectiveness of recent campaigns in the region
- Discussions of the Impacts of certain groups (racial or ideological) on political behavior in the region