

I. GENERAL PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

Political scientists study the interactions between different power groups and their desire to have those interests heard and their needs recognized. These struggles can either be on a local scale or on an international platform. The writing in political science attempts to rectify issues of power and to identify the underlying relationships between groups who battle for power and recognition of political goals. Political scientists create hypotheses and develop theories to better understand how interactions between power groups evolve. Writers may develop theories of how politics works; study political behavior of institutions; analyze fundamental concepts (such as *power* or *democracy*); explain political relationships, predict outcomes, or explicate power struggles between rivals and allies on local, national, and international scales; or examine how governments make decisions and how policies are implemented. Political theorists may also write about the relationships that exist between political entities. **Audiences** vary in political science from the general public, educators, and peers, to administrators, politicians, and lawmakers, plus those involved in political action or those who are merely interested in politics. Writers should be aware of the goals and aims of the audience(s) and also be mindful of the purpose(s) of their writing.

II. TYPES OF WRITING

- Abstracts (Succinct summaries that describe a research problem under investigation, including methods and findings)
- Research paper—which may include these sections:
 - Introduction/ Problem/ Methods of inquiry/ Literature Review/ Description & Evaluation of data/ Summary of findings/ Documentation
 - Introduction (including the research question)/ Literature review/ Data & Methods/ Findings/ Discussion/ References/ Appendices (if needed)
- Political Theory paper
- Case Studies
- Proposals
- Reviews
- Commentary

III. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- Empirical data gathered through scientific methods
- Qualitative evidence
- Quantitative evidence
- Methodical and accountable data collection
- Hypotheses to explain or test theories

IV. WRITING CONVENTIONS

- Writing should be clear, concise, precise, objective, and unbiased.
- Scientific method is used.
- Avoid jargon.
- Writing should be gender-neutral.
- Present tense is almost always preferred.
- First person references may be used, but only sparingly.
- Use consistent documentation methods.
- Clearly define terms used. (“Operational terms” must always be defined according to the way the user is using them. For example, “justice” or “freedom” may have vague, subjective definitions and must be presented precisely so that they can be tested against a stated hypothesis.)

V. COMMON TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- democracy
- representation
- ideology
- liberalism
- conservatism
- interest groups
- sovereignty
- state
- authority
- party system
- pluralism
- justice
- socialism
- communism

VI. CITATION STYLE

- American Political Science Association (APSA) recommends the Latest Edition of the **Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)** and indicates a preference for the Author-date system, such as (Smith 1995).
- **American Psychological Association (APA)** may also be used.
- **Confirm the preferred citation style with individual instructors.**