

Summer Assignment: U.S. Government 2021-2022

U.S. Government and Politics class is the study of the American political system and your role in it. Citizen participation is crucial to any functioning democracy and this class seeks to inspire that participation. After all, you will soon be able to vote in your first election. While we will spend considerable time studying American foundations and institutions, we will also explore political topics that arise in the news-- some of which breed controversy. One goal of this class is to learn to discuss current events in a way that respects varying opinions, promotes empathy, and reflects on American values: those like liberty, equality, and individual responsibility.

This summer assignment is meant to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on racial justice and policing, an issue that has been in the news with some frequency in recent months. However, it is an event about which you may know very little (which hopefully provides a little more space for honest reflection). On August 9th 2014, Michael Brown Jr. was shot and killed by police officer Darren Wilson. This assignment simply asks you to honestly read and reflect, and in so doing prepare for a class discussion.

Due: The assignment below should be completed for the 2nd day of school. It will be checked for plagiarism and submitted for a test grade (25 points). I will give instructions for submitting the assignment on the first day of school.

Original Reporting (30 minutes)

1. Read the article from August 15, 2014, written several days after the death of Michael Brown, and then write a one paragraph reflection (**150 words or more**). You may reflect on any element of the piece, but please write your reflection prior to moving on to the 2nd question.
<https://www.cnn.com/2014/08/11/us/missouri-ferguson-michael-brown-what-we-know/index.html> (5 points)

Summary of the Shooting (1 hour)

2. Read the summary of the events surrounding the Michael Brown shooting from Wikipedia. This summary has the benefit of hindsight and years of fact gathering. In a longer paragraph (**200 or more words**), write about what you learned from the Wiki entry and how it shaped your thinking in light of the CNN article. Did anything surprise you? Upset you? How did your understanding of the shooting change as you read?
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Michael_Brown (8 points)

U.S. Justice Department: A Coda (2-3 hours)

3. Months after Michael Brown's death, the Department of Justice published a report about policing in Ferguson, MO. Read 20 pages (or more) of the report. Then, **in 300 words** or more A) write about the key findings of the report and B) reflect on how these findings impact your interpretation of events (if at all). As you write, you might think back to the CNN article you originally read and the summary in Wikipedia. You might think about more recent events like the murder of George Floyd. What can we learn about liberty, equality, and individual responsibility when studying events like these?

https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf (12 points)