State and Local Politics
POL 371
Minnesota State University
Spring 2010

Issue Summary Paper Assignment

In Step One of this process, you picked out a topic for your written issue summary, answered several important questions about the topic, and you should now be ready for the next step of the process. As review, you should now have a topic and have decided why the topic is interesting, what the most interesting questions are about the topic, how the topic affects your home state and other states or regions, the federal implications of the topic, and what you already know about the topic. You should also have read and outlined (at least in your head but it is time to get it onto paper) as much as you can find in the course materials about your topic. If you did as assigned, you should have also had some help addressing these issues from your classmates.

Step Two: Issue Relevance to States Due March 23 (1 ½ page)

The second step in the issue summary assignment is for students to choose at least two states to examine how their topic is relevant to those states. You are encouraged to pick your home state and one other state. You may pick more than one other state besides your home state, and however many states you pick, you should consider picking a state that has particular relevance to the topic or that you have some reason to believe will make an interesting contrast to your home state. For example, if you pick unicameral legislatures as your topic and you are from Minnesota, then you could also pick Nebraska for your second state. That way, you would be able to discuss Minnesota, where there has been a proposal to have a unicameral legislature, as well as Nebraska where they actually have a unicameral legislature. As a second example, if you pick state cultures as your topic and Minnesota is your home state, then you could also pick Mississippi for your second state. That way, you could compare a moralist state to a traditionalists state (you could add a third individualist state if you like).

For March 23, choose your states, write a brief statement that addresses the following issues and bring it to class. The brief statement should include (1) your two states (or more); (2) what are some current ways that your topic matters in each of the states you chose; (3) has your topic been an issue of concern or caused controversies in the states’ histories; (4) what contemporary discussions are there about your issue; and (5) what are the biggest differences between the states you chose relative to your topic. On March 23, we will discuss the issues and the next step in writing the summaries. Be sure to bring a clean copy of your brief statement to hand in.

Comment:

By this point you should be developing a growing set of materials about your topic. Start considering how this information can be compiled into a coherent final issue summary paper. While this summary assignment does not require a lot of outside research, you should refer to some of the sources for information on the handout I am providing if you are having trouble gathering information.