

Information Technology and Public Policy

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Project schedule and guidelines – Version of 10/14/04

Overall goal

By 5:00 p.m. on Friday December 10, teams of 4-6 students each must email to us a “balanced policy brief” on some topic within the sphere of IT & Public Policy.

This should be a well-written, thoughtful, coherent analysis, 20-40 pages in length. (Stop writing when you have nothing left to say on your topic!) You should analyze your topic as if you were trying to help a policy maker understand and devise solutions for the problem. The policy maker has his/her own values and politics, but s/he needs to know what the relevant facts and arguments are. Try to provide this advice in a neutral way. The goal is to unearth, analyze, and organize facts in a balanced way, providing perspectives and policy options.

Although each team can structure itself as it desires, our recommendation is that each team divide the topic into sub-topics (“chapters” of the report) with each team member (or a small group of team members) acting as the “lead author” for that portion. (However, all team members should review and suggest changes for the entire report – the overall report must be “smooth and integrated” – not a “staple job” on 4-6 independent sections.)

Choosing topics

We will suggest a number of topics. It’s fine for a team to modify a topic to suit its interests, or to devise a topic of its own. It’s fine for multiple teams to tackle the same topic. We will review all topic choices, and provide guidance.

Milestones along the way

Friday October 15: Wiki pages will be established by us for an initial set of topics. Students can brainstorm on these pages. We will monitor and guide the brainstorming. Students can create additional pages that “fork” new topics. Overall, the Wiki will be a vehicle for idea generation and team formation – you’ll see who’s thinking along similar or complementary lines to you. [Wiki here](#).

Friday October 29: If you want to form a team on your own, create a Wiki page listing the general topic and the members of the team, and send us a link to the page you have created. This is by *far* the most desirable way to form a team – participate actively in the Wiki process, gravitating naturally towards a topic and a team. Even if you have not organized a team on your own, you still must let us know by this date of the topic you

want to work on – indicate this on the appropriate Wiki page and via email to the instructors.

Monday November 1: For those who have not organized a team on their own, we will arrange a shotgun marriage by creating teams from students who have selected the same topic.

Monday November 8: Each team must provide a one-page project description, which will be worth 10% of the project grade: team members, topic, sub-topics, sources, team organization, etc. (We will provide brief comments on these submissions.)

Friday December 3: Each team must provide a draft paper, which will be worth 20% of the project grade. (We will selectively provide comments on these submissions.)

Friday December 10: Each team must provide a final paper, which will be worth 70% of the project grade. There should also be a clear indication of the role played by each team member.

The team process

Once formed on November 1, we expect the members of each team to collaborate using the Wiki. This will allow us to monitor progress, provide guidance, etc. We will migrate from “one Wiki page per topic” to “one Wiki page per team.” Obviously, not every bit of progress will be documented on the Wiki. But we need to be able to monitor your early progress and process, ensuring that you’re well launched, and we also want to be able to get a feel for who’s contributing what.

Evaluation

Each student’s grade for the project will have two components: “team score” (the same for all team members), and “individual score” (our sense from the Wiki and other interactions of each individual’s contributions).