Writing Guidelines

1) Format

- All essays should be double-spaced and in 12-point type. Please make sure to number pages.
- Page limits are firm; we will not read beyond the assigned length.
- Use parenthetical citations, with a reference list at the end of your paper, rather than footnotes for all cited work. (You can find a guide to reference-list format in the *Chicago Manual of Style*). The reference list does not count toward your page totals. When you cite cases on our syllabus, the parenthetical citation generally only needs to include the first party in the case.

2) Style: Write for your reader, and make your writing lively and interesting. That means:

- Short, simple sentences are always better than long complicated ones.
- In nearly every case, the active voice is preferable to the passive voice.
- Direct, concrete statements are better than vague, indirect statements.
- Write for an audience that consists of educated generalists who are unfamiliar with the topic.
- Along those lines, avoid jargon.

3) Other

- Submit your essay as a Word document, not a pdf.
- Late essays lose one-half grade a day. We grant extensions only in emergencies.
- Finally, be vigilant about plagiarism, as it is an extremely serious offense and quite easy to avoid. Whether you are quoting a Supreme Court case, another author, or simply paraphrasing her ideas, you *must* cite the source. There are no exceptions, so when in doubt, cite. For guidance see: http://writing.mit.edu/wcc/avoidingplagiarism
- In addition, please consider using the services of the Writing and Communications Center, which offers free, one-on-one, professional advice from published writers about oral presentations and about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing.

17.245 Constitutional Law: Structures of Power and Individual Rights
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