

Princeton School of Public and International Affairs

Guide to Junior Independent Work

2024-2025

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Table of Contents

Junior Independent Work Deadlines	3
Goals	4
Elements of a Public Policy Paper	4
JP Grading Standards	6
Extensions and Late Penalties for Junior Independent Work	7
Manuscript Instructions	7
Title Page Format	7
JP Advising	8
SPIA Writing Advisors	8
Principles of Ethical Interviewing	9
Citations and Bibliography	14
Academic Integrity and AI	14
Research Resources	15

Junior Independent Work Deadlines

Important Notice: Extensions may be granted only by the student's residential college dean. Extensions must be requested and approved in advance of the JP deadline. Extensions may be subject to late penalties.

FALL 2024

(ONLY IF YOU ARE STUDYING ABROAD SPRING 2025)

JUNIOR PAPERS DUE TO INSTRUCTOR

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025

SPRING 2025

JUNIOR PAPERS DUE TO INSTRUCTOR

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025

Goals

Junior Independent Work in the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs is designed to teach students:

- to conduct research and analysis
- to think analytically about a public policy issue
- to critically review existing policies and their impacts
- to present evidence in a clear, logical, and well-organized manner

The Junior Independent Work requirement is fulfilled through completing the curriculum's core courses of SPI 299 (Introduction to Research Design) and SPI 300 (Research Seminar).

In SPI 299 (Introduction to Research Design), students will be provided with an introduction to the resources and support available to undergraduate researchers, background guidance and instruction helpful for conducting research. It will also provide a forum to practice and further develop the qualitative and quantitative skills needed to engage successfully in independent research.

In SPI 300 (Research Seminar), a faculty member supervises a small group of students engaged in research on a specific topic in public and international affairs. Faculty will introduce students to the existing state of knowledge and available evidence for research within a well-defined topic that is timely and important in the area of public policy. Supported by the separate coursework required in the research seminar, students will complete their junior paper.

Elements of a Public Policy Paper

Junior papers should be double-spaced and **must not exceed 24 pages** (or fewer as required by the Director), including appendices and footnotes. This limit does not include pages for the title, table of contents (if any), and bibliography.

- A public policy paper is analytical, not descriptive. The paper should specify a clear research hypothesis, justify its significance in scholarly and other relevant literature and relevance to public policy, compare alternative hypotheses, assess evidence in support of a conclusion, and provide specific public policy recommendations.
- Define the question you are examining.
 - What is the evidence of the problem/issue?
 - Why is it significant?
 - How does your question relate to existing theories?

- Include only as much background or descriptive material as is necessary for the reader to follow your paper. You are not writing a history paper or an article for an encyclopedia. If a fact or observation does not advance the flow of the paper, leave it out. (The test is whether it would matter if the reader skipped the information).
- Develop a clear argument that specifies how a particular public policy input or underlying condition affects your outcome of interest. Note that your argument should not represent a normative prescription, but rather an effort to explain the underlying process that generates patterns of behavior that we observe.
- Analyze empirical evidence to assess your argument relative to alternative explanations or “null hypothesis” that there is no pattern. The paper should include full citation of sources and description of methodology.
- Are there models for possible solutions to be found in the experience of other jurisdictions (cities, states, countries) or in the proposals of researchers? What are the pros and cons of these models?
- When making a recommendation, explain why you chose the approach. Is it clear how it can be implemented, how it will help resolve the problem, and what the drawbacks or criticisms might be?
- Beyond all else, think logically and write clearly and succinctly.

JP Grading Standards

- A The paper is an outstanding work that has all of the following qualities:
- is well-organized and exceptionally well-written
 - presents a clear articulation of the issue and its significance
 - demonstrates excellent research skills
 - makes a logical and thorough presentation of evidence and analysis
 - has conclusions that flow logically from analysis
- A- The paper is well-conceived and constructed, but does not evidence all of the qualities of an A effort.
- B+ The paper is informative and generally well-written, but lacks some elements of rigorous research, analysis, organization, or thoughtful conclusion.
- B to B- The paper is competent, but lacks one or more major qualities such as a clear articulation of the issue, a thorough research effort, a persuasive analysis or a fluid writing style.
- C+ to C- The paper demonstrates substantial flaws in logic, research, writing or understanding of the issue.
- D The paper demonstrates a significant lack of effort or has substantial defects in quality and clarity.
- F The paper demonstrates a complete lack of effort and no redeeming qualities.

Note: *The A+ grade is reserved for work of truly unusual quality. It requires an additional letter from the faculty member to the university's Committee on Examinations and Standards explaining how the student's work exceeds the high standards established for an A.*

An A+ grade is counted in SPIA's honors calculations as if it were an A.

Extensions and Late Penalties for Junior Independent Work

Students who do not submit their individual research papers on the due date may receive a grade of **F** for the paper unless they have requested an extension in advance and received approval for it from the **dean of the student's residential college**. Extensions may be subject to late penalties.

One-third of a grade will be deducted from the final JP grade for each four days (or fraction of four days) that a JP is late. For example, the first four-day period, would result in one-third of a grade penalty (the reduction of an A to an A-, etc.). The second four-day period, would cost an additional one-third of a grade (e.g., A is reduced to B+, etc.). The grade would continue to be reduced by one-third for each additional four-day period or fraction of four days (including weekends) that the JP is late.

Manuscript Instructions

For purposes of consistency in formatting, we recommend:

- numbering your pages
- use 1-inch margins on the left, right, top, and bottom
- use a 12-point size type and a readable font (avoid the use of multiple fonts and type sizes)
- indent paragraphs and avoid paragraphs longer than a page.
- double-space all text (except long quotations, footnotes, and bibliography)

Title Page Format

Research Seminar Number and Title
Director's Name
Title of Paper
Student Name
Date
Student Honor Code Pledge

Note:

A copy of your JP will be available for a limited period of time in the Undergraduate Program Office for review. Photocopying of JP's is strictly prohibited.

Writing & Research Assistance/Resources, Interviewing & Formatting Guidelines

JP Advising

Your JP advisor, who is also your Research Seminar instructor, will serve as your main sounding board and guide for your junior paper. You will select your Research Seminar based on the topics that are available in a given semester. We encourage you to select a topic that is of interest to you and that you may continue to develop for your senior thesis.

The background material for the basis of your junior paper will be covered in class, but you are encouraged to utilize office hours and other resources available to you including your UPO academic advisors, the SPIA writing advisors, Stokes Librarians and even other faculty with whom you have taken classes. Reach out to the UPO for more information on these invaluable resources and review the library and resource guides at the end of this manual.

If you have trouble communicating with your JP advisor, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Undergraduate Program Office (UPO).

SPIA Writing Advisors

In addition to your consultations with your JP advisor, we strongly recommended that you meet regularly with a SPIA Writing Advisor for assistance in conceptualizing and organizing your JP, developing your arguments, and reviewing your writing. Your research seminar director will provide the names and contact information of the current SPIA Writing Advisors. They can also be reached at spiawriting@princeton.edu.

Principles of Ethical Interviewing

Conducting Expert Interviews

Conducting research for independent work at SPIA often involves talking with public officials and other experts who have in-depth knowledge about government policies or programs. Knowledgeable informants can provide unique insights that help you hone in quickly and efficiently on key underlying issues in your research. It is important for you as the student researcher to conduct these expert interviews in a responsible manner and in compliance with federal regulations and University policy.

As a policy researcher, you need to gather and report facts with integrity, accuracy, and fairness. One aspect of ethical research revolves around the use of sources and understanding when and how to name those sources and when it is appropriate to keep them confidential.

Firstly, naming sources and their relevant title and/or role is a fundamental practice in policy research, just as it is in good journalism: it adds credibility and transparency to your thesis. Generally, it is important to attribute information to its source whenever possible. By naming sources, you enable your readers to evaluate the reliability, credibility, and perspective of the information presented. It also provides an opportunity for readers to conduct their own research or seek additional perspectives on a given topic.

However, there are circumstances where protecting the identity of sources becomes necessary. These situations typically arise when revealing a source's identity would put them at risk of harm, retribution, or jeopardize their livelihood. As part of your interview, you need to discuss with your expert informants whether and how they want to be named or described in your thesis. Confidentiality is often crucial for whistleblowers, individuals sharing sensitive personal information, or those involved in illegal activities who want to expose wrongdoing while safeguarding their own safety. Confidentiality is also important when conducting human subjects research, as explained below.

To decide whether to name or keep a source confidential, you must consider several factors:

- *Public interest*: Is the information provided by the source in the public interest? Will it contribute to a better understanding of important issues or expose significant wrongdoing?
- *Source reliability*: Is the source trustworthy and credible? Can you evaluate the veracity of the information and assess the source's track record and motivations?
- *Alternative means*: Can the information be verified or corroborated through other sources or evidence? You should make reasonable efforts to substantiate the claims made by their sources.

If you decide it is necessary to keep a source confidential, you must take measures to protect that person's identity. You should employ encryption tools, communicate through secure channels, and store information securely to minimize the risk of inadvertent exposure.

The decision to protect sources should not be taken lightly. The researcher must balance the need for transparency and accountability with the potential consequences that exposing a source might have on their safety and the quality of their future reporting. Naming sources fosters transparency and accountability and should be your default position. If necessary, protecting sources' confidentiality can enable important revelations and safeguard individuals in vulnerable positions.

Human Subjects Research

There are many instances where conducting interviews or observing people for your thesis is regarded as *human subjects research*.

If the information you are gathering for your thesis qualifies as human subjects research, then you must obtain approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before you conduct interviews or start collecting data. The IRB plays a crucial role in ensuring the ethical treatment of human participants in research studies. Its primary responsibility is to review and approve research proposals to protect the rights, welfare, and well-being of individuals involved in research conducted by faculty, staff, and students. As aspiring researchers, it's vital for you to understand when your work qualifies as human subjects research and when IRB oversight is necessary. Here are some key considerations:

- *Involvement of human participants*: Human subjects research typically involves individuals who are the focus of the study, whether through interviews, surveys, observations, or experiments. This includes collecting data from living individuals through various means.
- *Systematic collection of data*: If you are conducting research that systematically collects data from human participants, it is likely considered human subjects research. This applies whether the data are gathered through surveys, interviews, experiments, or even analyzing existing data that can be linked to specific individuals.
- *Identifiability of participants*: Research that involves identifiable information about individuals, such as names, addresses, social security numbers, or any other personally identifiable data, usually falls within the scope of human subjects research. Anonymized or de-identified data, where individuals cannot be identified, may not always require IRB review, but caution should be exercised to protect participants' privacy.

If your research is intentional and systematic, designed to contribute new knowledge, and involves human participants, you will likely require IRB review and approval. When

the results of your research aim to be generalized or applied to a broader population beyond the immediate study participants, IRB approval is typically necessary. The intent to contribute to broader knowledge is a key factor in determining whether IRB review is required.

Princeton's IRB takes a broad interpretation of what is "human subjects research." If you are conducting any interviews or a survey, Princeton IRB requires that you get an initial "human subjects determination" from their office. In general, your thesis advisor will serve as the "Principal Investigator" for your IRB review submission. Exceptions to this rule are described below. If you are uncertain about whether your interviews or data gathering activities qualify as human subjects research, please consult your faculty advisor and email a brief synopsis of your proposed research plan to irb@princeton.edu, cc'ing your advisor. The synopsis should mention that the research is for a senior thesis, and it should include (1) a one-sentence description of the purpose or goal of your research, (2) your proposed procedures, (3) a representative list of questions you intend to ask, and (4) your advisor's name and department. For example:

I am writing to request a human subjects determination for a proposed junior independent work project. My goal is to study policies regarding access to religious services for incarcerated individuals. I plan to discuss with corrections officials their policies on prisoner access to religious advisors; whether there are official chaplains associated with the prison (and details on the numbers and types); and the process for prisoners to request and access religious advisors. For those incarcerated, I intend to discuss if they knew of the policies for access to religious advisors; whether they had ever met with religious advisors; and their description of the process. In the thesis, corrections officials will be identified by name (for those who consent to be named) and inmates will be identified by pseudonym only. My advisor is Prof. Valerie Gutierrez in the Fine Arts Department.

You must not conduct any interviews before you have (a) determined whether you need IRB approval for your research, and (b) received IRB approval in cases where it is required. If the IRB responds to your initial inquiry and determines that you do not need full IRB review and approval, you may move forward with your interviews. However, if the IRB determines that your research will need review and approval, you will need to provide a fuller description of your proposed thesis research as described on the IRB website. You can access the form you need to complete for review [online](#).

It's important to note that seeking IRB approval is intended to ensure ethical conduct and protect the rights and well-being of human participants. IRB review helps to minimize potential risks, ensure informed consent, and maintain confidentiality and privacy. IRB approval protects human subjects as well as the investigator and the University. In addition, many scholarly journals require IRB approval for publication. As a rule, the IRB does not review or approve studies that have already been completed.

As a student researcher, you need to familiarize yourself with the IRB's guidelines and adhere to the principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, and

confidentiality when working with human subjects. The IRB process not only safeguards participants but also enhances the validity and credibility of your research. Understanding when IRB approval is necessary and how to navigate the review process are essential parts of the research skills you will be encouraged to develop as a SPIA concentrator.

You can find additional information about the IRB review process [here](#).

IRB Review: Obtaining Consent from Survey Respondents or Interviewees

If you are applying for IRB review for your research project, one of your first tasks will be to decide how to obtain consent from the subjects you are working with. Documenting consent is important because it demonstrates you have explained the nature of your project to the people serving as respondents in a survey or allowing you to interview them or observe them. The subjects for your study should know they are participating voluntarily and that you as the researcher will respect their preferences for being named as an informant or for keeping their identity confidential. In some cases, you might use a paper consent form to document their preferences, but in cases where a paper form isn't practical or feasible, you can use a verbal script to inform your research subjects before you begin interviewing or observing them. The IRB offers a template for a paper consent form on its [website](#). These are most appropriate when you are interviewing or observing people in person. If you are conducting a web-based survey or an online experiment, then [a web-based version of the consent form](#) is recommended. A third alternative is the verbal consent script, an example of which is shown below:

Sample Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent

Hello, my name is [your name]. I am a junior at Princeton University in the School of Public and International Affairs. I am conducting research that will be used in my junior paper.

I am studying [description of the research]...

[Example 1]

...the budgetary process in the state of New Jersey. I would like to ask you a series of questions about your role in formulating the state budget and your broader understanding of how spending priorities are set.

[Example 2]

...policies related to affordable housing. I am very interested in your opinions and interpretations of how effective policies and programs in New Jersey have been in increasing the supply of affordable housing and reducing homelessness.

The information you share with me will be of great value in helping me to complete this research project.

This [interview, discussion, etc.] will take about [approximate amount] of your time.

[Insert one of the following depending on whether participant identifiers are collected]

[Example 1 – Named sources]

Please tell me how you would like to be identified in my JP: by name and title or as an anonymous source.

[Example 2 – Identifiers collected and kept confidential]

There is a small risk of a breach of confidentiality, but I will make every effort to keep your identity and what you tell me strictly confidential. I will not link your name to anything you say in the text of my JP.

[Example 3 – Identifiers will not be collected]

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. I will not link your name to anything you say, either in the transcript of this [interview, discussion, etc.] or in the text of my JP.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can, of course, decline to [discuss any issue, answer any question, etc.] and you may stop participating at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me, my JP advisor or our university research office at any time.

(The respondent will be given an information card, when applicable, containing name, institutional affiliation, and contact information.) [See also sample text for card]

[Insert the following when audio or video recording the interaction:]

I would like to make an [audio/video] recording of our discussion, so that I can have an accurate record of the information that you provide to me. [I will transcribe the recording and will keep the transcripts confidential and securely in my possession.] [I will erase the recording after I transcribe it.]

Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate [Insert if applicable: 'and may I record our discussion']?

If so, let's begin...."

As you and your advisor complete the online application for IRB review, you will be asked to upload (a) your version of the consent form (i.e., the version to be printed on paper, the online version, or the verbal script), along with (b) your questionnaire or topic guide, and (c) any materials (e.g., letter, email message, or advertisement) used to recruit participants for your study.

Citations and Bibliography

You must cite your source of any fact or statistic not commonly known as well as the source of any quote, paraphrase or summary of the work, opinions or interpretations of an individual, publication or web site. The Princeton School of Public and International Affairs does not prescribe any particular citation style. You may follow the guidelines of any generally accepted system of citation as listed below with the approval of your advisor. You should consult with your advisor before making your choice.

Footnote citations must appear on the same page and not at the end.

The bibliography should appear at the end of the paper. It is NOT necessary to group sources by type of material in your bibliography (i.e. books, newspapers, interviews grouped together). In fact, this makes it more difficult for the reader to trace your sources.

Academic Integrity and AI

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for fair evaluation of your work. While GAI (such as ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) can be used to generate ideas, summarize articles, develop computer code, or create images, all work in your Junior Paper must be your own, completed in accordance with the [University's academic regulations](#).


If/when GAI is used in the aid of your junior paper, you must cite it like any other source you are using for this paper. Failure to cite the use of GAI puts your academic integrity at risk.

Please note that individual Research Seminars may have more specific guidance around the use of GAI. As such, please follow the guidance set forth by your Research Seminar Director.

Research Resources

The Stokes Library has created useful research/library tips. Please review this information and feel free to connect with the Stokes Librarians directly or work with the Undergraduate Program Office for assistance.

[SPIA Library Guide](#)




YOU AND THE LIBRARY

Academic Year 2024-2025

WHAT THE LIBRARY CAN DO FOR YOU

Princeton University Library (PUL) can help you:

- Find literature (books, journals, etc.)
- Develop a Search Strategy
 - So you know where to look!
- Find data and statistics
- Learn best practices for data management
- Determine appropriate methods for your research
- Troubleshoot and interpret your results



AND MORE!

Note that one person may not have all of these skills, but that's why we have different teams with specialized skills in the library.

For Example: While your subject librarian may not know the nuances of the statistical test you're running, we can connect you with data services experts in the library who can help you out!

Read on to find out more about how the library can help you!

Library Research Guides


Library Research Guides can help you with a lot, including: teaching you how to utilize library resources and showing you resources you weren't aware we had! Check them out here: <https://libguides.princeton.edu/>

And here's one just for you all: <https://libguides.princeton.edu/SPIA-Guide>

POP QUIZ!

Who Are Your Librarians?

(Some) Answers are on the next page...



[Above image is linked.]

SPIA Undergraduate Program
Quantitative & Qualitative Methods Resources

[Princeton Survey Research Center](#)



- Assistance with survey design and implementation
- Consultation and guidance on sampling, development, data collection and processing.

The Survey Research Center's main purpose is to assist students, faculty, and administrators with the design and implementation of their own survey research projects. The SRC provides consultation and guidance on study design, sampling, instrument development, data collection and data processing. The Center has digital voice recorders, iPads, a 12-station computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) facility, a library collection on survey research methods, and a network of external resources.

Need assistance? [Request assistance!](#) (log in required)

SPIA Writing Advisors



The SPIA writing advisors are available to read, review and provide feedback on the junior and senior independent work papers. The advisors are post-docs with extensive experience in the social sciences and policy writing, in particular.

To schedule a consultation, please reach out to spiawriting@princeton.edu

[Princeton University Data & Statistical Services](#)



- Data and statistical consulting
- Assistance with selection of quantitative research methods, interpretation, analysis, conversion and visualization of data

Data and Statistical Services (DSS) provides data and statistical consulting. Experts are available to advise Princeton University students on choosing appropriate data, application of quantitative research methods, the interpretation of statistical analyses, data conversion, and data visualization. Subject specialists help choose appropriate data. The statistical packages supported by consultants are R/R Studio, Stata, and SPSS.

Need help with analysis or methodology?
[Schedule an appointment](#)

[Program for Quantitative & Analytical Political Science](#)



- Focused on theoretical and quantitative research in political science and policy
- [Research consultations](#) in specializations such as statistics, game theory, causal inference and more

The Program for Quantitative and Analytical Political Science (QAPS) was established in 2009 to support theoretical and quantitative research in political science and its dissemination. We support students through QAPS fellowships, host post-doctoral research fellows, offer statistical and formal theory consulting, hold quantitative skills workshops, throw conferences, and organize the Quantitative Social Science colloquium.

Firestone Library



- [Subject specialists](#) available for consultation in multiple areas of interest, including: Law, History, Politics, and much more
- Multitude of different resources provided to all students.

The Harvey S. Firestone Memorial Library serves as the main library on campus and assumes primary responsibility for humanities and social sciences collections and specialized research support services. It also houses many of the library's centralized operations, Special Collections rare books and manuscripts department, and other services including the Data and Statistical Services Lab, Cotsen Children's Library, and the Center for Digital Humanities.

Mudd Manuscript Library



- [Exploring Special Collections](#)
- [Archival Research Consults](#)

The Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library is part of Special Collections within Princeton University Library and is home to the Princeton University Archives and a highly regarded collection of 20th-century public policy papers. You can [Explore the Collections](#) further or find more information on [Visiting Special Collections](#) throughout the website.