

Paper 2: Social Capital

PS 101

Due October 22, 2014

The purpose of this writing assignment is to test your understanding of the concept of social capital: how it is created, how it is defined and measured, and why it is important for political behavior. More generally, the assignment tests your ability to think critically about an argument and evaluate the research on which it is based.

First, write a summary of Putnam's theory (**1 page**) as described in "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." Your summary should address the following points:

- How does Putnam define social capital, social trust, political participation, and civic engagement? These concepts are related, but be sure to explain how they are different from one another.
- In 1 or 2 sentences, summarize Putnam's overall argument in the article.
- What evidence does he use to support his argument?
- What are the possible sources of the decline in social capital?
- According to Putnam, which of these sources are more likely to be causing the decline?

Next, write a critique of his argument (**2-4 pages**). Do you think he presents sufficient evidence to support his claims? What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses? Are you persuaded that the main cause of the decline in social capital is television? Explain why, or why not. Even if you completely agree with his argument and are convinced that he is right, be sure to explain your position.

Other requirements:

- The entire paper must be 3 to 5 pages in length, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point font.
- Properly cite Putnam's article in your paper, just as you would any other source.
- You must turn in a printed copy of your paper in class on Wednesday, October 22. Anything submitted after that point will be considered late.