

Politics in Action: Observing a Political Meeting

Frequently our political discussions this year have focused on state, national, and international events, such as immigration and the border controversy, the #Me Too Movement, the Trump Presidency, and the 2018 midterm elections, ignoring almost entirely the fact that many significant political events also occur at the local level. The goal of this assignment is to sharpen your understanding of how local political institutions work. Your task will be to attend the meeting of a local political body (a city council, school board, planning commission, or court hearing), take careful notes of what you observe, and synthesize your impressions in a two (2) page reflection paper. Your observations and paper will then be shared in a roundtable discussion with the entire Humanities Core.

The names, addresses, websites and meeting times of various political institutions are listed on the reverse side to assist you in selecting a meeting to attend. Please review the appropriate website, or contact the organization directly, *before attending the meeting* to confirm meeting dates and times. This is, by no means, an exhaustive list, and you may select other political institutions to study (with prior approval). Below, I have also provided a list of **guiding questions** to assist you in analyzing what you observe. **However, your reflection paper must not be a series of short answer responses to these questions, but rather a cohesive, thematic analysis of your overall impressions of the meeting.**

Finally, where possible, you should also collect and attach to your reflection paper a meeting agenda, or other literature distributed at the meeting, as evidence of your attendance.

Your reflection papers must be typewritten, roughly 2 pages in length, and are due on **Wednesday, April 3rd**.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the scope of the organization's authority? What types of issues does it address? What is the extent of its power? How does it exercise this power?
2. How is the meeting conducted? How does it feel? Is there a chairperson or chairpersons? Are there other "officials" or staff members present? What rules are followed? How formal is the meeting? How are people dressed? What political values are reflected in the way the meeting is conducted?
3. Who attends the meeting? Is there an opportunity for participation by the general public? What types of people attend the meeting? Do they have a particular agenda or point of view? What appear to be their primary concerns?
4. Does the meeting promote justice in our society? Does it promote democracy (i.e., "rule by the people")? Is it useful or worthwhile? Why or why not?

Political Institutions and Organizations

Windsor Town Council (www.townofwindsor.com)	9291 Old Redwood Highway, Bldg. 400, Windsor 838-5315 (2/6, 2/20, 3/6 & 3/20 – 6:00 p.m.)
Windsor Planning Commission (www.townofwindsor.com)	9291 Old Redwood Highway, Bldg. 400, Windsor 838-5337 (2/12, 2/26, 3/12 & 3/26 – 5:30 p.m.)
Windsor Parks Commission (www.townofwindsor.com)	9291 Old Redwood Highway, Bldg. 400, Windsor 838-5382 (2/13 & 3/13 – TBD – call for time.)
Windsor School Board (www.wusd.org)	9291 Old Redwood Highway, Bldg. 400, Windsor 837-7700 (2/5, 2/19, 3/5 & 4/2 – 6:00 p.m.)
Healdsburg City Council (www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us)	401 Grove, Healdsburg 431-3320 (2/4, 2/19, 3/4, 3/18, & 4/1 – 6:00 p.m.)
Santa Rosa City Council (www.srcity.org)	100 Santa Rosa Ave., Santa Rosa 543-3010 (2/12, 2/26, 3/12, 3/26 & 4/2 beginning @ 4:00 p.m.)
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors (www.sonomacounty.ca.gov)	575 Administrative Dr., Santa Rosa 565-2241 (generally every Tuesday beginning @ 8:30 a.m. – call to dates.)
Superior Court for Sonoma County (www.sonoma.courts.ca.gov/)	600 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa (Criminal) or 3055 Cleveland Ave., Santa Rosa (Civil and Family) 521-6500 (Check online calendar for details.)