



LSE USAPP Blog: Guidelines for contributing authors

Thank you for your interest in contributing to the [LSE Phelan US Centre's](#) USAPP - American Politics and Policy [blog](#). We're looking forward to publishing your work on the blog soon. These guidelines will help you to have your article published as quickly as possible. Please see our [editorial policy](#) for further information about what to expect after submitting your article. If you have any questions about your contribution, please email us at c.h.gilson@lse.ac.uk.

Length and format

- In order to increase readability and accessibility, we aim for our articles to be between 800 and 1,200 words.
- We are also happy to post longer essays of over 2,000 words as "Long Reads", if appropriate for the topic. If you are interested, please discuss this with the blog team.
- Please send us your draft article in Word format, with your name at the top.

Audience, writing style and language

- Our aim is to increase the public understanding of the social sciences in the US. With this in mind, your article should be written with a relatively wide audience in mind, including policy-makers and other non-academics.
- Our most widely read blog articles are written in a more natural style, so we recommend that you avoid overusing acronyms and academic terms, such as Latin words, or specific terminology that may not be well known outside disciplinary circles. Also avoid saying things like "In this paper I will...", or "This paper aims to...", and go straight into your discussion of the topic.
- Use short paragraphs made up of four or five sentences
- As with journalistic pieces 'lead with the best.' Don't save your main argument or analysis for the end of the post.
- Write your article as a standalone piece, even if it summarises material in a longer paper or journal article. Try to present all of your argument and evidence within the text and avoid relying too heavily on information contained in external sources. Avoid phrases such as "in my recent paper, I have shown that political pollsters tend to get it wrong..." and simply say "Political pollsters get it wrong for these reasons..." Remember that many journal articles are behind a paywall and not all readers will have access to them.
- For good examples of blog writing style and presentation, please see our [latest articles](#).

Referencing

- We use links rather than citations for references. Links should direct readers to more detailed reports or other pieces of research, news items or other blog posts. Open access sources are preferable compared to those behind paywalls.
- Please insert a hyperlink at the relevant point of your argument that you'd like to reference (using **ctrl-K** in Word) or simply place the URL in parentheses where you would like it to be placed and we will link it ourselves.

Titles

- We use narrative titles, i.e., a single sentence that sums up the main argument of the article. The more descriptive and catchy the title, the more likely the article is to be read. Try to avoid questions (How can Senate deadlock be overcome?) or general topics (Inequality in the Rust Belt). Some examples of good titles:
 - *Giving cities more autonomy over how they tax and spend does not lead to inflated budgets.*
 - *The US may be stuck with higher inflation in 2022, and potentially beyond*
 - *Political polarization and negative campaign ads may have increased turnout in presidential elections*
- Try and keep titles to twenty words or less, if possible

Graphs and Charts

- We encourage the use of charts and figures. Graphs and charts are preferable to tables, as they are easier for readers to interpret quickly. In all cases, please send us the raw data of your chart, table, or figure in Excel format.
- Each chart needs a clearly labelled heading, labels for the X and Y axes or histogram bars, including units of measurement and a readable scale or background grid.
- There should be a clear legend distinguishing multiple data series from each other and a brief note on sources. Lines must be thick enough and distinctively coloured. Charts should use a numerical progression to make comparisons more visible

Biography and contributor photo

- We're proud of our contributors, so we like to give them full attribution. Please send us a three to four line biographical note, with your academic position, research interests, and details of your two most recent books.
- Please also send us a small colour photo headshot. Our preference is for a more formal portrait style, rather than a photo taken from an event.

Our editing process

- In most cases submitted articles will be reviewed speedily by the Blog Team, who will edit the piece to enhance readability to the blog's wider audience. Once these edits are complete, we will send you the final version of the article, and give you an opportunity to make final edits.
- All articles on LSE USAPP should be evidence based. With this in mind, editors may double-check the factual accuracy of certain points, or ask you for links to supporting information.