

Assess the significance of the cabinet essay sample

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Assess the significance of the Cabinet in the Executive Branch

The US Cabinet consists of the heads of 15 executive departments and occasionally other important officials that the President decides to include. Some argue that the Cabinet is as important as the President wants it to be. The Cabinet is also said to have a greater input in legislative processes on an individual basis rather than as a collective body. This is known as a Kitchen Cabinet.

The Cabinet lacks constitutional legitimacy because they are all appointed by the President instead of elected by the electorate. This is central in their lack of power as a collective body. The British cabinet claims that the Prime Minister is simply a member of the cabinet but first amongst equals. There is no notion of such a thing in the US Cabinet. The President is seen as the leader and members of the cabinet below him. They are seen as subordinates.

Cabinet meetings are also not scheduled on a regular basis. Stephen Hess stated for example that JFK held cabinet meetings as 'seldom as possible'. John F Kennedy used his cabinet 12 times in his first 9 months in office. He used the cabinet a total of 31 times during his tenure. In the modern day George Bush held 49 meetings in 8 years. This suggests to us that Presidents intend on handling as much government business on their own or with one to one sessions with cabinet officials.

However this depends on the President that the Cabinet is serving under. For example Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan called 36 meetings in their first

year in office. So this reiterates the point that the cabinet is as important as the President wants it to be

These meetings can also be seen as unproductive. The Cabinet officials who's department matters are being discussed may be the only person who is interested in the matter. The rest are likely to be bored and are unlikely to contribute to the discussions. For example if the President is discussing issues about Education with the Secretary of Education - Arneuncan. Then the rest of the cabinet officials such as the Secretary of Transport - Anthony Foxx may not have much to say on the matters being discussed.

Another reason why the Cabinet can be seen as unimportant could be because the President is more likely to consult his own personal team such as the EXOP. The EXOP consists of the presidents most trusted advisors. This is in contrast to the Cabinet where the President will barely know the secretary personally. Presidents have also in the past felt that Cabinet secretaries can 'go native' which means that the secretaries loyalty becomes divided between the President and pressure groups and other people who are associated with their department and since there is no doctrine of collective responsibility it can be dangerous for the President to trust a cabinet secretary whole heartedly.

In my opinion the US Government could still function just as well without a cabinet. It has no constitutional standing, the members are unelected and not socially representative. Their advice to the president is hardly taken on because the President has EXOP and other personal advisors who he trusts

more to advise him and if their advice is ever taken on by the President then it is usually done individually and not as a collective body.