GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH REPORTS ON
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

1.   *General Instructions*

As noted in the syllabus, one requirement in this course is completion of a modest research report, the results of which will be made available to all students in the class — probably through a class presentation and in any event by posting on the course website and being available for class discussion. Each student will pick a different Presidential election and prepare a summary report on it, using the template presented below.

There have been 56 Presidential elections in U.S. history. Setting aside the (more or less) uncontested elections of 1789, 1792, and 1820, there are 53 contested elections for approximately 15-20 students to choose from. Of course, not all of these elections are equally interesting, significant, or consequential. The following 30 elections are probably more important than the other 23, for the reasons indicated. It is suggested, but not required, that you choose an election from this list of 30.

1796	The first contested Presidential election, which exhibited one quirk in the original Electoral College system (subsequently corrected by the 12th Amendment in 1804).
1800	A rematch of 1796, which exhibited another quirk in the original Electoral College system (also corrected by the 12th Amendment in 1804).
1824	Effectively a non-partisan four-candidate election, and the last election to be thrown into the House of Representatives.
1832	The first year in which a national nominating convention was used.
1836	The Whig Party tried a device never used before or since — running different Presidential candidates in different regions of the country.
1840	The first election fully characterized by mass campaign activity, slogans, general "hoopla," and an emphasis on "packaging" a Presidential candidate [William Henry Harrison], rather than on issues or character.
1856	The Republican party abruptly displaced the Whigs as the principal opposition to the Democratic party.
1860	Another four-candidate election, in which the Democratic Party [and the country] splits into Northern and Southern wings. Effectively, there were separate parallel elections in the North and South.
1876	A disputed election that was resolved by a special Electoral Commission, resulting in an *election inversion* (the candidate who won the popular vote lost the election) and having important political and legal consequences.
1884	An extremely close election that produced the first Democratic presidential victory since 1856.
1888	President Cleveland was defeated for re-election in the last election inversion prior to 2000.
1896	A Democratic-Populist fusion produced a major electoral realignment heavily favoring the Republicans.
1904	Theodore Roosevelt, the first "celebrity" President, was elected in his own right in the first modern landslide Presidential election.

1912   The introduction of Presidential primaries led to a split in the Republican Party, producing a three-candidate Presidential election.

1916   Woodrow Wilson was barely re-elected against a reunited Republican party; until 2000, no election since 1876 had been decided by such a small electoral vote margin.

1924   A 103-ballot Democratic convention produced a weak compromise candidate, which led to a significant third-party movement.

1928   With the first Catholic candidate for President, the Democrats begin to regain strength in big cities and Northeast.

1932   The first election after the onset of the Great Depression, and the first Democratic popular vote landslide in modern times.

1936   After a variety third-party challenges collapsed, the election ratified the New Deal and crystallized the New Deal electoral alignment.

1948   The "great upset," with left and right factions splitting off from the Democratic Party into third/fourth party movements.

1952   The first Republican Presidential victory since 1928, following an intensely contested Republican nomination and the last multi-ballot [Democratic] convention in history.

1960   A classic "outsider strategy" won the Democratic nomination, the first televised debates, the "religious issue," unpledged electors, and the closest popular vote election in the 20th century.

1964   Enthusiastic issue-oriented "amateurs" captured the Republic nomination, producing the last Democratic Presidential landslide.

1968   The Democratic Party got the wrong kind of "bounce" from its convention, and set up a commission to "reform" Democratic nominating rules; the election produced the last third-party candidate to win electoral votes.

1972   Democratic party "reforms" enabled enthusiastic issue-oriented "amateurs" to capture the Democratic nomination and helped produce a Republican landslide.

1976   An incumbent but unelected President was strongly challenged for his party's nomination, and a wide open Democratic nomination contest produced the first Presidential nominee from the South since 1848 (apart from the special case of LBJ in 1964). An unexpectedly close election, with the second closest electoral vote count in 20th century (assuming the 2000 election belongs to the 21st century).

1980   The Republican nomination contest was more wide open than we recall, and a significant third candidate role roiled the general election campaign.

1992   A wide-open Democratic nominating contest, the greatest popular vote support for a third candidate since 1912, and the first Democratic Presidential victory since 1976.

2000   Ralph Nader, Florida, hanging chads, *Bush v. Gore*, and all that.

2008   The longest [Democratic] nomination contest since the 1976 [on the Republican side], between the first "serious" African-American and female candidates in history; election of the first African-American President.

*2.   **Template for Report***

Note: not all points are relevant for all elections.

A.   Context of Election

Which party controlled White House (and Congress)?
Is the incumbent president running for re-election?
Is there some particular issue that is roiling the country?
Is this election generally similar to or different from the previous presidential election (with
        respect to the candidates, party platforms, issues, etc.)?
What was the general nature of party competition in this era? Was one party generally dominant?
What were the dominant issues, and party position on these issues, in this era?

B.   Party Primaries and Nominations (for each party)

Was the nomination contest consensual or divisive?
Who were the principal contestants and what were their nomination strategies?
Was the result a factional victory or agreement on a compromise candidate?
Did primary elections exist at this time and how important were they?
Was the nomination clinched prior the convention?
Did the nomination require many ballots at the convention?
Who was the Vice President nominee and what considerations influenced his selection?
Was there a convention fight over any major platform plank?
Was there any significant third party nominee?

C.   Candidates

Description of each candidate with respect to:
        social and political background
        experience and political skills
        personal qualities and appeal
        factional affiliation in party
        positions on issues.

D.   General Election Campaign

What were the early expectations regarding the likely winner (based on early polls, etc., so
        applies only to modern era elections)?
What was general campaign strategy of each party or candidate (regional, group, etc., appeals)?
What general issues and themes were emphasized by each party or candidate?
What was the role of incumbent president (if not running for re-election)?
Was there a substantial imbalance between the parties and candidates with respect to campaign
        resources?
Was there a significant third party candidate and did this affect the strategies or fortunes of either
        major candidate?

Was there any expectation that the election might be thrown into the House?
Was there any "October surprise" (last-minute event they may have suddenly shifted voting preferences one way or the other)?

E.   The Election Outcome

What were the popular and electoral vote divisions?
What patterns of regional support were evident in the electoral map?
What were the patterns of group support for the parties or candidates? (For the most part, this kind of information is available for modern era elections only.)
Did the election produce any quirks or controversies with respect to the Electoral College (unpledged or faithless electors, an election inversion, the contingency procedure, etc.), the death of a candidate, or electoral disputes?
What is the historical significance of the election, if any?
What impact did it have on future elections, if any?

3.   Research Resources

In part, this is a "scavenger hunt" type of exercise — it is up to you to figure how to track down the information you need to fill in the template outlined above for the election you have chosen. But here are some suggestions to get you started.

A.   Complete all the course readings. Polsby and Wildavsky's *Presidential Elections* provides a general overview of the Presidential selection process as it has operated for the past half century or so. Allan Lichtman's *The Keys to the White House* provides a thumbnail description of every Presidential election from 1860 onwards, focusing on the thirteen "keys" and how they "turned" in each election

B.   Probably the most valuable single reference work available is Congressional Quarterly's *Guide to U.S. Elections*. This two-volume reference book includes state-by-state popular vote totals for every election since 1824 and electoral maps for all elections. Additional CQ reference volumes include CQ's *Guide to the Presidency*, CQ's *Presidential Elections since 1789*, and CQ's *National Party Conventions*. These books and many similar reference works are available in the AOK Library Reference Room. They are shelved close to one another with call numbers beginning with JK.

C.   There are many other relevant reference books, journals, indices, and so forth. Don't be reluctant to seek help from the UMBC reference librarians. They are both very knowledgeable and (in my experience) very willing to help.

D.   *Wikipedia* has an entry on every U.S. Presidential Election, including links to other web sites and references to books and articles. Given the nature of its editorial process, there is always some question about the accuracy and reliability of Wikipedia entries, but my impression is that those on U.S. presidential election are generally well done and that they provide a good starting point for gathering information. Another valuable web resource is David Leip's *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*, to which there is a link on the course web page. Certainly there is much

other good material on the web, which you can turn up using Google or another search engine. But remember that anyone can post anything on the web without any vetting or editorial review, so you should be skeptical of the credibility about information provided by some sites. To search for academic works, use Google Scholar rather than the usual Google search function (click on **More**, then **Even More**, then scroll down to near the bottom of the page); this will lead you to unpublished as well as published works.

4.   *Class Presentations*

The last several classes will be devoted to student presentations. Presentation s may be voluntary if total enrollment is greater than anticipated.

Making a presentation has these benefits:

(1)   the development of good oral presentation skills is very valuable for many career objectives,

(2)   a presentation will give you an extra incentive to have your work largely completed prior to the very end of the semester (when you may face many other competing deadlines),

(3)   you will get some feedback from me and, I hope, from your fellow students prior to completing the final version of the report.

If you wish, you can use the same PowerPoint facilities that I use in class each day. Alternatively, I can make Departmental resources available to you if you want to make xerox handouts for your presentation. Please see me a few days in advance of your presentation to make the necessary arrangements.

5.   *Final Paper*

Your report should generally follow the template outlined above. The written report should be approximately 8-12 doubled-spaced pages (2000-3000 words) but can be longer if you wish. You may also wish to attach tables, maps, or other material in addition. Your paper should be well organized and clearly written, using correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. (Remember that the spell-checker of a word processing program does not catch all spelling errors, let alone other errors.) In my experience, a well organized and clearly written paper emerges only after multiple revisions.

A.   *Typing and Formatting.* Your final paper should be word-processed in double-spaced format. Footnotes (if used) may be placed at the bottom of the page or gathered at the end of the paper.

B.   *Citations and References.* Your paper should include proper citation for important facts (that are not common knowledge), opinions, arguments, as well as direct quotations. Most commonly, you will summarize the facts, opinions, or arguments in your own words and then provide a citation. Sometimes you may choose to quote your source directly: brief quotations (up to several lines) are placed in quotation marks and embedded in the text of your paper; longer quotations are set off by indentation (as shown below). In either event, what you present as direct quotation should be *exact* (word for word) quotation. And, whether you summarize or directly quote the words of another author, you must not misrepresent the author's evident meaning (by "quoting out of context").

There are many different styles for providing citations. The traditional footnote style (which has many variations) is no longer commonly used in political science writing. Many political science books and most political science journals now use the more convenient "scientific" style, by which an abbreviated citation (author's last name and date of publication) is provided parenthetically within the text, for example:

> According to Taagepera and Shugart (1989), even proportional representation systems show small degrees of disproportionality . . . .

> Various studies have shown that district magnitude is the decisive factor influencing the seat-votes relationship (Rae, 1967; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Lijphart, 1993).

A list of references, including all items cited and following any standard style, is then placed at the end of the paper. I do not care what citation and reference style you use, but I do insist that proper citations be provided.

D.   *Due Date*. The research report is due in <u>electronic format</u> (as an email attachment) no later than by the end of the day of **Wednesday, December 19** (last day of final exams). Especially if you attach tables, maps, etc., you may wish also to deliver a hard copy to me (in PUB 321 or my mailbox in PUP 355), so that you know that what I read and evaluate is formatted exactly as you intend.

6.   Plagiarism

Plagiarism is taking written work of others and passing it off as your own. In academic life, plagiarism is an extremely serious offense. A Ph.D. candidate found to have committed plagiarism may be expelled from graduate school; a professor found to have committed plagiarism may be fired. Consider how you would feel if you had "sweated blood" to produce the best paper you could, and you then discovered that another student had copied or paraphrased large portions of your paper and turned it in as his or her own work. It should be added that plagiarism of this sort is often both easier to detect and easier to prove than might be supposed. Submission of a plagiarized paper in this (or any other upper-level) course may result in a grade of F for the course, regardless of exam or other grades, and the matter will be referred to the Academic Conduct Committee.

In an undergraduate course, I do not deem errors, evidently made in good faith, in handling sources to constitute plagiarism. (But I will note and correct such errors.) But deliberately copying or paraphrasing extended portions of someone else's writing and pretending that it is your own writing is inexcusable conduct at any level (even if citations are provided) and it will be punished. (A "paper" that consists largely of direct quotation, presented as such and properly cited, does not constitute plagiarism but at the same time does not constitute an acceptable student paper.)

For further guidance on plagiarism, see the course website.