

MIDTERM TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT

Write on **either** Question I or Question II.

Question I

You have been asked to participate with others in a pre-election forum. While some of the other participants in the debate have been selected as political activists, partisans, or ideologues, you have been asked to participate as a student of political science who is taking a course on Presidential Elections. Your specific assignment is to compare and contrast different methods for forecasting Presidential election outcomes and to assess their advantages and disadvantages.

Write an essay previewing the main points you would want to make in your debate speech. Your discussion should cover (a) pre-election polls, (b) Allan Lichtman's *Keys to the White House*, and (c) predictive (statistical regression) models. Your essay should be appropriate given your role as a student of political science and, for grading purposes, it makes no difference which techniques you may evaluate more or less favorably.

Question II

You have been asked to participate with others in a debate on whether the Electoral College system for electing the President should be maintained or abolished. While some of the other participants in the debate have been selected as political activists, partisans, or ideologues, you have been asked to participate as a student of political science who is taking a course on Presidential Elections. In the debate, you can advocate either one of two positions:

- (1) *that the Electoral College system should be maintained as is or with specified modifications;*
or
- (2) *that the Electoral College system should be abolished and be replaced by a system of direct popular election with specified characteristics.*

Choose one or other position, and write an essay previewing the main points you would want to make in your debate speech. If you select position (1), your essay should identify and discuss the modifications (if any) that you recommend in the Electoral College system. If you select position (2), your essay should identify and discuss the particular rules and provision for the direct popular vote that you recommend. In either event, the essay should be appropriate given your role as a student of political science and, for grading purposes, it makes no difference which position you chose to support.

See OVER for specific instructions.

Specific Instructions

1. Your essay should not exceed six double-spaced pages (about 1500 words), and it probably shouldn't fall much below this limit either. Part of the assignment is to decide what are the most important points to cover within this limited length and then to state them as concisely and cogently as possible.
2. You are free to consult all course readings and other material but you may not collaborate with other students in writing your answer. You are *not* expected to do any outside reading (beyond the material on the course syllabus) or other research in preparing your answer. You do not need to use footnotes or formal citations, but specific references to relevant course readings should be cited informally, e.g., "As Edwards says on p. 65,"
3. ***The essay is due by midnight on Monday, November 12.*** In the absence of special arrangements that will be granted only to accommodate unusual circumstances, essays turned in after this deadline will be penalized according to the degree of lateness.
4. Assuming that you will prepare your essay on a computer, please submit an ***electronic copy*** to me by the due date. The electronic copy should be submitted as an email or, preferably, as a Word or WordPerfect attachment to an email, sent to ***nmiller@umbc.edu***. Please consult with me in advance if it is difficult or impossible for you to submit your answer in this manner.
5. The essay that you turn in should represent your own individual effort, not collaborative work with other students. And of course, it should not be plagiarized from other texts (books, journal articles, web pages, term paper mills, etc.). Please note the statement on Academic Integrity in the syllabus.