

## ***Research Paper Assignment***

This is to be a five-to seven-page (approx. 1500 words) paper and should be typed and include a bibliography. See the citation requirements below.

Since all of these are fairly large topics, you will not be able to offer a "complete" answer. So, strive for a coherent and convincing answer. You must take a position on the question, but you should not merely state your opinion -you should back it up with evidence and arguments from your sources. I will be looking to see that the sources and evidence you discuss are directly relevant to the question and that they support the thesis you present. In short, you need to focus and organize your answer and not get distracted by all the possible angles. Keep asking yourself whether what you're writing contributes to answering the basic question (as presented in the first sentence of each topic, before all the "ifs" and "considers").

**Due Date: Wednesday, December 3**

**No late papers will be accepted.** Early papers are of course acceptable.

### **POSSIBLE TOPICS**

Choose one of these questions to answer. If you would like to propose an alternative topic, you must clear it with me no later than November 17 (either e-mail or give me something in writing – I'll respond by November 19).

1. Would term limits for members of Congress make that body more "representative" than it currently is? If so, what specific time span (limit) would be appropriate and how would you address objections that term limits weaken Congress relative to the executive branch and interest groups? If not, what else could or should be done to address the "insider mentality" of long-serving Congresspeople?
2. Does the President now have too much power to "make war?" Consider the Constitutional framework and such recent innovations as the War Powers Resolution. Consider also the President's relationship to Congress, the military, and the media in military matters and illustrate, if possible, with references to recent military conflicts.
3. Which is more important in determining the likely success of a presidential candidate: campaign contributions or media coverage? Consider how each of these affects the other and figure out which one "determines" the other. Consider also whether there is something peculiar about a presidential race that affects the answer. Feel free to draw on examples from recent and historical campaigns.
4. Should people be allowed to vote in federal elections over the Internet? How might this be done? What advantages might such a reform have (e.g. increasing voter turnout, convenience)? What problems might arise (e.g. fraud)? Could the problems be solved? If not, would the benefits outweigh the possible problems?
5. Which of these interest groups is more powerful: the National Rifle Association or the AARP? Be sure to define the characteristics and measures of "power" (e.g. policy influence, reputation) -how do you know they're powerful? Also, discuss the elements of power (numbers, money, organization, etc.) what makes them powerful?

6. Would a successful third party at the national level in the United States make government more responsive to voters? First, define what would constitute "success" at the national level: would this mean electing a president, electing a large number (or even a few) Representatives and Senators, or something else? What would the likely impact of such success be on "responsiveness": would you expect shifts in policy, greater turnover, or something else?
7. Has the welfare reform instituted at the national level in 1996 been successful in moving welfare recipients into jobs? At what cost? In assessing success, consider the goals of "welfare to work" and what steps would be (have been) necessary to accomplish this for individual recipients. In assessing "cost," consider especially state and federal spending on the programs associated with this reform. To narrow this down, you should probably focus on two or three states and how they have developed their own approaches to the "welfare to work" goal.
8. Should the electoral college be abolished? If so, what would replace it (e.g. would the President would be chosen by a majority of popular votes considered nationwide)? If not, are there small reforms that could address the problems it has, or should it be kept as is? For both sides, consider "discrepancies" between popular and electoral vote totals not only in elections such as 2000, but also in more "normal" elections. Consider also the impact of the electoral college on presidential campaigns (i.e. where and how candidates run).
9. On balance, has the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law passed by Congress in 2002 been an effective response to any (or all) of these complaints about campaign finance: "soft money," the escalating cost of campaigns, or the excessive influence of large campaign contributors and/or political action committees? Focus on the intent of specific provisions of that law in addressing such complaints and the arguments for and against the likely effectiveness of such provisions. This paper should be mostly a review of the policy debate, not a political analysis of the legislation's struggle in Congress. However, your assessment of the law's effectiveness should consider what has happened since passage (e.g. court challenges, emerging patterns in campaign finance).
10. Should Supreme Court Justices have a set term on the bench (e.g. ten years, nonrenewable)? Would this erode the independence of the judiciary or make the rulings of Justices better reflect contemporary politics? Explain what you consider to be the proper political functions and relative position of the Supreme Court and how well the current "life term" accomplishes those functions and maintains that position. Although not central to this question, you might consider how such a change would affect confirmation hearings.

## **Citation Guidelines (and Warning on Plagiarism)**

**Plagiarism will not be tolerated on this assignment and will likely result in a zero for the assignment.**

- You need to use (and cite) five sources, only two of which may be Internet sources.
- Wikipedia (and other online or print encyclopedias) should be used only for background research and for guidance to additional sources. If you use this, cite it in your bibliography, but it will not count toward the total sources used.
- The kind of source refers to the source itself, not to how you found it. Thus, if you used the on-line catalog to locate a book or article (even if the latter was delivered to you on-screen as a full-text), this would not count as an Internet source.
- Direct quotations must be placed in quotation marks (or if longer than three lines, indented and single-spaced).

- You must give a specific citation for all direct quotations, as well as for any substantial paraphrases or summarized information.
- Citations in the body of the text may be parenthetical (e.g. Brooks, p. 12), or you may footnote, but a full citation must be given in the bibliography.
- Any information not cited properly may be considered plagiarized and punished accordingly (which probably means a zero for the assignment).

You are to write this paper in your own words, but also acknowledge properly all sources. If you have any questions, contact me immediately.

### **Internet Source**

This refers to web pages and other internet content that does not exist anywhere beside the Internet. Sources should have at least the URL and preferably also the page's title (found in the title bar of the browser). For example:

<http://www.acri.org/clinton/index.html> "The Clinton Administration Record on Preferences, Set-Asides and Quotas"

Reproductions of newspaper articles, primary documents, results of database searches that bring up full-text articles are not considered to be internet sources. You can usually tell these by a URL that has a lot of numbers and "session" somewhere in the URL (e.g.

[http://web3.searchbank.com/infotrac/session/754/878/6080612w5/76lrxn\\_1](http://web3.searchbank.com/infotrac/session/754/878/6080612w5/76lrxn_1)). Clicking on an address like this is likely to lead nowhere. You should cite these as if they were journal or newspaper sources and indicate that they were "delivered" online, e.g. "Delivered by FirstSearch on July 14, 2003"

### **Book**

This refers to hard-or soft-bound textbooks and monographs, and to articles or essays found within them. You should cite the author, title, place, publisher, date, and any page numbers used. For example:

Robert A. Hendrickson, *Hamilton*, New York: Mason/Charter, 1976.

### **Journal Article**

This refers to a scholarly journal or to popular monthly magazines, preferably the former. You should cite the author, title of article, page numbers of article, title of journal, and date of publication. For example:

John P. Roche, "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," pp. 799-816 in American Political Science Review, December 1961.

### **Newspaper, Newsweekly**

This refers to daily or weekly newspaper articles and editorials. You should cite the author (where available), title of article, newspaper title, date, section number, and page numbers. For example: Katharine Q. Seelye, "House Panel Passes Constitutional Amendment on School Prayer," New York Times, March 5, 1998, A17.

### **Primary Document**

This refers to government documents and historical documents, e.g. committee hearings, court decisions, the Federalist papers, etc. Citations will vary, but get as much as possible, including author, title, date. Such sources are often found on the internet; if so, provide the URL address too. For example:

Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist #84* (<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/1776-1800/federalist/fed84.htm>)