

## Prediction Memo

This assignment gives you the opportunity to use the information that we have learned in class to make predictions about the 2020 election. You are writing this essay as a political scientist, not a partisan. You are writing about what you expect to happen based on the evidence available about the 2020 election and your understanding of previous elections.

### When is the assignment due?

This assignment is due on Friday, October 30 at 11:59 PM. The Dropbox is posted on Pilot.

### What do you write?

You should write a paper that is approximately 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. The paper should include in-text citations (APA) of course readings and a references page at the end on a separate page (does not count towards your 5-7 page limit).<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Introduction (1/2 to 1 page)

In this paper, you will start with a brief introduction about who you think will win the election and provide three unique reasons that are supported by evidence (e.g., 1) effective campaign strategy in terms of visits, advertising, fundraising, etc.; 2) voters in a certain subgroup breaking towards a candidate like increased Hispanic turnout, increased evangelical turnout, etc.; 3) unemployment in a specific sector/region, etc.).

#### II. Electoral Map (1/2 page)

You should go to <https://www.270towin.com/> and fill out a map based on the category designations (Safe D/R; Likely D/R, Leans D/R). You do want to change all toss-ups to either a state won by Biden or Trump.

#### III. Overview of Map (1-2 pages)

In this section, you tell the reader why your map broadly looks the way that it does. Here are some possible ways you might frame this section:

- “While Trump makes further inroads in states like Iowa and Ohio, he will not be able to hold on to the “Blue Wall” states that Clinton lost.”
- “Even though Biden concentrated his ad buys and appearances in the Midwest, it has not been enough to resonate with the Obama-Trump voters in 2016. Moreover, Trump capitalizes on his climate plan to win over voters in the oil and gas industry.”
- “Biden will benefit from the strong Senate candidates in Arizona and Georgia and create a new path for Democratic victory in the Electoral College.”
- “While Biden dumps resources into flipping Arizona and even Texas, he comes up short and Trump takes advantage of his blunder and wins the Electoral College by rebuilding his 2016 coalition.”

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<sup>1</sup> APA Citation Guide:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

- “Democrats build on the momentum from the 2018 midterms and dissatisfaction with Trump’s management of the coronavirus response and run away with the suburbs and women voters, winning in a blowout election.”
- “The RNC convention and subsequent ads successfully paint Biden and the Democratic Party as socialists. Trump wins in a landslide by winning back moderate voters who fear the Democratic Party’s policies are too extreme.”
- “Trump improves his numbers with white non-college educated voters and Baby Boomers, helping him to win in states with higher numbers of these voters (citation of education levels - <https://www.census.gov/topics/education/educational-attainment.html>), but loses support among older voters leading to losses in these states with an older electorate (citation of median age - <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-state-detail.html>)”
- “States with robust early voting and mail-in-voting (citations: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/early-voting-in-state-elections.aspx> ; <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/how-to-vote-2020/> ) break to Biden thanks to their efforts to encourage supporters to have a plan to vote. States with strict voter laws and policies discourage Democratic turnout and break to Trump.”

You should not to list off each state and explain why Biden or Trump won the state, but instead provide broader impressions of the election. You should also use sources (polls, articles, etc.) to support your projection. You should also not use biased or opinionated language. For example, “Group Z voted for Candidate Y because they are terrible people” is not a good argument and you will lose points for that kind of assertion. But, “Group Z breaks towards candidate Y because of this theory (citation) and this poll (citation)” is excellent. You are not writing about what you *hope* will happen, nor what you *dread* will happen, but what you *think* will happen based on evidence. Also, remember that no group of voters is monolithic. For example, about 60% of Latinos identify as Democrat compared to 35% that identify as Republican. However, Cuban Americans are much more supportive of the Republican Party than Latinos from Puerto Rico or Mexico (Willis and Seiz 2020)<sup>2</sup>.

#### IV. A closer look at a state of your choice (that isn’t Ohio) (1 to 2 pages)

In this section, I want you to take a closer look at a non-Ohio state (it’s time to expand our horizons) and explore one of the original three factors that you listed in the introduction. This should focus on a battleground state as they will be targeted by the campaigns.

- You should search for articles about the specific state, often the best information comes from regional reporters (e.g., *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *The Arizona Republic*) but other publications often write features on the states too.
- You can find excellent data at the county-level by using sources like: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>; <https://www.census.gov/data.html>
- You can also find good electoral data on the Secretary of State’s webpage for each state and from recent election results on pages like *Politico*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* - <https://www.politico.com/2016->

<sup>2</sup> <https://theconversation.com/all-latinos-dont-vote-the-same-way-their-place-of-origin-matters-133600>

[election/results/map/president/texas/](https://www.politico.com/election-results/2018/florida/) ; <https://www.politico.com/election-results/2018/florida/>

V. Conclusion (1/2 to 1 page)

Finally, you will tie together your section on a specific state to your broader map and theory. There is no need to write platitudes here (e.g., “Regardless, the American people’s voice will be heard”) – just provide summary of what you wrote and recap your key arguments.

**Additional Notes**

I am happy to go over rough drafts of your paper up to two days before the due date. I am also available to help you find additional resources, data, polls, etc. as you are working on the paper. I also recommend that you work ahead and take advantage of the [University Writing Center](#).

You might also find it helpful to start with Section IV (A closer looker at a state) and work your way backwards to your Electoral Map. Let the information that you gather help to guide your conclusion and broader theory.

Even with all of the information available, elections are difficult to predict. You will not be evaluated on the accuracy of your predictions but on your argument. Wrong predictions that are objective and well-reasoned are better than correct predictions that are poorly argued. Of course, if you can do both (accurate and well-reasoned), then you can leverage this paper for a lucrative career in punditry!

All writing should be your own, but I recommend discussing the project with peers and even sharing drafts for their critiques and feedback. I also invite students to write a longer paper if they are interested in fulfilling a [Departmental Honors Program](#). I think this is a paper that will be fun to write and ultimately lead to a product that you can be proud of.

**Rubric - Point Breakdown**

Professionalism	20 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Superior mechanics</li><li>- No use of slang</li><li>- No typos</li><li>- Clear topic sentences and transitions</li></ul>	
Introduction (.5 to 1 double-spaced pages)	15 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provides a clear overview of your prediction memo.</li><li>- Identifies <u>three</u> unique explanations for the outcome of the 2020 election</li><li>- Provides an overview of the rest of the paper including the state that will be closely examined.</li></ul>	
Electoral Map	5 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Successfully pastes a map from 270towin.com into the Word file.</li><li>- Makes predictions based on the prompt without careless errors.</li></ul>	
Electoral Map Overview (1-2 pages)	30 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Essay makes clear connections to information that has been covered in the class (e.g., electoral rules, campaign strategies, October surprises, etc.).</li><li>- Cites <u>two</u> sources from the syllabus or lecture content (APA Citation).</li><li>- Cites at least three additional relevant articles, background information, or data to support the argument.</li></ul>	
Critique (.5 to 1 double-spaced page)	20 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- If relevant, scrutinizes claims from the documentary/podcast (with supporting documentation)</li><li>- Cites sources from alternate points of view</li><li>- Provides thoughtful critique and counterpoints when relevant.</li></ul>	
Conclusion (.5 to 1 page)	10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provides a summary of the key arguments that were made in the paper</li><li>- Connects the information they gleaned from the state with the broader theories laid out in the paper and Electoral Map Overview</li></ul>	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100 points</b>