Final Project

This assignment gives you the opportunity to use the information that we have learned in class to explore a question related to the 2020 election. You will do this either through writing a paper OR creating a podcast. For the paper, you can work with one partner – you will both earn the same grade on the assignment. For the podcast, you can work with up to two other classmates – you will each earn the same grade on the assignment.

You are completing this project as a political scientist, not a partisan. You are writing or podcasting about some aspect of the election based on the evidence available about the results of the 2020 election.

When is the assignment due?

This assignment is due on **Wednesday, December 9 at 11:59 PM**. The Dropbox is posted on Pilot. You will post a Word file or a link to your podcast (preferably posted on Soundcloud or a video podcast can be posted on YouTube[1]) AND a Word file containing the references of the information that you studied.

Paper
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 additional readings, and a references page at the end on a separate page (does not count towards your 5-7 page limit).[2]

I. Introduction (1/2 to 1 page)

In this paper, you will start with a brief introduction about a topic in the 2020 election that you want to explore further. This topic can fall in several different categories:
1) Specific groups (ethnic, religion, class)
2) Locations (urban/suburban/rural, Midwest/Southeast, etc.)
3) Campaign events (conventions, debates, travel, etc.)
4) Campaign strategies (advertising, candidate branding, voter targeting and mobilization, etc.)
5) Events (October surprises)
6) Issues (Coronavirus, racial strife, protests, international affairs, the economy, abortion, guns, etc.)
7) Information environment (media, social media, foreign interference, etc.)
8) Voting (Early voting, absentee ballot, voting rights, etc.)

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[1] If you are worried about privacy, you can post a Youtube video as 'unlisted' or 'private' so that only people with the link can watch. I'm not sure about Soundcloud's settings, but it is up to you to figure the specifics out prior to the due date.

[2] APA Citation Guide:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

With whatever topic you decide to land on, you will write an introduction that sets up the key topic and clearly explains what you are going to explore about it.

Of course, these topics are not mutually exclusive. You may talk about how the George Floyd protests (#6) influenced black voting behavior (#1) or how candidates' travel (#3) was concentrated in the Midwest (#2) and targeted at suburban voters (#1). I am happy to speak with you and provide guidance on a specific topic.

II. Background (1-2 pages)

In this section, you provide a background of this issue has a) been prominent in past elections and b) how you expect this issue to influence the 2020 election. You are essentially answering the question, 'why did you choose to explore this issue?'

In this section, you should cite a mix of academic literature and popular literature that supports your claims. The syllabus provides a good starting point for readings, you should also browse the Reference page in the readings for additional articles that may be more relevant to your research question.

III. An analysis of how the issue affected the 2020 election (2 to 3 pages)

In this section, you will use arguments, analysis, or data (polls, exit polls, election results at the state-, county-, precinct-level) to describe how the issue you focused on affected the 2020 result.

IV. Conclusion (1/2 to 1 page)

Finally, you will review how the issue you wrote about did (or did not) influence the 2020 election. You will recap the significance of this issue in previous elections and speculate on how this issue might evolve and shape future presidential elections.

V. References

Include APA citation for each source that you used to write your paper. Use internal citations within the document. Note internal APA citations use authors' last names or source (if name is unavailable) rather than the title of the article. You should use **at least six sources**. Consult an APA guide while writing your paper.

Podcast

The podcast gives you an opportunity to be more creative with your final project. You can work alone, but this will probably be easier with a classmate or two. In the podcast, you will have discuss the election within the parameters that I provide below. I will give you leeway in how you decide to produce the podcast – I can consult with you about the logistics. In the past, I have either used my phone on speaker and recorded on Garage Band or recorded on Webex or Zoom.

In addition, you are free to include up to 7 minutes of audio or video clips from other sources. For example, if your podcast is focused on the debates, you can include a few soundbytes or clips as a way to motivate the discussion.

What do you say?

I. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

In this podcast, you will start with a brief introduction about a topic in the 2020 election that you want to explore further. The topics are the same as the ones listed in Section I of the paper.

Your podcast does not need to be scripted, but you need to have an idea of what points you plan on making. I recommend writing an outline and going over it with your partner.

II. Background (10-15 minutes)

In this section, you provide a background of this issue has a) been prominent in past elections and b) how you expect this issue to influence the 2020 election. You are essentially answering the question, 'why did you choose to explore this issue?'

In this section, you should cite a mix of academic literature and popular literature that supports your claims. The syllabus provides a good starting point for readings, you should also browse the References cited in the readings for additional articles that may be more relevant to your issue.

Note that you will submit a bibliography page with your podcast. In the podcast, you can 'cite' your articles by saying something like "A recent study by Pew Research showed…" or "Nate Cohn stated in the *New York Times*…" or "In Alan Schroeder's book on debates, he states that …". You don't need to provide direct quotes, in fact, it might be better and more conversational if you provide summaries about the readings rather than overusing direct quotes. That approach should be sufficient for me as long as you include a references page.

III. An analysis of how the issue affected the 2020 election (10-15 minutes)

In this section, you will use arguments, analysis, or data (polls, exit polls, election results at the state-, county-, and precinct-level) to describe how the issue you focused on affected the 2020 result. Just as in the last section, you can cite your arguments by providing enough context that I know where you are getting your information from.

IV. <u>Conclusion/Wrap-up</u> (3-5 minutes)

Finally, you will wrap up your discussion talking about how your issue did (or did not) influence the 2020 election. You will recap the significance of this issue in previous elections and speculate on how this issue might evolve and shape future presidential elections.

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 project or to provide tips about your podcast. I also recommend that you work ahead and take advantage of the University Writing Center.

You might also find it helpful to start tracking a specific aspect of the election through polls or through collecting articles about the topic that you are interested in. Most pollsters will release a topline report, so you can track how voters are thinking about specific issues. Polling aggregators like FiveThirtyEight and Real Clear Politics will also link back to specific polls in their models. Let the information that you gather help to guide your conclusion and broader theory.

For podcasters, I am happy to provide advice on the content and direction of your podcast. I can also share my how I create and edit videos and podcasts, but this is not my area of expertise. I suggest you work ahead and conduct your own research on the technical aspects of podcasting. Your grade on the podcast will be predominantly focused on the content of your conversation, however, you should take the appropriate measures to ensure that the production value is adequate.