

# Essay 2

## Historical Apportionment

MATH 100: THE MATHEMATICS OF DEMOCRACY

FALL 2013

ANDREW GAINER-DEWAR

### DESCRIPTION

The method used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives has changed several times during its history. All of the methods which have been used are discussed in our text, but the history of how each came to replace its predecessor is discussed only briefly.

Select one of the moments in American history when the method of apportionment was changed. Use a variety of historical sources to investigate this event; discuss your findings at length. Some questions you might consider:

- Why was the method changed?
- What arguments were advanced in favor of keeping the old system and in favor of the new proposal?
- Were there several proposals at the time, and if so, what caused one to prevail over the others?
- Did any notable figures participate in the debate, and if so, what were their roles?
- How ‘mathematical’ was the discussion? How might a more modern perspective on the mathematics of apportionment have affected the outcome?

Note that, in particular, you are *not* asked to speak directly to the merits of the various methods. This essay is a historical analysis, not a political or philosophical one.

### REQUIREMENTS

Your paper must be double-spaced with a standard 12 pt font and 1 in margins. If submitted on paper (as opposed to electronically), it must be stapled and should be double-sided.

This paper must be approximately 1500 words in length.

This paper must use at least four outside sources, including at least two historical primary documents<sup>1</sup>. You should quote from these sources as appropriate, but you must also include your own discussion of the content and significance of these sources. All sources which are not original historical documents must be professional or academic publications (textbooks, monographs, journal articles, Census Bureau reports, etc.). Blog posts, Wikipedia entries, and other ephemera of the Internet may be useful in helping to guide your research, but they are not suitable for citation.

Any outside material used in your essay must be cited properly according to a standard style format. You may choose which stylebook to follow; I have no preference among APA, MLA, Chicago, and other standard styles, so long as I can make sense of the format.

---

<sup>1</sup> Texts of bills, transcripts of House debates, correspondence by relevant historical figures, contemporary journalism, etc.

Prior to the final deadline, you will need to submit a preliminary version of this assignment. This will consist of two parts: an annotated bibliography and an outline of your paper. The annotated bibliography should name and properly cite the sources you plan to use and give a substantial paragraph explaining the content and relevance of each.

## DEADLINES

**28 October** Outline and annotated bibliography due.

**4 November** Final paper due.