

# Prompt for Postelection Report Assignment

17.263: American Elections  
Professor Devin Caughey

Due December 8, 2020

The purpose of the postelection report, which should be **12–15 double-spaced pages** long, is to summarize your race and relate it to what we have learned in this course. Specifically, it should include the following components:

- A brief recap of the background of the race, the candidates involved, and your expectations before election day (i.e., the content of your preelection report).
- Details on the outcome of the election and how they conformed to or deviated from your predictions.
- Your explanation for why the election turned out the way it did.
- A discussion of what your race might teach us about the general questions and theories explored in the course. Examples of relevant questions include:
  - Are elections best thought of as backwards-looking referendums or forward-looking mandates?
  - How does strategic manipulation of the electorate affect political outcomes?
  - How do social identities and networks shape political participation?
  - How does the supply of candidates affect political representation?
  - Are political parties dominated by office-seekers or benefit-seekers?

- How predictable are elections based on “the fundamentals”?
- How, and how much, do campaigns affect electoral outcomes?
- How do attitudes towards race and gender affect vote choice?
- How does the media shape the flow of political information?
- How do presidential, congressional, state, and local elections differ from one another?
- Are elections effective means of inducing governments to represent the interests of their citizens?

Answering these questions should take up one-third to one-half of your paper. However, do not try to answer all these questions! Focus on at most three (one would be fine too).

Finally, your report should be cited appropriately and should satisfy the following sourcing requirements:

- Cite at least **2 internal sources** (i.e., the assigned readings)
- Cite at least **5 external sources** (each book, newspaper article, or website counts as a source)

All sources should be listed in the bibliography. (For more information on citations, see the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).)