Final Project Checkpoint 1: Topic and Hypothesis

DUE September 16 at 5 PM

For the first checkpoint, you will propose a topic and explain a hypothesis regarding the relationship between an independent and dependent variable. This will involve three things.

1. **First,** select a topic that interests you and for which you believe data are reasonably available. If you're having trouble coming up with a topic, come see me and we can talk through some possibilities. I've listed some widely used data sources below which can also get you started. A few tips:

   - Don't pick something you aren't interested in learning more about because you'll spend a lot of time this semester working on it!

   - Don't overcomplicate your topic. You want to find something about which data are easily accessible. The goal of this project this semester is not for you to come up with the most cutting-edge research project imaginable. Rather I want you to clearly demonstrate that you can design research to answer a research question in political science and then carry out that research using data and the quantitative tools we will use in class.

2. **Second,** compile some peer-reviewed social science articles related to your topic. Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com) is a great place to find articles. You can use news articles and other non-academic sources of information to contextualize your research topic or question but you will need to use at least 4 articles in the third step (see below).

3. **Third,** write a 2-3 page literature review which includes a theory and testable hypothesis. Your literature review should summarize important research on your topic (again, reference at least four peer-reviewed articles), synthesize the arguments and findings from these studies, and explain why this prior literature (or observations related to that literature) leads you to your hypothesis. You should model this after the literature review and/or theory sections in the academic articles you read. When summarizing and synthesizing the literature, be sure to discuss:

   - 1) the authors' theories,

   - 2) how they tested their hypotheses,

   - 3) their results, and

   - 4) how the previous three things are similar or different from the other research on this topic.

   Excellent literature reviews will also critically assess the research designs or theories of the cited articles (e.g., evaluate the logic of the theories and validity/generalizability of the research designs).

Most importantly, successful assignments will do the following:

- Clearly state a research question about some political dependent variable.

- Summarize the current literature on your topic.

- Provide a theory or argument motivated by the literature.

- Propose a hypothesis implied by your theory.

This checkpoint is due at 5 PM on September 16. Please submit your literature review through CANVAS.

Please print your hypothesis in bold at the top of your submission!