

17.20:
INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PROCESS

Paper Assignment #1

Due: Thursday, October 6, 2011

OPTION #1

Why do you think there are so many young Americans indifferent to politics today? Do you agree with the claim that current levels of youth interest and participation in politics should be a source of concern for the American political process? Why/why not? What evidence is there to support this claim?

This assignment presents you with the opportunity and the challenge to take a stand on an important issue facing the American political process using concrete evidence and systematic analysis. Your paper will be evaluated on the quality of your research, analysis, and writing. Remember that a good paper anticipates and addresses possible objections to its arguments and the methodology used to arrive at those arguments. Your paper must draw on our course lectures and readings. It also should include material drawn from other sources, including primary source data. The work, of course, must be your own. Your paper should be seven double-spaced pages in length (12 point font, 1 inch margins). You should provide both a hard copy and an electronic copy of your paper by Thursday, October 6, at 3 p.m. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade per day late.

Your paper should identify the sources you have used and provide a bibliography of the books, articles, or websites you have consulted. If you present work that is not of your own authorship, you will automatically fail the course and will be subject to MIT's rules regarding academic dishonesty. If you have any questions about how to properly cite sources, please consult the teaching staff.

OPTION #2

You may answer the questions in option #1 by producing a political advertisement that, using political science research, tries to persuade viewers that young Americans' indifference to politics is/is not a problem and offers ways to address the problem (if you think there is one). The ad needs to be accompanied by a copy of the script and a three-page paper that briefly describes and analyzes the political science research that you used to create the ad. Further details about this option will be provided in class.

As in option #1, your work will be evaluated on the quality of your research, analysis, and writing. It must draw on our course lectures and readings. It also should include material drawn from other sources, including primary source data. The work, of course, must be your own. You should provide both a hard copy and an electronic copy of your ad and paper by Thursday, October 6, at 3 p.m. Late work will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade per day late.