Political Science 3000 – Research Project

The purpose of this group project is to practice the research procedures and techniques that you will learn throughout Poli3000. Each group will decide on a research questions, provide theory and a research design for studying the question, implement their design, and provide the class with an analysis of the results of their project.

Because this may be the first piece of political science research that many of you have done, the Instructor will help guide the students through every stage of the project. You will notice that several group days are set aside in the syllabus. These days provide opportunity for your group to meet during the class time with each other, and then for brief meetings with the Instructor to discuss particular issues or problems the group is having. Thus, there is no excuse for not having regular meetings with your group, and advancing systematically with the project as the semester progresses. The Instructor is also available to meet outside these hours with any group. Don’t wait until too late to work on each step of the project, as your instructor expects regular check-ins on Group Meeting days.

As a rough guideline, the following parts of your project should be completed at the following dates.

A. Choice of Topic, and some agreement on initial steps to take (division of labor, what to research, when to meet, etc.) around January 30th. Meet with Dr. Bowling for Approval.

B. Initial Model of problem discussed, and basic literature review/research accomplished around February 6.

C. Research Design Chosen, Methods discussed, surveys built, observation techniques outlined, etc. by March 6th.

D. Data Gathering March 6th through April 3rd.

E. Data Analysis completed by April 19th.

F. Prepare for Final Presentations, work on Final Product, April 19th through April 26.

G. Final Paper due, April 3rd, by 2:00 pm.

** BY YOUR GROUP MEETINGS WITH DR. BOWLING ON MARCH 6TH, YOU SHOULD HAVE THE RESEARCH DESIGN COMPLETED AND ANY SURVEYS, OBSERVATION PLANS, ETC APPROVED BY HER. YOU MAY NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, PROCEED WITH YOUR PROJECT UNTIL IT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY ME. THIS IS FOR YOUR PROTECTION. FAILURE TO GAIN APPROVAL BEFORE BEGINNING THE DATA GATHERING PHASE OF THE PROJECT WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF F ON THIS PROJECT.

Project Guidelines:

This project should be small, specific, and completable. Some research techniques will be relaxed for this to occur. For instance, a smaller than normal sample may be drawn, provided you discuss “what you should really do” in your final product. This project is for practice—thus, it should be doable. Dr. Bowling will help you choose your topic/research question. The research question should focus on some issue that can be researched either on campus, or with resources present in the surrounding Auburn area. The project was not designed to make you do a tremendous amount of traveling or data gathering. So choose something to research with either students, faculty, or institutions that immediately surround you. Ideally, your question should have something to do with the realm (broadly defined) of politics. However, I am likely to approve any research question that I think meets the broad qualifications described above.

The project will count for 30% of your grade altogether – 20% will be a group grade assigned to the project***, 3% will be an individual grade assigned for presentation preparation and style, and 7% will be an individual grade for participation, decided mainly by your peers, with the final decision to made by Dr. Bowling.

*** Group members will confidentially rate the contributions of other members of the group to the project, including the presentation. Students judged to have contributed significantly below the group’s average by two or more group members’ evaluations will receive a 0% for their participation grade and are highly likely to receive a D or an F (even if the group as a whole receives a higher grade) on the entire project. Slackers should not be tolerated by their group members. Any severe problems should be reported as early as possible to Dr. Bowling.