POLITICAL SCIENCE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Political science is a social science. Political scientists are directed in their pursuit of knowledge about politics, government, policy and society by the scientific method. An important part of political science education, therefore, is training in scientific inquiry.

To this end, I would like you to write a short proposal for a project you would like to undertake. (You do not have to do the project, although this proposal could lay the groundwork for a paper in a future class). The project proposed must be directly related to the class material. Please get your topic approved by me if you are in any doubt that the subject matter of your proposal may not be suitable. Also, please feel free to call, e-mail or see me as you work on your proposal.

Your proposal should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1 inch margins and no less than two pages and no more than three pages long. The proposals are due on April 3. You will be deducted a grade for each day that the assignment is late (i.e. a B+ becomes a B etc.).

Make sure this is well thought through. Thoughtfully and succinctly explain what you are trying to investigate and how you will go about investigating it.

Your proposal will comply with the following format. You can chose to present with these subheadings or as continuous text.

TITLE: Make it an apt but simple and short description of your project.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW: You will explain, (1) why your work is important and interesting, (2) what the current thinking is on the topic through a discussion of some of the literature on it. Provide at least 2 sources and explain what people have already found out about the subject. Make sure you properly cite some relevant literature in parenthetical, footnote or endnote format. For literature sources, see:

Books: The JK call numbers are where it’s at for congressional and presidential studies. Check out Es if you are looking for some historical stuff, Hs if you are looking at economic-related material and Ks if you want legal books.

Journals: Political science journals can be very technical. For this paper you will probably find Legislative Studies Quarterly, Congress and the Presidency, Presidential Studies Quarterly and Political Science Quarterly most useful. Some journals are on line. You can search journals thoroughly through the NCSU library site, scroll down to “Social Sciences Citation Index.” The electronic journals can also be found there. Go to: http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/eresources/polisci.html
RESEARCH QUESTION: In the form of a question, explain what you are trying to do. Your project is basically an answer to this question.

HYPOTHESIS/HYPOTHESES: This is your prediction(s) or expectation(s). This is what, in theory, should happen. Provide a prediction(s) of what you think the answer will be. Justify your prediction(s) by citing existing knowledge or implications from existing knowledge.

DATA: What will your data be? Where will they come from? Make sure you explain, in some detail, the data that will enable you to answer your question.

METHOD: Explain how you will use your data to answer the question. Basically, you need to determine the existence of a relationship between a cause and effect. How will you show that A is or is not affecting B. Remember to account for other possible causes of changes in B so that you can be sure you are witnessing a relationship between cause (A) and effect (B) and not, say C or D and B.

HERE ARE EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS 301 STUDENTS’ PROPOSALS:

- Explaining the Government’s Agenda
- Explaining Low Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections Since 1960
- Bipartisanship in Congress
- Congress and Education Policy
- The Clinton Administration’s Use of the IRS
- Examining Gerrymandering and the Election Process
- From Where Does the President Get His Legislative Power?
- Rating the President: What Contributes to High Marks?
- Campaign Finance Reform
- The Influence of Money in Congressional Campaigns
- Explaining the Presidential Regime
- The Effect of Campaign Contributions on Making Policy of Low Salience
- Why is Turnout So Low in Congressional Elections?
- Presidential Popularity and Congressional Support
- Economic Influences on the Modern Presidential Campaign
- The Development of Presidential Power
- Why are There More Interest Groups in the Legislative Process?
- The Role of the Media in Presidential Elections
- Would Congressional Term Limits Improve Policy?
- Has the New Primary System Affected the Quality of Presidential Candidates
- Who are More Responsive to Public Opinion: Senators or Representatives?
- Presidential Parties and the Economy
- The Length of Senate Confirmations
- Who Wins in Conference Committees? The House or Senate?
This may seem like a daunting task. But I’m not expecting you to be masters at scientific inquiry yet. This assignment is designed to get you to think like a social scientist. Just make sure you are imaginative, careful, thorough and rigorous. Keep thinking as you work through your proposal. Again, please feel free to call, e-mail or see me as you work on your proposal.