

PS 1275 – Religion and American Politics Research Project Guidelines

Listen up, kid. My name is Jake and I'm your Boss. I'm the campaign manager and you and your colleagues are my Deputy Directors of Faith-Based Outreach. Our candidate is in a tight race to retain their Senate seat and every vote will count. I need your team to supply me with memos on the most important religious traditions in your district and a strategy of how we can win them over. After you put those together, the candidate and I want to see a presentation summarizing this information and explaining where we should prioritize our efforts between the different traditions.

The Memo (20% of Course Grade)

Basic Points

- The strategy memo should resemble a memo format
 - It should contain a proper memo-style header
 - The first paragraph or two should contain an executive summary of your entire memo
 - You should use section titles to distinguish between sections
 - This is a memo, not an essay, so there is no need for introduction paragraphs, transition statements, etc.
 - You should still write in paragraphs, do not give us a list of bullet points
 - Time and space is limited, so write directly and clearly.
- The memo should be no more than 7 pages – anything beyond that (except citations) will not be read.
- Each memo should be focused on one religious tradition and should have only one author
 - Memos should focus on one of the following religious traditions: Catholics, Mainline Protestants, Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants, Jews, Mormons, or Muslims
 - Your team should decide which from this group are most important for you to cover
 - This means that there will be a few you do not cover, that is okay
- Number your pages
- NO FOOTNOTES
 - Use parenthetical in-text citations in the format (Author Year)
 - E.g. My teacher reports that using footnotes leads to a loss in points (Schiller 2021).
 - OR: Schiller reports that using footnotes leads to a loss in points (2021).
 - OR: Schiller (2021) reports that using footnotes leads to a loss in points.
 - Provide a Works Cited at the end
 - Use the Chicago Manual of Style's Author-Date format for your citations
 - This is a standard format in political science
 - NOT a bibliography

Content

- Memo Header (Single Spaced, only on first page)
 - TO:
 - FROM:

- DATE:
- SUBJECT:
- Line across the page to separate the header from the body
- Section 1: Executive Summary
 - 1-2 paragraphs summarizing the most important, high-level points from the memo
- Section 2: Faith Background
 - Size/share of the population
 - Where they exist in the state
 - Are they concentrated in certain cities or are they spread out
 - Prominent congregations, movements, interest groups, or faith leaders in the state
 - What values, theological doctrines, or beliefs are politically relevant among this tradition?
 - (Note: don't talk policy yet, but focus on the values that inform the policy)
 - This is where you should think about the three B's of religiosity (Believing, Belonging, and Behaving)
- Section 3: The relationship between the faith tradition and the candidate
 - What are the party affiliation trends for the religious tradition and how do they relate to our candidate?
 - How has this group voted in the district in the past?
 - How does our candidate's biography relate to the religious tradition?
 - Has our candidate worked with any of the movements, congregations, faith leaders, or interest groups before
- Section 4: How to win over members of this tradition
 - What political issues or policies do the tradition and our candidate agree on?
 - How important or prominent are the issues to the group?
 - How central are they to our candidate's work in the Senate?
 - Is the senator on any relevant committees?
 - Has the senator sponsored any relevant bills?
 - What work, if any, has our candidate done on behalf of these issues that we want to emphasize in our outreach?
- Section 5: How to lose members of this tradition
 - What political issues or policies do the tradition and our candidate disagree on?
 - How important or prominent are the issues to the group?
 - How central are they to our candidate's work in the Senate?
 - Is the senator on any relevant committees where these issues might come up?
 - Have they sponsored any relevant bills?
 - What work, if any, has our candidate done on behalf of these issues that we want to avoid talking about in our outreach?

The Presentation (10% of Course Grade)

The Basics

- Prepare a presentation
 - It should be visually appealing and not over-saturated with text
 - Include figures, maps, statistics, or graphs where appropriate
 - It should be informative and have relevant information
 - It should be well organized
- Each member of your team is required to speak
 - The easiest method will have each student speaking about the religious tradition they researched
- The presentation should be well rehearsed
 - You will have only 15 minutes to present
 - At 16 minutes I will stop the presentation
 - If you haven't practiced, it will show
 - You will also run out of time if you have not practiced
- You should be prepared for a question or two at the end from me.

The Content

- I will afford you much greater latitude with what goes into the presentation
 - It is up to your group to determine what is most important for the candidate to hear
 - You may want to use the executive summaries as a starting point and add or subtract from there
 - You should include some discussion of each religious tradition for which a strategy memo was written
 - You should have some data in your presentation (where that is most effective is up to you)
- Remember, your job is to advocate for how the campaign should engage with the religious traditions you have selected.