

## **Writing Assignment #2, due Oct. 16th**

### **POLS 1155: Fall 2019**

This assignment is designed to give you practice looking for similarities or differences between cases, in ways that help explain something about the world. The format will be a bit formulaic, and your goal is simply to describe two cases and tell us why either the similarities or the differences appear to be more useful with regard to the following question:

Canada uses a parliamentary system and heavily limits campaign spending; the United States uses a presidential system and only limits some kinds of campaign spending. Using Dahl's and/or Schumpeter's criteria for democracy, both countries are democratic. Are Canadian and American democracy better explained by institutional differences like the ones above, or are the similarities between the two more important for explaining their politics?

Your answer should be roughly 500 words and use the format below---you'll have more freedom of writing style in later papers, but the goal here is to learn to quickly compare cases and find things worth researching.

#### **Format:**

Your introductory paragraph should just state the question you are answering (in your own words), and highlight the key point of your argument, something like: "The differences in [Independent Variable X and Y] are greater than the similarities, and [Country A] appears to have a higher level of [Dependent Variable Z]. The most important reason for this appears to be [Reason B]."

Your first body paragraph should list 2-3 important political similarities between the two countries. What do they have in common? What evidence are you using to show that they are similar (a similar series of events, numerical data, etc.)? It should also briefly describe why these things might be connected to democracy.

Your second body paragraph should list 2-3 important political differences between the two countries. What things are noticeably different? What evidence are you using to show that they are different in these ways? It

should also briefly describe why these things might also be connected to democracy.

Your last paragraph should explain why you think either the similarities or the differences are more important. How did the evidence you provided above weigh more heavily in one direction than the other? You can add a short concluding paragraph if you think it will help tie things together.

### **Sources:**

In addition to some reference to course reading, this should take about 1 or 2 hours of outside research before you start writing. You may find the following online sources helpful:

Political data projects like V-DEM, Polity, and Freedom House. These are highly trustworthy sources that answer the question specifically, but the data they provide may be technical and hard to sort through.

Wikipedia, which is entirely reliant on outside sources you must always double check (that is, Wikipedia can be a good place to start and find more reliable sources or to get an overview, but never rely on it as a source itself.)

Journalism sites like newspapers, magazines, or web journals like Vox are easy to read and may address these questions directly. Mainstream sites are usually reliable sources, but at the same time may also contain assumptions, opinions or biases that are less explicitly stated than in academic research (See, for example, David Shribman's "Canadian elections are short, civil, and to the point. Why not ours?" from the Boston Globe, Oct. 3, 2019)