

POSC 100 - Introduction to American Government - Paper Assignment #1

Instructor: Charles Mahoney - CSULB Fall Semester 2020

Paper Prompt – The Electoral College and Assessing the 2020 US Elections

The United States elects its president not via direct popular vote but through the electoral college. Answer the following questions about the electoral college and the outcomes of the 2020 US elections:

- 1) Explain how the US electoral college works. How many electoral votes does a presidential candidate need to win? What types of states does the electoral college favor? What types of states receive the most attention from presidential candidates? How can a candidate win the popular vote but lose the electoral college? Is the electoral college democratic according to the definition of representative democracy we have discussed in class?
- 2) As of November 13, 2020, what is the outcome of the electoral college? What are the key swing states in the 2020 presidential election? Why were these states so important? (Please note, if the election remains undecided by November 13 just describe the outcome as it stands on that date).
- 3) What was the outcome of the election in the House of Representatives? What party will control the House in the upcoming Congress?
- 4) What was the outcome of elections in the Senate? What party will control the Senate in the upcoming Congress?
- 5) Will US government be characterized by united government or divided government beginning in 2021? How will this affect the likelihood that major legislation will be passed?
- 6) Finally, the Supreme Court will be split 6 conservative justices to 3 liberal justices after the likely confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett. How might this affect important public policies in the US?

In addition to assigned readings, lectures, and Powerpoint slides, this recent podcast from *The New York Times* will help you answer many of the questions about the electoral college:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/22/podcasts/the-daily/electoral-college-trump-clinton-gore-bush.html>

Guidelines

Submission: A copy of the paper must be turned in to the Dropbox on Beachboard by Sunday, November 15.

Length: The paper should be about 4-5 pages in length.

Format: Papers must be typed and double-spaced. Use standard margins (“normal” margin setting in MS Word) and a common 12-point font (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, etc.). Papers that do not use standard margins or a widely used 12-point font will

be penalized.

Title Page: All papers must have a title page with the student's name, UID#, and e-mail.

Citations: If you quote an author directly, you must use quotation marks around their words and cite the quotation. Do not use block quotes (long quotations) in your paper. Please refer to the citation guidelines handout for more info.