Government 317, Fall 2003 Final Exam Study Guide

The exam will include a number of short-answer questions and one longer essay question. The long essay will count for half the exam grade. For the long essay I will give you a choice between two of the following. That is, of the three questions, I'll pick two from which you are to choose one to answer. I expect you both to draw clearly on the required reading and to engage the ideas I talked about in lectures. Wording on the actual exam may vary slightly.

1. Explain why the cartoon (below) is funny (or at least ironic). Review the theories and evidence about elections and voting that relate to what the TV commentator is saying: "The party of the winning presidential candidate usually *loses* seats in the next election."

2. "The 2000 presidential election was the worst election in American history." Why would anyone say such a thing? Are the problems in 2000 typical or exceptional? What is being done to produce better elections in the future? What should be done?

3. Some say that two patterns characterize recent American politics. First, educational attainment has increased in the United States over the past few decades, but voter turnout has decreased. Second, monetary contributions to political campaigns have increased at an increasingly rapid rate. Are these descriptions correct? If not, what are more accurate descriptions of what has been happening? Are trends in voter turnout and trends in campaign finance related to one another?