

Political Science 389-001, Fall 2011: final paper

Your final paper should do one of three things:

1. Get data from some public election and analyze the data looking for signs of fraud or other anomalies.
2. Make a theoretical, empirical or conceptual contribution to the problem of distinguishing fraud from strategic voting or other normal political phenomena.
3. Consider some other relevant aspect of evaluating elections.

Your topic must be approved by me. The paper should use one or more of the analytical approaches considered in the course. Your paper should in some way feature your original analysis of some kind of data. This may be anything from an informal case study based on personal interviews or archival research to a statistical analysis of actual or simulated data. I encourage you to talk to me either in person or via email to discuss ideas for the paper.

To get approval for a topic, you must submit a 1–3 page proposal for the paper. The proposal should summarize the argument you expect to make (e.g., what is the principal hypothesis) and give some indication of the data you expect to use to build evidence for your argument. It should also identify relevant literature—at least two academic research articles or books that are closely related to your topic. Postelection observation reports count for this purpose. As much as possible you should explain clearly how the data you plan to examine will be sufficient for your analysis. If I haven't approved your proposal, I won't accept your paper. The proposal is due in class on Tuesday, Nov 22 (I'll also accept it earlier).

The paper itself should run about 10 pages (double-spaced) and is due at my office on Wednesday, December 14. Both the proposal and the paper should use normal scholarly apparatus for footnotes, citations, bibliography and any tables or figures.

Walter Mebane