POS 4413

Mid-Term Take-Home Essay Assignment

Due: in class, Tuesday, 20 November 2012

Instructions:

Assignment must be 5-7 pp., typed, double-spaced, standard font. Proper use of English grammar, syntax, and spelling is expected; papers with grammatical, syntactical, and spelling problems will receive lower grades.

Reference both the Pika/Maltese book as well as the chapters in Nelson (when citing chapters in Nelson, you must reference the author of the article, not “Nelson”, as the latter is the editor). Be sure to include page numbers for citations. Endnotes, footnotes, and parenthetical referencing are all acceptable. Just be consistent.

All papers are due in class. Emailing papers is not acceptable for this assignment.

Drawing solely from the course readings, lectures, and discussions on the syllabus through 1 November 2012, write a 5-7 pp. memo to the next President of the United States. Your role is that of advisor to the President-elect (either Romney or Obama, depending on the election outcome; if we don’t know it by Wednesday, 7 November, just pick your candidate!).

Your objective is to advise the President-elect on what you have learned about presidential leadership based on an academic understanding of theories and empirical data, and make recommendations.
Your memo should include recommendations on the following, citing specific examples of what we know about the following dynamics:

1) The Constitutional and informal bases of presidential power—which one should the President-elect focus on, or both? What is the essence of the debate?
2) Public politics, including public opinion: What should the president know about the parameters of public opinion, trends, and how best to utilize it as a resource? What drives approval and disapproval, and what if anything can be done about it?
3) Presidential “competence” (see the chapter 4 in Nelson)—what advice would you offer on how best to achieve a high level of competence?
4) How should the President-elect deal with Congress? What drives “success”—and how does unified or divided government affect success? (consider various parameters such as roll-calls, vetoes, override attempts, etc.).
5) How should the President-elect structure the White House as an institution? Should he have a chief of staff? What works and what does not seem to work so well historically?
6) How should the President-elect approach the judiciary, particularly the politics of appointments (consider both the Supreme Court and the federal courts). What should he know, particularly with reference to congressional norms?
7) Given the state of the economy, what should the President-elect do with domestic/economic policy? What can he control, and what can he not control?
8) Finally, what should the President-elect do in terms of foreign policy? Consider questions like advisory structures, assumptions about American power and its use, etc.

You are free to structure your memo however you wish. In other words, you do not need to cover each of the issues point-by-point as they are listed, as many may overlap, although you may choose to do so. You have ample opportunity to write creatively (and are encouraged to do so) just as long as you insure that you touch upon the major points above.

Good luck!