

### Paper Assignment

For this assignment you are required to write an 8 to 10 page paper on one of the topics listed below. In researching your paper you must draw on sources other than the readings assigned for the course. Other sources include books, articles from scholarly journals, the *Congressional Record* and its predecessors, articles from news sources such as *The New York Times*, *National Journal* and *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, and Web sites. Your papers should follow standard term paper format (i.e., as described in the *MLA Handbook For Writers of Research Papers*, *Chicago Manual of Style*, or a similar guidebook). Parenthetical citations to sources are preferred.

The preliminary summary of your paper is due in class on April 1st. This summary will be one, double-spaced page of text that includes a thesis statement and the general outline of your argument and one page of a preliminary bibliography. Your papers are due in class on April 29. **Attach your original preliminary summary (with comments, if any) to the final paper.** Make sure you keep an extra hard copy of your paper in case anything happens to the copy you turn in, and maintain backups as you work on the paper.

1. One of the biggest controversies in the 108th Congress has been the obstruction of President Bush's nominees to the federal bench. The Republicans claim this is a constitutional coup and that Democrats are subverting the Senate's advice and consent power by filibustering the nominees. How does the current use of the filibuster in the nominations process compare with past usage? Compare and contrast particular instances of the obstruction of presidential nominees (not necessarily judicial nominees). What implications do the current obstructive efforts have for the separation of powers system?
2. In a famous quote, Samuel P. Huntington claimed that during the 20th century, "the initiative in formulating legislation, in assigning legislative priorities, in arousing support for legislation, and in determining the final content of the legislation enacted has clearly shifted to the executive branch." Does this quote hold true today? Pick a major piece of legislation that has recently been enacted into law. What was the source of the legislation: a member of Congress, the president, a bureaucrat, or someone else? How did this legislation make it onto the congressional agenda? How did the rules, structure, and procedure of Congress affect the proposal and passage of the legislation?
3. Some evidence indicates that party leaders are ideologically more extreme than the majority of their party caucus. Considering the potential influence that party leaders have over the policymaking process, why would members of Congress select leaders who did not share their ideological predispositions? Discuss the process of leadership selection in terms of regional, demographic, and ideological representation. Specifically, compare the representativeness of party leaders in the 108th Congress in either the House or the Senate to that of leaders in a Congress under Democratic control.
4. Many political observers claim that negative campaigning is on the rise. What roles do negative ads have in shaping the tone of a congressional campaign? Under what circumstances is a challenger more likely to employ a negative strategy? Under what circumstances is an incumbent more likely to do so? What outcomes are produced by the use of negative ads? Discuss examples from recent campaigns.