Final Paper Essay Prompts

Below are XX paper prompts for your final paper. CHOOSE ONE. You should be able to answer one of these questions in approximately 6 double-spaced full pages, 12-point font, one-inch margins, not including references. You will likely have to use outside resources to gather arguments, evidence, and scholarship to make your case. Use as many or as few sources you need to make your case, but you will have a hard time making your argument with fewer than five sources. Sources coming from non-academic, Internet sites should be used sparingly, especially information coming from sources not sticking to mainstream journalistic standards of objectivity. In addition to clear and grammatically correct writing, successful papers will include a strong and clear thesis statement, evidence/arguments supporting that thesis statement, and a conclusion. The best papers will specifically address the prompt's question while applying appropriate background information useful in answering the question. Please do not plagiarize, you will be caught.

Pro Tip: Never start a paper, “Since the beginning of time..."

1. Non-Attitudes: Phil Converse, and later, John Zaller, found that most Americans are lacking in ideological constraint, consistent ideological thinking, and often make up their answers on the spot when confronted with a question regarding their political attitudes. Furthermore, later research has discovered that a large swath of Americans have low levels of political knowledge. But according to other scholars this is not necessarily a problem for the effective functioning of democracy. Why?

2. Political Knowledge: In 1940, the percentage of Americans (25 years or older, non-institutionalized) with a 4-year college degree or higher was less than 5 percent. Now, for the first time, that figure stands at just over 30 percent. In addition, shifts in media production virtually guarantee a huge range of options in which to gather information about politics and the world. However, over this time, the levels of political knowledge and understanding of many political issues have dropped, as Americans seem to know less about American politics. Given that we know level of education is one of the main predictors of political knowledge and political participation, how do we explain this paradox? Delli-Karpini and Keeter wrote the seminal text on this.

3. Muslim Ban 1: In January of this year, the presidential administration implemented what many are calling a “Muslim Ban” or “travel ban”. The initiative specifically targeted people from seven predominantly Muslim countries. As a result, many protests began around the country at different airports. Knowing what you do about public opinion, is Trump likely to win in the court of public opinion, why or why not? If yes, who is shifting and why? You can use my article as a starting point: http://www.collingwoodresearch.com/uploads/8/3/6/0/8360930/change-heart-individual__4_.pdf
4. **Muslim Ban 2**: Although there have been many protests about the travel ban on people from certain countries, many people still support the ban. Why is this? Is this an unusual historical pattern? What are American’s typical attitudes regarding civil liberties, especially regarding those from other countries and people of color?

5. **Ideology and Race**: Amongst the mass public, does ideology (i.e., conservatives versus liberals) or race/ethnicity (one’s own racial identity or one’s attitudes about other racial groups) best shape voting behavior and public opinion?