

## POSC-171

### Final Paper Essay Prompts

Below are six paper prompts, **please select one** for your final paper. **CHOOSE ONE.** You should be able to answer these questions in 6 double-spaced full pages, 12-point font, one-inch margins, not including references, abstract or title. 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** academic 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 or use a paper from a similar course, you will be caught.

1. Over the past few decades, in general, some states have moved to make registering and voting easier. However, voter id laws and other restrictions have recently made it harder for people to register to vote, and thus act as a constraining force. **Make the case for against implementing voter id laws at the statewide level.** In your discussion, be sure to include an analysis of historical patterns as to which states tend to implement voter id laws. Include a discussion of the politics of voter id laws, and the roles political parties play. Who is harmed/hurt by voter id laws? Include anything else relevant in answering the question.

2. The politics of federalism continue to rage across the United States, from Cliven Bundy confronting the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada to the implementation – and then take down – of Obamacare. Recently, the Trump Administration has gone after sanctuary cities – cities whose police cannot inquire as to one's immigration status. **In your view, are sanctuary cities “good” or “bad”?** Why do cities implement such policies, and what might happen if such policies are abandoned? Weigh the evidence on either side of the debate.

3. Direct democracy is fairly popular in California, but is practiced minimally in other states. **Overall, is direct democracy “good” for governance, or is it “bad”?** In your discussion, be sure to analyze the key effects of direct democracy upon citizens in California and elsewhere, as well as the role of the courts. You can also incorporate examples of issues where direct democracy was “good” or “bad” (i.e., affirmative action, tax policy, immigration policy, drug/marijuana policy).

4. California has term-limits for state legislators, whereas other states and the U.S. Congress do not. **Do you think term-limits are a good idea?** Why or why not?

Entertain the debate on both sides then make a persuasive case for one side or the other.

5. Gerrymandering is the process of drawing voting districts in such a way that packs certain types of people (i.e., Democrats or Republicans) into districts so that the surrounding areas are beneficial to one party or another. In the late 1980s the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial redistricting was allowed under the Voting Rights Act. Subsequently, a fairly large share of Black Democrats emerged in the U.S. House often in highly gerrymandered districts. However, overall the share of Democrats in Congress dropped heavily (Lublin 1999). **With all the negativity surrounding gerrymandering in general, is racial redistricting normatively and morally legitimate? Politically, is it the best approach for the representation of African-American and Latino interests?** Be sure to include a discussion of descriptive versus substantive representation and how that helps answer the question. In your answer, ANSWER THE QUESTION DON'T JUST GO ON ABOUT GERRYMANDERING.

**6. Are interest groups generally good or bad for the operation of state politics?** What role do interest groups play – incorporate corruption, issue representation, racial/ethnic representation into your answer. In your answer, include a discussion of the theory of pluralism, and why it is legitimate or not. Also consider what state politics might look like if interest groups were not allowed.