

Writing Assignment 2 – Polisci 209

Writing Assignment 2

First Draft due on November 16th, Final Paper due on November 28th

For this assignment you need to download one data set: the “Presdata.csv” data file from the course website: http://fhollenbach.org/Polisci209_2018/data/Presdata.csv. Read the data into *RStudio* and play around for a bit. There are 16 different variables in this dataset. The variables included are the following:

1. Year - election year
2. inc1 - National two-party vote share received in the presidential election by the party currently holding office.
3. q2gdp – GDP growth in the second quarter of the election year (Abramowitz, 2012)
4. cumpt8pclei2016 – Measure of Leading Economic Indicators, see Erikson and Wlezien (2012)
5. LogTWH – logged time in the White House for a party (Lockerbie, 2012)
6. G – growth rate of real GDP per capita in the first three quarters of the election year (Fair, 2012)
7. P – absolute value of the GDP deflator in the first 15 quarters of the administration (Fair, 2012)
8. Z – number of quarters in the first 15 quarters of the administration in which the growth rate of real per capita GDP is greater than 3.2% (Fair, 2012)
9. ECONHALVED80 – Qtr. 2 real GDP growth (Campbell, 2012)
10. gnpchan – Gross National Product, as percentage change non-annualized in GNP constant dollars from the fourth quarter of the year prior to the election to the second quarter of the election year, data from the Survey of Current Business (Lewis-Beck and Tien, 2012)
11. Unemployment – average unemployment rate in the months from January to August in the election year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016)
12. Inflation – average inflation rate in the months from January to August in the election year (US Inflation Calculator, 2016)
13. ViolentCrimeRate – violent crime rate per 100,000 people in the year prior to the election (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016)
14. MurderRate – Murder and non-negligent manslaughter rate per 100,000 people in the year prior to the election (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016)
15. AssaultRate – Aggravated assault rate per 100,000 people in the year prior to the election (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016)
16. OwnershipShare – Rate of homeownership in April of the election year (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2016)

These data include observations for the presidential elections from 1952 to 2016. In this writing assignment you are expected to develop a short theoretical argument using two of the variables in the list above (3-16) to explain and predict incumbent vote share in presidential elections in the US. Your dependent variable is inc1 – the incumbent vote share – in the Presdata dataset. The incumbent vote share is the number of votes the party of the current President received nationally divided by the total votes received nationally by the Democratic and Republican candidates. For example, for 2008 this is the two-party vote share received by McCain, for 2012 it is the two-party vote share received by Obama. You can choose any two of the other variables in the data set (variables 3-16 in the list above) as your independent variables. Note that some variables are quite similar to each other, so you should pick two variables that measure different things.

To begin, you should look at your data. Use the `head()` function. You can see the type of each of the variables. As you can see, all variables are numeric.

The overall goal in this writing assignment is to develop and test a theoretical argument about the relationship between two independent variables and the incumbent two-party vote share.

Detailed Instructions:

The **Introduction** should give an overview of your paper and explain why others should care about your ideas and the problem at hand. Make sure to include a clear statement that lays out your argument and your expectation about the relationship in one sentence.

The next section (**Theoretical Argument**) should include the development of your argument. You can find background information on all the variables in the data set using the references given in the list. Come up with a theoretical argument for the expected relationship for both independent variables (you may want to have subsections). **Beware of caring too much about being right.** I care most about you clearly explaining creative and imaginative ideas. Why does your independent variable matter for incumbent vote share? How do the variables you chose affect the vote share for the incumbent party in presidential elections? What are the mechanisms by which changes in each of the variables lead to high/lower vote share for the incumbent? Marshal support for your model. Remember, here you are still in the model-building phase. Why does your theory make more sense than obvious alternatives someone might suggest? What are the features that make it particularly compelling and give it a high degree of explanatory power? Make sure to add appropriate citations if you use outside sources. **Note:** The outcome is incumbent vote share, i.e., the vote share of the party that holds the presidency at the time of the election. This means that your theory should not be about partisanship or party differences!

The next section of your paper is the **Empirical Analysis**. In this section you should show the nature of the relationship between your chosen independent variables and the dependent variable (incumbent vote share). Use the techniques we have covered in class so far to tell the reader about the development of these variables over time, their distributions, and relationship (i.e. plots, sd, mean, etc). Lastly, you should run two bivariate regressions, one for each of your independent variables with incumbent vote share as the dependent variable. Run the regression only on data until 2012 (including). Summarize the results of the regression, i.e. coefficients and RMS. What does it tell you? Make sure to interpret **all** coefficients. What are the predicted changes associated with your variable? Lastly, use the data for 2016 and your regression results to predict the 2016 election. How far off are you? Lastly, run a multivariate regression with both of your independent variables and incumbent vote share as the dependent variable. Summarize the results. How does the interpretation change? What are the relationships of the variables with incumbent vote share? How does the prediction for 2016 change based on the new model? **Note:** It may be useful to have three subsections: one for each independent variable and one for the multivariate model. **It is okay if the data shows your theory to be wrong or off. For example, it is totally fine if you predicted a positive relationship but the data shows no relationship or even a negative one, however make sure to note if that happens. Do not change your theory based on the result.**

Last, the **Conclusion** section should summarize the previous sections and discuss what we learned from your work. Give your readers an overview of the paper and leave them with a takeaway—your key point. If your theory was shown to be wrong, you may speculate about possible explanations.

General Guidelines

Great assignments will be clearly and concisely written, have very few grammatical or spelling errors, and will describe plots and statistics in detail. Your conclusion should include some speculation about why you observed the empirical relationship. Your conclusion should include some speculation about why the development you observe occurred.

Explain everything like your reader knows nothing about the topic or the statistical methods used. E.g., It would not be sufficient to write: “ β is equal to five.” Explain the meaning behind all terms.

Remember to provide citations for any outside sources you use, even if it is the text book (if you are unsure how or when to cite, see: http://library.tamu.edu/services/library_tutorials/citing_sources/index.html). I prefer you use APA style, but any of the ones listed on the library site are fine.

Your paper should be between 1000 and 1500 words (excluding references and r-code) and follow this format:

- 12 point, Times New Roman Font, for the main body text.
- Double-space the main body of the text.
- Use section and subsection headings, with larger or different font as you see fit.
- 1 inch margins.
- Include your name, the title of your paper, and the word count on the first page of your paper.
- Beyond the points above, your paper should look and sound professional. You will be graded on completeness of the assignment, grammar, spelling, and creativity. **Make sure to proofread before submitting (even the first draft)!**
- I do not tolerate plagiarism. You can find the Honor System Rules here: <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/Rules-and-Procedures/Rules/Honor-System-Rules>. **It is okay to ask for help but do not share your R-code with other students. You should note that even seemingly minor violations can become a permanent addition to your transcript.**
- The paper must contain at least 1000 words. I welcome additional effort, but I encourage you to focus on fitting more content into 1000-1100 words rather than submitting a 1,500 word paper.
 - In Final Submission: Paste the R-code used at the end of the assignment (**only in the final version, not in the first draft**)

SUBMISSION of first draft: **Prior to class on Friday, November 16th** on eCampus under Writing Assignment 2 - First Draft. Peer review comments are due on Monday November 19th via eCampus. **The final draft is due on November 28th via turnitin on eCampus.**

References:

- Abramowitz, Alan I. 2012. “Forecasting in a Polarized Era: The Time-for-Change Model and the 2012 Presidential Election.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4):618–619.
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- Erikson, Robert S. and Christopher Wlezien. 2012. “The Objective and Subjective Economy and the Presidential Vote.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4):620–624.
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- Lewis-Beck, Michael S. and Charles Tien. 2012. “Election Forecasting for Turbulent Times.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4):625–629.
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- US Inflation Calculator. 2016. “Historical Inflation Rates: 1914–2016.” <http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/historical-inflation-rates/> (Accessed October 2016).