

17.251

**Congress and the American Political System
Fall 2012**

First assignment

Come to the next class meeting (September 10) prepared to give a 3–to–5 minute political introduction to your home congressional district and your current member of Congress.

The presentation should include information about the following items:

The salient political characteristics of the district

- Geographic location
- Location of large cities and economic regions
- Ethnic or other demographic blocs that are politically relevant
- Districting history (especially, what is the difference between the *current* and the *new* congressional district?)

The salient political background of the incumbent

- When was s/he first elected and what was her or his political background?
- How electorally secure is the incumbent?
- Where does the incumbent's primary political support come from?
- Who is running against the incumbent in 2012?
- What are the prospects for the incumbent's reelection in 2012?
- [NB: If the incumbent is not running for reelection, adapt these characteristics to the candidates running to replace him or her.]

The political future of the district

- What political, economic, or social trends might change the incumbent's chances in the future?
- What is likely to happen with the redistricting that will occur next year?

The best source of information for this assignment can be found in the current editions of the *Almanac of American Politics* or *Politics in America*.