Assignment summary

Working with your assigned group, answer the question posed to you. You will give a 15-minute presentation (with 10 minutes available for questions) on your work on March 14. Your group will also turn in a nine-page written report on your project on Friday, March 17. (Please e-mail a copy to me by 5:00 pm., in one of the following formats: doc, wpf, or pdf.) The report should be in the form of a (mini) term paper meaning, among other things, that it should follow the format described by Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. The paper should do the following:

1. State, or re-state, the question, and discuss to whom the question is important and why.
2. Review any relevant literature you can find, either in journals, press accounts, or books.
3. Describe your method, including, how you measured the variables of interest (dependent and independent variables) and where you gathered the data.
4. Summarize your findings, using the appropriate figures and tables.

The nine page limit includes tables, figures, and bibliography.

Statement about Collaboration

You are encouraged to seek and extend as much help as you can, both within and between groups. I expect you to be meticulous in citing the written work of others that you use.

Grading

I will assign a letter grade to each group's project. That will be the grade you receive, plus or minus an adjustment that will be determined as follows: I will ask each member of the group to indicate the relative amount of effort each person contributed to the successful completion of the project. If someone in the group stands out as being a conspicuous over- or under-contributor to the group effort, that person's letter grade will be adjusted upward or downward as appropriate.
Project 1: Support for Extending the USA PATRIOT Act

Names: Daniel Barclay, Adam Groce, Zachary Ozer

Question: What explains congressional opposition to or support for the extension of the USA PATRIOT Act?

Possible explanations

Partisanship. George W. Bush has become associated with waging the War on Terrorism and his co-partisans in Congress rally around him in supporting the USA PATRIOT Act extension, while Democrats try to derail him/it. Therefore, Republicans should be more supportive than Democrats.

Ideology. Conservatives historically have been more likely to take a hard-line approach to domestic dangers, and therefore more conservative members should be more supportive of the extension than liberals.

Civil libertarianism. Civil libertarians (who are usually liberals, but not always) believe that it's wrong to restrict civil liberties, even under the most dire of national dangers. Therefore, the strongest civil libertarians will oppose the extension.

Constituency characteristics. Representatives will respond to their constituents' desires, and therefore those with more Republican or conservative constituents will be more likely to support the extension.

Electoral vulnerability. Legislators who are "cross-pressed" by electoral strength of the opposite party in their district/state will sometimes try to diffuse opposition by acting against type. Therefore, for instance, Democrats from districts with more Republican strength in the electorate may be more likely to support extension while Republicans from districts with more Democratic strength may be more likely to oppose.

Data sources

thomas.loc.gov. The "Thomas" web site is the portal to U.S. congressional action. Included therein is a bunch of detail about the path of legislation, including roll call votes.

Voteview web site. voteview.ucsd.edu. Keith Poole's web site that has datasets that measure general liberalness and conservatism of representatives. (These are called "NOMINATE" scores on the web site.

Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, Statehouse Democracy. Book about state-level ideology and partisanship, with data.

Interest group web sites (like from the ACLU) often contain "scorecards" that rate legislators according to how often they vote according to the group's goals.

Congressional Directory contains basic data about members, including most recent vote totals.
Comments/hints

This project asks you to consider a range of explanations for why legislators do what they do when they make national security policy, sorting through a bunch of explanations that, themselves, are highly correlated with one another. It asks you to consider "legislative" behavior; remember that Congress has two chambers and the data availability for each chamber may be different. As of this writing, the legislative process is ongoing, so you may also have to improvise your measures of "support" and "opposition" to extension based on what has happened to date.
Project 2: Women in Parliaments.

Names: Tabitha Bonilla, Jakob Hopping, Laura Hajj

Question: What explains the variation in women's representation in parliaments around the world?

Possible explanations

Duration of democracy. Young democracies struggle with the most basic implementation of democratic rules, therefore these countries might treat women's representation, and other minorities' rights, as a second order concern.

Regime type. Presidential regimes are characterized by their lack of flexibility and "winner takes all" nature. Access points to power are determined by the president and the leading political parties making it difficult for women to survive in a male dominated environment. Parliamentary systems are more flexible and governing coalitions are more likely to be formed. Therefore women should have more political representation in parliamentary regimes.

Electoral rules. Countries where voters have to support one candidate in a single member districts may place more weight on the candidate's gender. Countries where voters choose among party lists in multimember districts may give more importance to the party and not to each candidate's gender.

Ethic fragmentation. Countries with more than one social cleavage may find difficulties in enforcing equality of representation for all groups. The higher the ethnic fragmentation in a country the less priority will be given to women's representation.

Stage of development and inequality. In countries where all the material needs of its citizens have been fulfilled other non-material issues, such as gender equality, are welcome in the political debate. Wealthy countries should have more women in their parliaments. In the same line of reasoning, income inequality should be negatively correlated with women's representation.

Religion. Some religions believe in the equality of women and men more than others. These perceptions of equality may be reflected in the political opportunities for women. If this is true, countries with tolerant religions should have more women in parliaments.

Data sources

United Nations Statistic Division. Social, political and economic statistics and indicators.
WIDER World Income Inequality Dataset. www.wider.unu.edu
Przeworski et al, Democracy and Development. Book with detailed information about regime types for 141 countries.
The Freedom House website (www.freedomhouse.org) contains country reports with data about civil rights, political rights, some demographics and a "freedom" index.
The Inter-Parliamentary Union website (www.ipu.org) contains information about legislatures around the world including electoral rules and results of the most recent elections.

Comments/hints
The trick here is, first, finding reasonable measures of things like "ethnic fragmentation," and then finding comparable measures across a bunch of countries. You will find numerous reference books from international organizations that report on economic and social statistics. You will need to do a cross-sectional study, in which the observations are at the country level. If you are lucky, you may find the number of women in parliaments measured at a couple of different times (say in 1970 and 1990), in which case you might want to see if you can predict the change in this number across the years.
Project 3: Gay marriage

Names: Shannon Greer, David Nedzel, David Tobias

Question: Why have some US states adopted bans on gay marriage and others have not?

Possible explanations

Ideology. In the US history liberals have strongly opposed anti-miscegenation laws. For many prohibiting same-sex marriage is another example of discrimination. Then, states with strong presence of liberals should oppose the adoption of bans on gay marriage.

Partisanship. President Bush endorsed a constitutional amendment that would restrict marriage to people of opposite sexes. Intuitively, Republican states have strong incentives to align their position with President Bush.

Demographics. Rural regions have traditionally viewed “alternatively lifestyles” with suspicion. People with lower incomes and lower levels of education have tended to be less tolerant of homosexuality. Therefore, states where the population is concentrated on rural and poor areas are more likely to adopt bans on gay marriage.

Church attendance. Conservative Christians argue that marriage can only take place between a man and a woman. Therefore, states with more conservative Christians may be more likely to prohibit same-sex marriage.

The initiative. Some states allow citizens to initiative legislation via the ballot box, but others do not. Anti-gay-marriage sentiments tend to be more strongly felt among non-elites, and therefore, states where it is easier for average people to write legislation directly may be more likely to ban same-sex marriage.

Data sources

Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, Statehouse Democracy. Book about state-level ideology and partisanship, with data.

www.census.gov. Demographics and economic statistics.

Book of the States (the “Blue Book”) that contains basic election data for the states.


Marriage Equality website (www.marriageequality.org). Contains information about gay marriage in the US.

Human Rights Campaign website (www.hrc.org) has state-level information about anti-discrimination laws and policies.

The Archive of American Religion (www.thearda.com) hosts a bunch of datasets about membership in religious organizations.
Comments/hints

The question is fairly straightforward. You will want to think about the dependent variable, since some states will have positively dealt with the issue and others have not; and, you need to decide whether a court deciding an issue is the same as a legislature or an electorate. Religiosity is an obvious independent variable to explore, though you will probably discover that you’ll need to so some thinking about which types of religious groups fall into which categories. Finally, if you’re curious about what your loving professor thinks about the argument that gay marriage cost John Kerry the presidential election in 2004, check out what Al Franken has to say about an article he wrote on the matter, in Franken’s book *Lies (with Jokes).*