

Short Paper Topics

Mexico vs. Canada

Same sized economies; endowed with lots of natural resources
Both trade U.S. (~80%); linked in Free Trade Agreement to each other and to U.S.
Mexico poorer, corruption significantly greater, less democratic. Why?

Histories different: Mexico product of Spanish colonialism; Canada product of British colonialism (for a long time (1867 and really even later)

Social structure; Mexico (Canada has French, though)

Culture (Iberian tradition, Catholicism, etc.)

Institutions: Both now have regular, free, fair, and inclusive elections. Canada is parliamentary, Mexico Presidential

USA

Following two of the closest presidential elections in American history (2000 and 2004), some observers have described the United States as a "50/50 nation." In a 1,000 word essay, identify and assess social-structural, institutional, and cultural explanations for these narrow outcomes. Is America really a divided country? If so, what are the most important lines of cleavage?

Brazil

Brazil's president has been mired in corruption scandals. He's a very good guy; not personally corrupt. Brazil has similar institutions (presidential, federal), but not exactly the same. Brazil has PR, U.S. has FPTF

Democracy in Latin America

Democracy has not been very stable in Latin America. Some blame this on culture; some on socioeconomic inequality; some on

Past Paper Topics

Option #1:

Two weeks ago, the results of Iraq's December 15th parliamentary elections were certified. The final tally gave 128 seats to the Shia United Iraqi Alliance, 53 to the Kurdish Alliance, 44 to the Sunni-led National Concord Front, 25 to the secular Iraqi National List, and 25 to smaller parties of various affiliations. In a 1,000 word essay, identify and assess social-structural, institutional, and cultural arguments for this outcome.

Option #2:

Following two of the closest presidential elections in American history (2000 and 2004), some observers have described the United States as a "50/50 nation." In a 1,000 word essay, identify and assess social-structural, institutional, and cultural explanations for these narrow outcomes. Is America really a divided country? If so, what are the most important lines of cleavage?

Option #3:

Read the article below and then write a short (1,000 word) essay in which you identify and assess social-structural, institutional, and cultural arguments for the violence that has recently plagued France.

The Washington Post

November 5, 2005 Saturday

HEADLINE: As Youth Riots Spread Across France, Muslim Groups Attempt to Intervene

BYLINE: Molly Moore, Washington Post Foreign Service

DATELINE: SEVRAN, France Nov. 4...