This assignment is divided into two main parts. The first is a personal reflection and the second is a more formal research proposal.

**Personal Essay**

The personal essay is an informal essay that is designed to make you go through a process of self-reflection. Remember that good research begins with self-knowledge—to obtain self-knowledge, we must spend a moment reflecting on ourselves.

A good reflection essay is specific.

The reflection essay should address the following questions:

1. Why politics?
   
   *(Why are you interested in politics? Be as specific as you can—don’t just give me a vague platitude and tell me that you care because you think it’s important—tell me who or what in your life made you think it’s important. Was there a role model or particular event that sparked your interest? Or, are you interested in politics? If you’re not, then think about why you chose this class over other classes. Why not take a QR course in psychology? Why political science?)*

2. Why did I focus on this question?
   
   *(Why did you choose the question that you did? In your mind, what does it connect to? What implications does it have for the things you care about? How did you find the question? What was the chain of reasoning or thought? Etc.)*

**Formal Research Proposal**

The research proposal itself has two main parts. First, it will indicate what you intend to study. Second, it will tell us how you intend to study it. More detail on each of these sections is below. Your paper does not necessarily have to flow in this order, but all these components should be there.

1. **What you will study**

   A. The Question
      
      i. What is it?
      
      1. What is the key question you wish to address?
      2. Is there a puzzle you are trying to solve?
      
      ii. Why should we care? (examples)
      
      1. Will it help policymakers solve a problem?
      2. Will it help improve democracy?
      3. Will it help scholars better understand an important phenomenon?
      4. Will it further collective knowledge?

      iii. How does it fit with previous literature (Literature Review)
      
      1. What do we know?
         
         a. What have previous scholars found?
         b. What theories exist that can help you answer your question?
2. What do we not know?
   a. What gaps exist in the literature?
   b. Where does your question fit into this body of scholarship?

B. The Hypothesis
   i. What is your central hypothesis? (state it clearly)
   ii. Where did this come from? (connect it to previous work)

II. How you will study it

A. Research Design
   i. Central Goal in this section: describe how you will evaluate your hypothesis against data.
   ii. Identify the measures
      1. What is/are your major dependent variable(s)?
         a. What is the underlying concept or construct it measures
         b. How does the variable capture the construct?
         c. How have other scholars measured this variable?
         d. How will you measure this variable?
      2. What are your major independent variables?
         a. What is the underlying concept or construct it measures
         b. How does the variable capture the construct?
         c. How have other scholars measured this variable?
         d. How will you measure this variable?
   iii. What “unit of analysis” will you be studying?

B. Data
   i. What data do you need? (How will you operationalize the variables?)
      1. Is the data publicly available?
      2. Will you have to collect your own data?
      3. Where will you get your data? (Be specific)
   ii. How will you get your data? (How will you collect data?)
      1. Specify the procedures you will use.
      2. Who/what is included in your sample? (How will you select cases for your analysis?)
      3. Note: If you download a publicly available dataset, you should look at the documentation in the codebook to find this information.
   iii. Describe the dataset
      1. What is the unit of analysis?
      2. How many cases are there?
      3. Specify about what measures exist for each of your variables.

C. Special Problems:
   i. Are there any special problems you have to address?
   ii. Examples:
      1. A crucial variable that will be difficult or impossible to measure directly?
      2. Problems you might encounter in your data collection effort? How might you overcome those problems?
   iii. Quantitative analysis is rarely straightforward, so tell us any wrinkles you’ve encountered thus far, or anticipate encountering over the coming months.