In this project, you will use SETUPS (Supplementary Empirical Teaching Units in Political Science), a data set regarding public opinion in the 2008 election.  The data comes from the University of Michigan’s National Election Study, which has collected public opinion information about elections since 1952.  SETUPS employs 160 variables from the 2008 American National Election Study.  SETUPS is free to use!

In this exercise, you will create crosstabulation tables involving a dependent variable, an independent variable and (at times) a control variable to better understand variations in public opinion regarding the 2008 American election.

The actual project will involve six group reports. Each group (of 4-5 people) will create a PowerPoint presentation of 20-30 minutes duration. Each group also will create a brief outline of their presentation for hard copy distribution to the class. Additionally, all PowerPoint presentations will be placed in a common course file for student use.

Four groups will focus on explanations of variation in particular types of dependent variables: social issue opinions, economic issue opinions, presidential candidate preference, and media use habits. Suggested independent variables include respondents' demographic characteristics and foundational orientations such as party identification, ideology and religiosity. Two additional groups will employ data analysis as political consultants, one group providing strategic advice to the Democratic Party and another to the Republican Party regarding the forthcoming 2010 and 2012 elections.

So you must first decide which group you prefer.  Please send me an email list of your top four group preferences, listed in rank order.  These groups are:

Social issues group

Economic issues group

Presidential preference group

Media use group

Democratic consultant group

Republican consultant group

Your group assignments will be announced in class.  After our tutorial day on SETUPS, each group will meet, do analysis with SETUPS, and create PowerPoint presentations for our last two class periods.  Each PowerPoint should be about 15-20 minutes in length, allowing an additional ten minutes for discussion of your findings.  With PowerPoints, remember that less is MORE!  Don’t present too many findings too quickly.  Instead, chose important findings, display your results and explain the implications of these results for a while when the PowerPoint finding is displayed.  Copies of your PowerPoint presentations will be placed in the common course file for your access when preparing for the final exam.

Each analysis group should also prepare an outline of key findings, no longer than what can be contained on one side of an 8 ½ by 11 inch sheet of paper, on one side, for distribution during your presentation.

The social issues, economic issues and presidential preference groups will present during the first day of presentations, and the media use, Democratic and Republican consultant groups on the second day.

A final exam essay question will require students to draw upon at least three group presentations in discussing new understandings of American politics resulting from the reports. These essays must also draw upon class readings.