**Documenting Democracy – Fall 2012 (Spanish, Humanities, Chemistry)**

From now until the time of the 2012 U.S. elections, we’ll be looking at what influences a person’s political beliefs in the United States, including your own. Now, for those of you who aren’t particularly politically minded, don’t fret, we’ll be doing so in a unique way. We’ll collect information through a variety of sources, and we’ll document our understandings through writing, both creative and research based, and photography. Throughout the process, you will unearth what informs your own perspectives on political issues and those of importance to community members in San Diego. Meanwhile, you will learn about visual literacy and our ability to interpret and communicate through the medium of photography.

**Questions**: What factors influence a person’s political beliefs? How can we shape the political process? How can we communicate our beliefs and understandings through visual art, particularly photography?

**Assessment Formats:**
Throughout this project, you will be assessed in various ways, including during the process of and at the completion of your projects (end products). Below are a list of your final project components that will be assessed. Each will be explained in detail as they approach.

1. **Developing our understanding: Elections, Visual Literacy, and Camera Skills**

a.    Participation in Photography Workshops & Excursions (Andrew)

 Throughout this project we will have workshops that will serve to introduce and build photographic skills.  To practice and hone our individual techniques, we will take excursions to various locations within san diego.  Each of the locations that we visit will offer unique opportunities for students to explore and develop their ability to capture imagery.

Participation in the workshops in both expected and necessary to attain the items required for the portfolio.  These items include photographs related to excursion assignments, logs from the field, and artifacts from various activities that we engage in.  Specifics regarding the details of these requirements will be provided as we approach each activity.

At certain points in the process, you will be required to interview / interact with community members. You will also learn in workshops how to conduct an interview: Designing Questions & Polling

b.    Personal Statement (Laszlo) *What is my political ideology and where does it come from?*
 The students will create a written piece (1 page single spaced) about the foundations of their political views after being exposed to a few sources, as well as the environmental and genetic factors that have contributed to the shaping of those views.

There will be a visual component added to the written piece in the form of any object, man made or otherwise, that collectively represents that student’s views.

At the end of the semester we revise the statements to incorporate the issue represented in their final conceptual photograph, as well as any shifts that students may have undergone throughout the semester.

c.    Photo Analysis and Historical Narrative (Liz)

To advance your ability to interpret images and to increase empathy (understanding) for issues facing Latino voters, students will analyze historical photographs related to Latino issues and will write a short piece of historical fiction that brings a particular photo to life.

d.    Candidate Profile (Laszlo)

After defining personal political ideologies and the factors that shaped them for each student, we will be investigating and analyzing various candidates from the upcoming election on a local, state, and national level.

There will be simulations and activities related to the gathering of this information, with the end product being a full and professional profile of each candidate, either in hard copy or or multimedia form.

e.    Latinos in 2012 Election (Liz)

As we get closer to the elections and after writing our narratives, we will turn our attention to Latinos in the elections this year. The “Latino Vote” has been heralded as one of the most important votes, and we will have the chance to assess what issues influence this vote, predications about election outcomes, and to interact with Latino organizations and Latino voters themselves.

f.     Electoral Processes (Laszlo)

As a class we will dissect the process of elections in the United States, looking at how campaigns are financed and executed, how the Electoral College works, and what strategies are used in securing votes.\*\*\* **See images below :)**

This will include analyzing what shapes public opinion surrounding an issue or candidate, and how that information is transmitted and interpreted back to the nation.

Our team will be running a school wide simulated election the day of the national election (**Tuesday, November 6th**), using teaching teams as our “Electorate”.

g.    Socratic Seminars (Liz)

As you discuss the electoral processes in the United States, we’ll do some socratic seminars on big questions about democracies and how they are arranged, making comparisons to democracies in other parts of the world.

h.    Debate the Issues (Liz & Laszlo)

As we investigate issues surrounding local, state, and national elections, we will be preparing for a series of debates during school in which students act as advocates for and against certain issues or candidates.

                **A professional photographic art portfolio.**

After you have completed all of the photography workshops and assignments, you will begin developing a portfolio that encompasses your work and that displays your growth as a photographer (and visual communicator). You will be provided the option of multiple formats and with models that you can follow. While you don’t need to complete the portfolio for some weeks, it is imperative that you keep the pictures you take for each assignment in a safe location (both copies we print for you and digital copies), and that you document your photo logs for each of our photo shoots.

                **Final Conceptual Photograph & Written Reflection**

After the election, you will receive a final photographic assignment. This assignment will be displayed, alongside your portfolio, at our final exhibition. The theme of this photograph will be related to the elections and your developing perspectives on politics in the United States.

                **Re-design: The Electoral Process**

After the election, you will work to re-design the electoral system for a new generation of voters. Your design ideas will be present at exhibition in December.

**Excursions**
-       Political Rallies
-       Voter Registration Drives
-       Election Day
-       Practice Photo Days
-       Photo Shoots (Zoo)

**Guest Presenters**
-       Political Interest Groups
-       Photographers

**Project Calendar\****is subject change as the semester progresses. Check google doc for updates.*