In Claiming the Mantle, Lawrence Butler examines our system of nominating candidates to run for the Presidency. After an analysis, both topical and historical, that focuses on how the system does not work as it was intended, he concludes:

"Yet perhaps we should step back for a moment and examine the outcome. The presidential nominee is likely to be someone who has worked his way up through the party ranks until he has earned a leadership position. Or, he is a highly skilled politician. Or, he is a vice president who has had four to eight years of first-hand experience in the White House. On the whole, that is a pretty good set of qualifications for the president of the United States." (p. 184)

In effect, he concludes that the system may “work” because it does not work as it was intended.

You should evaluate our system and Butler’s evaluation of it. Does it work well? (Note, you will need to be clear on what criteria you feel we should use to evaluate a nomination system). Why or why not? Also, note that the system has evolved since Butler wrote this in 2004. In particular, the system has become much more frontloaded. Is this a positive change or not? Looking toward 2012, how, if at all, would you change the system?

(One final caveat to keep in mind – this question asks you to focus on the process as a whole. While that may involve some discussion of the Iowa caucuses and their role, that will not be your focus in this essay. The final essay related to your internships, which will be due after the caucuses in January (and will be posted later this week), will ask you to evaluate the caucus process in Iowa and its role.)

Be sure to cite specific evidence from class material to support your argument.

This essay is due in my office by 4:00 on Wednesday, December 19. Late essays will be penalized one letter grade for each day (24 hour period) they are late, but I will not accept essays after 4:00 on Friday, December 21.

Your essay will be evaluated with the following rubric:

1. Displays understanding of how the nomination system works. (20 points)

2. Evaluation of the nomination system, including its strengths and weaknesses and Butler’s evaluation of that system; (20 points)
3. Discussion and evaluation of how changes in the system in 2008 impact the effectiveness of the system. (20 points)

4. Overall coherence of the essay including, but not limited to, the relationship between the evaluation of the system and the recommendations for 2012. (20 points)

5. Quality of writing (spelling, grammar, proper citations, clarity, etc.). (20 points)