American Government—Extra Credit Assignment

Due: Oct. 15 (at the beginning of class)
This extra credit assignment is worth up to 5 points, which will be added to your score on Quiz 1. You have two options for this extra credit assignment. Pick one. Make sure you answer all questions associated with the option you choose. The total page length of your completed assignment should be 1-2 typed, double-spaced pages, using 12 point font and standard margins. Full credit will only be given to assignments that answer all questions thoughtfully and completely and that are free of most spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

Option A. Redistricting 101
This assignment asks you to try your hand at congressional redistricting. Here is the website you will need to go to: http://www.redistrictinggame.org. In order to play the game, you will need Adobe Flash Player 9 installed on your computer. If you are having technical difficulties, I recommend you pick the other option for the assignment.

Once you reach the website and watch the opening video, click on “Play the Game.” Next, go to “Mission Two: Partisan Gerrymander.” I recommend that you select the “Basic” level (believe me, basic is hard enough!). While you are welcome to try the other games on the website, make sure you complete the partisan gerrymander for the purposes of the assignment.

After you complete the basic partisan gerrymander, write out answers to the following questions. Each answer should be 1-2 paragraphs in length.

1. What were some of the challenges in completing your partisan gerrymander? Was it easier or harder than you expected? Why?
2. Why do you think gerrymandering is easier to complete now than it was in the past?
3. Is gerrymandering harmful for a democratic system of government? Why or why not?

Option B. Know Your Representative
This assignment asks you to get to know your member of Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives. To do so, go to http://www.house.gov. In the upper-left hand corner, type in your five digit zip code, and click on “go.” You will then be directed to the website of your member of Congress. Explore your representative’s homepage and click on a few of the links. Then write out answers to the following questions. Each answer should be 1-2 paragraphs in length.

1. Who is your representative? Describe two of your representative’s top priority issues. Are these issues that you care about?
2. What projects does your representative mention that will help out your district?
3. What are two of your representative’s recent accomplishments? (Note: I am using the word “accomplishment” loosely here; it can be something as simple as introducing a bill!)