**Final Project + Debate: Voicing Your Thoughts**

**Due Dates TBA (pending release of final exam schedule)**

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Amendment I to the U.S. Constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

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In the final project, you will draw on course material, current events, and your own experiences in order to voice your own thoughts on whether and in what contexts the U.S. needs the First Amendment. There are two parts to the project: an essay and a class-wide debate.

The final project will be graded based on the clarity, thoroughness, and persuasiveness of your argument and the connections you draw among course material, current events, and personal experiences. Both the written portion and the in-class verbal portion will be factored into the Final Project grade. Both parts will be graded holistically using a rubric.

**Content Requirements**:

* Define the American voice. Consider to what extent the first amendment shapes and/or constrains this definition.
* Clearly and thoroughly argue whether and in what specific situations the U.S. needs the First Amendment. (see possible avenues for exploration below)
* Use evidence and examples from at least 5 texts we’ve examined in this course and at least 3 credible news reports or opinion pieces to support your claims. Cite all sources using a consistent citation style.
* The essay should be coherent and cohesive, using an engaging tone for the purpose and audience of this essay.

**Essay Form Requirements:**

* Creative title
* Minimum of 8 pages, typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, with 1” margins.
* Name, course, instructor, assignment, and due date at top left-hand corner of first page; last name and page numbers on every page
* Appropriate grammar, spelling, syntax, and punctuation

**Debate Requirements:**

* Use your essay to participate in the in-class debate about whether the US needs the 1st Amendment
* Consistently and thoughtfully offer your thoughts on the subject, listen to what others have to say, respond to others, and ask thoughtful questions.

**Possible Avenues for Exploration:**

* Protests and riots
* Libel laws
* Journalism
* Religious practice and clothing
* Free speech and employment
* Art/freedom of expression
* Hate speech/inciting violence
* Obscenity laws
* Fake news

**Some Credible News, Analysis, and Opinion Outlets**

* *The New York Times*
  + *The Daily* (NYT Podcast)
* *The Washington Post*
* *The Wall Street Journal*
* *L.A. Times*
* *Chicago Tribune*
* *The Hill*
* *BBC*
* *NPR*
  + *NPR Politics Podcast*
  + *NPR Up First* (10-minute morning news brief podcast)
* *Al Jazeera*
* *Foreign Affairs*
* *Politico*
* *The Atlantic*
* *The National Review* (credible conservative news/opinion site)
  + *Mad Dogs & Englishmen* (NR Podcast)
* *Mother Jones* (credible liberal news/opinion site)
  + *The Mother Jones Podcast*
* Factcheck.org

Pro Tip: set up the news app on your phone to give you breaking news notifications from credible news outlets. Read the stories whenever you have 5 minutes to spare.

**Less Reliable Outlets—DO NOT USE**

* *CNN*
* *MSNBC*
* *Fox News*
* *NBC*
* *CBS*
* *ABC*
* *USA Today*
* *Newsweek*
* *Daily Mail*
* *New York Post*
* *Chicago Sun times*
* *Breitbart*
* *BuzzFeed*
* *Huffington Post*
* Most documentaries (Take them with a grain of salt--they’re opinion pieces, not presentation of absolute fact)

**Final Rubric**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Does Not Meet Expectations** | **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Definition of the American Voice | The student does not define the American voice. | The student attempts to define the American voice but does not clearly connect it to the first amendment, or the explanation/connection is vague. | The student defines the American voice and articulates to what extent the first amendment shapes and/or constrains this definition, but some portions may be vague or otherwise unclear. | The student clearly defines the American voice and thoroughly articulates to what extent the first amendment shapes and/or constrains this definition. |
| Do we need the First Amendment? | The student does not argue whether the U.S. needs the first amendment. OR the students argues whether the U.S. needs the first amendment but does not apply this to specific situations, demonstrating a rudimentary understanding of course content. | The students argues whether and what situations the U.S. needs the first amendment, but much of the evidence or reasoning is vague or otherwise unclear, demonstrating a rudimentary understanding of course content. | The student argues whether and in what situations the U.S. needs the first amendment, demonstrating an understanding of course content. One or two areas of analysis may lack specificity or the arguments may be illogical and unclear in some spots. | The student clearly and thoroughly argues whether and in what specific situations the U.S. needs the first amendment, demonstrating a mastery of course content. |
| Evidence | The student has incorporated some evidence but it may be irrelevant or not credible. All sources are cited, but the citations are inconsistent. | The student has incorporated evidence from at least 4 texts and 2 credible news/opinion sources, but many of the claims are not sufficiently supported with evidence or examples. All sources are cited, but the citations are inconsistent. | The student has incorporated evidence from 5 texts covered in class and 3 credible news sources or opinion pieces, though a few of the claims are sufficiently supported. The citations are mostly consistent throughout. | The student has effectively and thoroughly incorporated evidence from 5 texts covered in class and 3 credible news sources or opinion pieces. All claims are supported by sufficient evidence or examples. The citations are consistent throughout. |
| Style | The essay is disjointed and the paragraphs do not logically connect to one another. The student’s tone varies widely throughout. | The essay is mostly coherent and cohesive, though some paragraphs do not logically connect to each other. The student’s tone varies but is mostly appropriate for the purpose and audience of this essay. | The essay is coherent and mostly cohesive. The student uses a consistent tone for the purpose and audience of this essay. | The essay is coherent and cohesive. The student uses a consistent, engaging tone for the purpose and audience of this essay. |
| Form | The essay is significantly less than 8 full pages. There are numerous spelling and grammar errors, vague word usage, and little to no evidence of proofreading. | The essay is at least 6 full pages. There are numerous spelling and grammar errors, vague word usage, and little to no evidence of proofreading. | The essay is at least 7 full pages. There are a few spelling and grammar errors, but word usage is varied and there is evidence of proofreading. | The essay is at least 8 full pages. There are no spelling or grammar errors, and word usage is engaging. |
| Voice | The student contributed one or two isolated ideas to the debate but did not fully engage their peers in the broader discussion OR the student consistently engaged in the discussion but offered no relevant evidence to support their points. | The student consistently engaged their peers in the broader discussion of the first amendment, but most of their points were overly generalized or did not draw on specific evidence for support. | The student consistently engaged their peers in the broader discussion of the first amendment, but one or two points were overly generalized or did not draw on specific evidence for support. | The student consistently and thoughtfully engaged their peers in the broader discussion of the first amendment by connecting clear evidence to logical ideas. |

Comments: