

Writing Topic 1 and Discussion Focus Questions: Angry American

This week's readings and class meetings focus on the topic of why Americans seem to dislike government so much. Here are the big questions that we will focus on for the first part of the week:

How angry are we? Are the distrust of politics and loathing of political opponents in the U.S. relatively new phenomena, as many people believe? What some of the main causes and consequences of our anger?

The discussion seminar at the end of the week will tackle the question of whether America would be better off if our society was less political, less divided, and more consensual. In short, would we all benefit from getting rid of the Michael Moores and Sean Hannitys of the world so we can have a calmer, more reflective dialogue that always looks for consensus and the middle road?

Focus questions to prepare for our discussion session: Recall that you will need to write an analytical essay during the first unit of the course, and you will have the option of writing a second discussion-topic essay during the last course unit. Since you will select the specific weeks when you submit your essay, many of you will not write on this week's reading and discussion session. Nevertheless, the discussion material is covered on exams, and you are expected to come to class on Friday having completed the week's readings and prepared to fully participate in our discussion.

As you prepare for this week's seminars and our Friday session, please consider the following questions:

- Steven Webster argues that anger in American politics is growing. What does he mean by anger, why does he think it is a problem that so many Americans are angry? What does he see as the main causes for more anger in politics?
- Not all Americans are angry to the same extent and degree. What makes Republicans and Democrats angry and how does this anger manifest itself? Looking at racial differences in this country, who is most angry (keeping in mind that the data you will be reading is from 2017)
- In Federalist 10, several important Founders, argue that aggressive political debate and factions are inherent to democracies. Why do they see this kind of conflict as a problem, and why did they think that a republic (which is?) would work any better than other ways of organizing modern society? Why did they believe that having the most serious of problems addressed at the national level was the best solution to dealing with political divisions? Where were they right in their assumptions? Where were they wrong?
- The Federalists thought American republicanism was the best form of government, but what are some of the other ways that society might be organized to deal with political division (Be familiar with the utopias proposed by Plato, Marx, and Skinner)? What fundamental trade-offs are made when a society chooses to model its politics off of one ideal type of government instead of another? Do any of the classical utopian models outlined in your textbook have any obvious lessons for how we might improve politics today?
- Has American politics become increasingly and uniquely polarized in the last couple of decades? Is there even a way to measure how political civility has changed over time (see Daniel Shea and Alex Sproveri)?

- Is it helpful--and at least somewhat accurate--to consider different schools of anger in the way that Starobin does? Does his typology of the major divisions in American politics capture most of what we are angry about?
- Paul Starobin suggests that rising levels of political anger can be a good thing. Why? What arguments does Martin Luther King provide to justify his belief that American politics moves forward at times only because so many people refuse to go along with the status quo? Why then do many political scientists--including Sandy Maisel--instead think that today's levels of political disagreement may pose serious problems for America's democracy over the long run?

Writing topic and directions: You need to write one paper during Unit 1. This topic is one of several options.

If you **choose** to write on this week's topic, your paper should be at least 1,500 words long. It will be **due by e-mail and in hard copy by the time noted in the course schedule.**

To be considered as having been submitted on time, do the following:

- (1) Email your paper as a PDF or MS Word or RTF attached document (if you send the document as an e-mail message, in pages format, or as a link to a cloud server document or drive—such as Google Docs/Drive—the paper will not be accepted until it submitted in one of the acceptable formats and late penalties will apply).
- (2) Send the email and attachment to: msetzler@highpoint.edu. Include a short note explaining what the attachment is.
- (3) Make sure the message's subject line is: PSC1010 paper 1
- (4) Submit a hard copy of the paper at the start of class. Ideally, your paper will be stapled, but at a minimum, it should be paperclipped. Use double-spacing, and number your pages.

The writing prompt is:

Is getting angry about the state of politics in the US helpful to society, or is it ultimately a hindrance to solving our problems?

Before you begin writing, carefully review the grading assessment criteria for this assignment (the grading rubric for essay grading in lower division courses is on the course website, under the "Student Resources" tab). You also should review carefully the handouts on the course website addressing citation expectations as well as the syllabus policies on "Academic dishonesty" and "Using artificial intelligence assistants, including ChatGPT and similar technologies." The paper's citations and bibliography must carefully follow one of three formats most used in the social sciences: University of Chicago, the APA, or the APSA. For your convenience, my website provides a handout with many formatting examples using the APSA style. You need to use page-specific citations so that your instructor can quickly verify your interpretation of cited material. Without exception, instances of plagiarism (see the syllabus statement) will be reported and punished according to university policy.

Keep in mind as you answer this question that the main purpose of this assignment is for you to make a reasoned, well-defended (by the readings and specific evidence wherever possible) argument that engages class concepts and materials. **For you to do well on the paper, it needs to be clear that you have carefully reviewed the relevant assignment from the full week's reading on this topic** (i.e., not just the readings for the discussion day). Please **do not use any**

outside readings or other sources unless you specifically have cleared doing so (i.e., you may not use the internet, unassigned authors, or any other student's work, to help you write the paper).