Political Science 334
Seeking Truth in an Age of Misinformation, Cynicism, and Political Polarization
Autumn 2019
Professor Mark Alan Smith

Paper Assignment

Assignment: Write an essay on how we (as individuals or collectively) can best find truth across a range of topics, given the limitations of human beings (tribalism, fallacies and biases, errors in perception and memory, etc.) and the particular features of our current media and political landscape. Can those challenges be overcome in the search for truth, and if so, how?

Process: Your essay should reference and engage many of the concepts, authors, and research findings we examined this quarter. At the same time, your paper should not merely recycle your notes. Instead, use the materials of the quarter as a springboard to finding your own voice. You are welcome to incorporate additional materials from outside the class, but you need not do so to write an excellent paper.

Expectations:
Length: 6-8 double-spaced pages in 12 point Times Roman font, one-inch margins, plus a title page.

Formatting: Do not include a header or footer with your name, which should appear only on the title page. Your hard-copy submission should be stapled in the upper-left corner.

Citations: There is no need for you to make formal citations unless you're referencing something from outside the course materials. Anything from the course can be cited informally within the body of the paper itself, e.g.
> "As Andrew Sullivan argued in 'Can Our Democracy Survive Tribalism,' . . . "
> "Elizabeth Loftus's research indicates that . . . "
> "John Stuart Mill pointed to the value of . . . "

Deadline: Wednesday, December 11 at 4:00 PM. You will submit your paper in hard copy to the Political Science main office (Gowen 101), which is open from 8:30-5:00 except for 12:00-1:00. You will *also* upload your paper to the Canvas site for this course in PDF format. All electronic submissions will be assessed for plagiarism using VeriCite. Late papers will be penalized by ½ point (on the 4.0 scale) for each day late. For example, a paper that otherwise would have been a 3.5 becomes a 3.0 if it is one day late. The clock for lateness begins at the time for submission. Thus, a paper will be one day late if it arrives between 4:01 PM on Wednesday, December 11 and 4:00 PM on Thursday, December 12.