

NIFI Discussions:

For over 20 years, thousands of Americans have met annually through the National Issues Forums to discuss important public issues. They have encouraged Americans to think about the hard choices we face on major questions like AIDS, racial inequality, and health care. In this class, we will use NIFI publications and discussion questions to consider and reconsider the political system. "More and more people feel our politics does not work. They feel no one cares what they think. Many Americans feel that our system needs to be changed, But they do not know how to fix it" (Scully). We will talk about different actions we can take. "These are called 'choices.' Some of these choices have been suggested before. More than once choice could be right" (Scully). You will think through the choices presented and to consider and develop alternatives.

Purposes of this Assignment:

- Provide the opportunity to engage in actual political discourse
- Improve public speaking skills in a discipline-specific and "real-world" format
- Consider not only political concerns but also political remedies.
- Engage critically with course concepts
- Integrate course material with real life

In these ways, the NIFI discussions fulfill the Communication and Media Studies department's student learning goal of demonstrating professionalism in communication by generating information and ideas appropriate for public consumption, behaving ethically as communicators, and analyzing information and appeals. They also practice oral communication skills via a speaking-intensive approach.

To prepare for discussions, you will read the associated NIFI issue guides provided online, and find, read, and bring to class two related mainstream, corporate news articles from different sources, noting relevant information and ideas.

Consider the approaches presented. What do you like/dislike, agree/disagree with? Can you think of alternatives that are not presented here? What solution(s) would you propose or support? Be prepared to state a position or pose a question during the "Town Hall" discussion in class. Be familiar enough with the information that you can even question, challenge, or defend the comments other people might make.

Outline, in writing, 3 key points/ideas/arguments you think are important for consideration, and bring these materials with you in paper or digital form (you will also submit copies online).

During discussions, you will practice good civic engagement by:

- Being respectful to be all participants and all ideas
- Listening to others and being open to the possibility of having your mind changed
- Being efficient in your communication so that you express your thoughts while giving others a chance to express theirs.

Grading Criteria

-Be fully prepared to participate	= 3 pts
-Remain attentive, tuned in, and focused during the discussion – engage active, mindful, listening and ethical conversational practices	= 2 pts
-Make <u>at least 1 contribution</u> to the discussion, <i>demonstrating familiarity w/ the readings</i>	= 5 pts
-Make <u>at least 2 contributions</u> to the discussion total	= 5 pts
-Show your fellow citizens courtesy; pay attention to what they have to say, and respect their opinions even if you disagree, and try to understand their standpoints	= 2 pts
-Thoughtful completion of NIFI questionnaire administered after discussion	= 3 pts

NIFI issue guides used →

- *Democracy's Challenge: Reclaiming the Public's Role*
- *A House Divided: How Do We Get the Political System We Want? What Would Have to Give Up to Get it?*
- *Political Fix: How Should We Get American Politics Back on Track?*
- *News Media & Society: How to Restore the Public Trust*
- *What Should Go on the Internet? Privacy, Freedom, and Security Online*
- *Infectious Disease Outbreaks: How Should We Keep Our Communities Safe?*
- *Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?*
- *Coming to America: Who Should We Welcome, What Should We Do?*
- *Climate Choices: How Should We Meet the Challenges of a Warming Planet?*
- *Free Speech and the Inclusive Campus: How Do We Foster the Campus Community We Want?*
- *What Should Be Done to Ease Racial Tensions in Montgomery in 1956?*
- *Woman Suffrage and the Great War: What Should Woman Suffrage Advocates Do in Response to the Great War?*