

Blog 8/22/13

What is the most important thing in the world? Explain your reasoning. Why so important?

The most important thing in the world isn't a thing so much as it is a mindset. It is important to act and react to the world in an open and inquisitive manner. If people were unwilling to accept the new ideas and theories that came their way, how would society ever move forward? The world will constantly change. We may not like all of that change, but society will move on whether we do or not. A child's imagination and curiosity should be fed and encouraged so that they feel free to continue to question their world in the future. Through asking questions, we continue to expand and grow throughout the course of our lives, and we may help others to change and grow as well. That is one of the best things we can do for ourselves and for the world.

Blog 8/27/13

Are laws in place to give you freedom, or to take freedom away? Tell us about your gut reaction. Do we need more or less laws? Give us an example of a law that gives you freedom, explain. Give us an example of a law that takes your freedom away, explain.

This is a debate that Ashley, Molly, Robin and I shared on a hiking trip during the summer. We were talking about cliff-diving in lakes, and how some of those lakes made it illegal to do so from a certain height, or banned the activity entirely. Our debate was of whether or not the government could really restrict us from diving when, if we broke the rules, the only immediate impact would be on ourselves. If I dived from the cliff and ended up breaking my neck, it wouldn't harm another person directly. However, by designing that rule, people were attempting to protect me from physical harm, and give others the liberty to live with peace of mind.

This is how many laws operate: By restricting some of our personal freedoms and liberties, many actually give us the ability to lead far better lives and even far longer lives in some cases. It's hard to just say that yes, we need more laws, or no, we're restricted enough, because of laws designed similarly to cliff diving. What's the law? How prevalent is it to our current society? If I break that law, will I be harming only myself or will I be hurting those around me as well? It can be argued that if a law broken will only affect myself, then it can only restrict my freedom. However, it can also be argued that all laws were created for structure rather than discipline. My question is, can it do both? Often, the answer seems to be yes.

Blog 8/29/13

To what extent were women left out of the Constitution? In what ways do you think our political culture

would be different if our constitution was designed by females, and women made up the vast majority of our political representation?

To what extent were women left out of the Constitution? That is a difficult question for a number of reasons, chief among those reasons being represented by the drafters of the Constitution: At the time, to have power you needed to be male, and you needed to be white.

I could carry on about the injustices of our world and how long it's taken to move toward a state of equality, but that would require a few more days of blogging time and a lot of coffee. So I'll get right to the point. Women were left out of the Constitution not out of malice but as an attempt by these men to radically change their government during a period when women weren't a part of the government. However, they are still present. The writers could have written the constitution catering only to men, and their inclusion of phrases such as "the *citizens* of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of *citizens* of the several States" shows us clearly that women were included. They are simply hidden within the text, emerging in our everyday lives as we continue to change and grow.

As to the differences in our political culture in the event that women to be primarily in charge, I think our country would be vastly different than it is now. Although I feel we have moved in the right direction for equality across the board, the process has been slow, arduous, and painful, and it's not over yet. Sometimes it is our zeal for equality that causes the largest apertures between each other. I get the distinct feeling that if there were more women in political power, this change would move a lot easier and would have progressed farther than it has today. That being said, the conscious acts that individual organizations, not countries, take today to encourage and allow women and minorities to become a stronger part of society are necessary, which may ultimately move our country in the right direction. It's the change in our everyday lives that is going to change our country, one step at a time.

Blog 8/30/13

In your opinion, should burning the American flag in hatred be legal or illegal? Why? Explain your position!

The American flag is a representation of our country when dealing with other countries and even within our own. It stands for freedom and for the morals that our country was founded upon, and is perhaps the purest piece of our government today, held to the same symbolic standards as the bald eagle. This is an interesting dilemma, because where is the line drawn between burning the flag in hatred and burning the flag symbolically? Should burning the flag be entirely illegal? In my opinion, burning the flag in hatred within the country should be illegal. Like it or not, this place is your home, and the flag stands for the battles that have been fought and won to make our country a better, stronger place. You're not just insulting America as it is today but willfully disrespecting everything that our country is supposed to stand for. There are things that you aren't going to like about the government, and perhaps we don't always reach our ideals, but the flag has been and hopefully always will be a hopeful symbol which looks past our flaws into a brighter future.

Blog 9/2

What was the perceived purpose of the Bill of Rights?

What are some clues? Reference a specific piece of text or 2.

Are these purposes still valid today? Why/why not? Explain. Any examples?

The perceived purpose of the Bill of Rights was to restrict the power that the government could have over the rights of the people. This way, the government could not abuse its powers sometime in the future. This is shown in the first paragraph: “the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added.” The people wanted assurance that the government wouldn't have complete control of them and that it wouldn't be able to contort the words in the Constitution to serve its own purposes. Today, the Bill of Rights holds strong in protecting our freedoms. It allows the press to publish highly controversial stories and allows us to punish those who take away another's right to life. I think that sometimes we try to bend the words in the Bill of Rights to fit our own needs, as can be seen in controversies such as those surrounding gun control, because the words can be slightly opened to interpretation. What if the Bill of Rights didn't exist though? I predict that we would live in a very different (though perhaps not bad, look at Japan and gun control) society without that Bill of Rights. It protects our freedoms in ways that many do not even see.

Blog 9/9/13

To what extent is our Constitution a Suicide Pact? Does holding certain freedoms as sacred protect the instruments of our demise?

This is a very difficult question to answer. Immediately I want to say that no, holding our certain freedoms is to protect us from demise. However, in our attempts to hold true to the Constitution, we find that there is much grey area that is difficult and sometimes dangerous to navigate. As we continue to grow and change as a society, these grey areas grow vastly in quantity, any one of which could certainly send us spiraling into a suicide pact. The question we must then look at is this: What potential dangers are you willing to risk in order to continue living a life of freedom? These rights were granted to us through the Constitution in order to protect us from living in a caged society which, quite frankly, could be just as likely to spiral downward. If anything, our current state of living is less likely to be a suicide pact than a society in which our every thought and action is controlled and monitored. Here, it is a possibility. There, it would only be a matter of time.

Blog 9/10/13

1. Define Libel: Libel is a purposeful published statement misrepresenting another, given in a manner which is intended to cause them harm.

2. Define Slander: Slander is a verbal statement targeting someone else that is intended to damage their reputation.

3. Define Malice: Malice is similar to anger or spite, often encompassing the intent to cause someone else physical or emotional harm.

4. Should publications be protected by speech and press laws when they publish information that they KNOW is false, misleading, or views are not fairly shown?

Of course publications shouldn't present information they know to be false, and if they are knowingly stating false information, it's hard to find a reason why they should be protected by speech and press laws. That being said, many publications (especially those with political biases) rarely actually directly print misinformation. More often than not, they present matters in a manner that is most becoming to their point of view. Although ideally, they would just present the straight facts, many don't state misinformation directly and I don't think they can be punished for something they haven't directly done.

9/13 Seminar Reflection:

1. Read the rubric closely. Thinking back on the seminar yesterday, what do you think you would have received if it had been graded?

I wouldn't have done well. I don't know if you follow the same guidelines that the other teachers do as far as if I comment once, I'll get a C, but that's the highest grade I could expect from this seminar. That being said, I didn't feel particularly motivated in this seminar. It never felt like things really started flowing and I usually do invest more into these groups.

2: What is one thing that you personally did to add to the Seminar? Describe it, and explain how it helped voice an idea, deepen a perspective, or advance a cause or opinion.

I spoke directly to the question of how the Patriot Act disrupts our government's system of checks and balances, saying that it was mostly the judicial branch that was being undermined by intelligence gathering agencies with the example that the FBI doesn't need to obtain a warrant to search someone's home if it's for "intelligence purposes." Isaac then built off of my comment and the rest of the commentary was spurred from there.

3: Overall, do you think this was a strong or weak seminar? Explain your answer.

Overall, I would say that this has been one of the weakest seminars I've participated in. It felt less like a smooth and progressing conversation and more like the segregated sides of a non-argument. We didn't look very deeply at either side of the argument like I've experienced in the past, and it just felt like most of the others didn't really get into the seminar either. That being said, this was the first seminar of the year and it deserves some leniency for that. It felt more like a presentation than a discussion and like we never really touched on the question.

Blog 9/24/13

Describe the issue in your own words. What are the different sides of the argument? Using a concessive, craft a well-refined statement of personal belief in regards to the article/issue.

The issue that the NFL finds itself facing is the damage that one man can inflict not only upon himself but also on his entire team for making a rash statement. While the First Amendment protects these players' rights to free speech, these players are very influential and reach out to a very large audience, and negative comments made by these players reflect badly on them as individuals and the team. The problem here is less about the right of free speech (which the players undeniably have) but the thoughtless manner in which some, such as Bryant and White, abuse that right. Social media programs such as Twitter allow the players direct access to their fans, but that access is not always treated responsibly, and because of this, that direct access backlashes and damages the reputation of the NFL. So what power does the NFL have to disengage itself from that backlash? Right now the best solution that they have come up with is a quick reprimand for the players, asking that they remove their controversial material from the site and issue a public apology for their rash statements. Sometimes, the repercussions of the player's words are punishment enough in themselves though, as is seen in the player who lost a deal over his tweet.

My concessive is this: Although players in the NFL have the right to their freedom of speech, they must wield that power responsibly when stepping into the public eye so as not to reflect poorly on the system that employs them.

Blog: 9/26/13

1. Do you feel that wearing these bracelets is a form of free speech/expression? Why/why not? Explain the arguments on each side, and tell us why you feel that way.

2. Read the first comment. Do you agree or disagree with the teacher? Why?

These bracelets were absolutely created to be a form of free speech or expression. The people who created them did so in hopes of spreading awareness about breast cancer in an inexpensive, and non-invasive manner. That being said, I can certainly see why some schools could feel the bands to be disruptive, especially if they feel that their students are not wearing them to support breast cancer and are only doing so to attract attention. The comment that the middle school teacher made, may be true for most middle schoolers, but if a child is wearing one of the bracelets, then teachers should do their best to learn why they are wearing the bracelets. I look to the girl who wore her bracelet in support of her mother, a survivor of breast cancer, and feel that she was absolutely right to do so, and the fact that the school took the bracelet away from her limited her right to free speech. At the high school level, though, it seems especially important for teachers to ask themselves why this child is wearing a bracelet and take into consideration the fact that they may simply be trying to draw attention to a serious matter, rather than wearing the bracelet for laughs. Overall, I feel that the phrase I <3 Boobies is relatively harmless, and although I can see why teachers may find it disruptive at the middle school level, and perhaps even in the earlier years of high school. However, as a child reaches a certain age, they become more aware of the world around them, and the difficulties that face themselves and others. They're more connected. Therefore, they will be more concerned about the messages that they project to the world, and these bracelets become a form of free speech, not a form of distraction.

Blog 10/1/13

How, specifically, does the Tinker decision change your thinking on what is or is not permissible in school?

It is hard to imagine, when attending a school like Animas, a school system where my constitutional right to the freedom of speech was not only ignored but was actively oppressed. Here it feels like we are encouraged to develop our thoughts and ideas and express ourselves not only in school but also in the community. Many of our projects require us to exercise our freedom of speech. I've been in situations at exhibitions where adults have questioned my reasoning and I had to defend it as best I could, but no one ever told me that I didn't have a right to express those opinions, regardless of whether or not they agreed with them.

I have to wonder whether or not Animas would even exist today were it not for that Supreme Court ruling, because many of the values that we encourage here require students to advocate for their rights. It's right there in the PAPER acronym; Perspective. What makes Animas successful is our ability to argue our controversial perspectives in school, often in active discussions within the curriculum, such as seminars.

Many of the limitations that have come from resulting cases are the result of common sense. For example, I completely understand why the student wasn't able to continue his vulgar campaign. They were at a school assembly where he was running for a leadership position. He had every right to express his perspective in school, but because the same campaign could have been run in a far more professional manner, he should have conducted it in that manner.

10/16/13 Blog

1. Honestly, I felt like this project went really well. It had a good time allotment and I appreciated the freedom that was involved in the making of these videos. It worked really well and I hope to participate in our-of-class work time in the future as well.

2. I would keep the time scale for this project. It was enough time for us to really refine our work but we had to keep moving in order to complete our work on time. Overall too, this was just a comfortable project. It worked well. Any changes that I could make to the project would be very minor because overall, it was a strong project.

3. I would take the chance to make the video requirements a bit longer, because I feel that 5 minutes is a sufficient amount of time to make your point concisely. I do understand where you were coming from when you said that if it keeps you interested, it can be longer, but there would have been a lot less stress over this project for us if 5 minutes was alright to begin with.

4. This has been the most cohesive group project that I have ever had the pleasure of working in. Everyone had their part and carried their weight in this project and I feel that we all worked very well together. Because of this I am comfortable with receiving a group grade for this project.

