

POLI 101
Summer 2016
Mesa College
Prof. R. Allen Bolar

First Writing Assignment (Due June 30th in class)

You are asked to write a 3 page paper where you take an argumentative position in favor of or opposed to a current political controversy. You may choose the current event yourself or in consultation with your professor. It's fine if you choose the same event as someone else, but your analysis and work must be your own.

You are also asked to read 3 essays that relate to your chosen topic. There are 3 groups of essays, and you will choose one. All the readings can be found at the course website: <https://allenbolar.com/mesa-pol-101-summer-2016/>

Group A: Readings on Civil Disobedience

Plato, "Crito"

Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Group B: Readings on Liberalism and Conservatism

John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," chapter 2

Edmund Burke, selection from "Reflections on the French Revolution"

Michael Oakeshott, "On Being Conservative"

Group C: Readings on Liberalism and Socialism

John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," chapter 2

Friedrich Engels, selections from "The Condition of the Working Class in England"

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto"

In your paper you are asked to discuss the political event, and to take a position on it with reference to the readings from the group you selected.

For example, you might choose to discuss Edward Snowden's leaks of classified information to the American public and reference the readings from "Group A." Was Edward Snowden justified in breaking the law to provide classified intelligence secrets to the American people, or a traitor who unjustifiably took the law into his own hands?

The readings in Group A deal with questions of civil disobedience and might help us to make sense of the Edward Snowden case.

You might also write about a case of public indecency where you could discuss the conflict between freedom of expression and the desire to uphold traditional standards of morality and authority. The "Group B" readings might relate to that.

Or, maybe you want to talk about campaign finance reform and the recent ruling of the Supreme Court to overturn limits on campaign contributions. The "Group C" readings might relate to that.

You are free to choose what you want to discuss. These are merely examples. If you are struggling to find a suitable topic, please see me. We can come up with one together. Good luck and happy writing!