

## Personal Political Philosophy

*“Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.”*

Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849).

Over the past several weeks we have examined competing views of the proper role of government in society. The aim of this assignment is for you to reflect on your own political philosophy in greater depth, and to explore the sources of your most fundamental beliefs about what government ought to do.

Based on our class lectures and discussions, readings in *The Challenge of Democracy* (Assignment #12: Political Ideology Matrix), completing multiple ideology surveys (Assignment #13), and your participation in the Political Party Convention, you will compose a 2 to 3 page typewritten essay which describes and examines your political philosophy. Your essay should present a clear statement of your political ideology, examine the values that underlie your beliefs, and explain how your ideology is reflected in your views on specific modern issues. In writing this paper, you must address each of the following questions. However, your piece **should not be a series of short answer responses, but rather a single integrated statement of your political philosophy which includes an engaging introduction and conclusion.**

1. Do you consider yourself a conservative, a liberal, a libertarian, a communitarian, or some mixture of these viewpoints? Identify and discuss in depth **at least three (3) contemporary political issues** as evidence supporting your self-identification. Also, be sure to incorporate a discussion of the fundamental political values of freedom, order, and equality as part of your analysis.

2. What factors (e.g., race, gender, social class, family background, and/or religious belief) have shaped your political philosophy? Which of these factors have been most influential in forming your views, and why? Do you believe that these influences will grow or lessen in importance as you grow older? Which ones and why?

3. **Interview one or more family members** about their political ideologies. Identify your interviewees, describe their ideologies, and explain why they view themselves as they do. Refer to specific political controversies and issues whenever possible. (You may wish to have your interviewee take one of the online political ideology surveys you completed as homework.) Have their views changed over time? Also, discuss how your political ideology differs from, or is similar to, that of your interviewee(s).

Your **typewritten and carefully proofread** paper is due on **Monday, November 5th**. Please come prepared to share your philosophy with the other members of our Core that day.