

PROTOCOL FOR HOT TOPICS OF THE WEEK

At the first session each coordinator will be prepared with 1 topic, which will be chosen from any news source that appeared during the week prior to class. They will check with each other two days before class to make sure that they each have separate topics. The topics and their sources and links, if possible, will be sent out to the class one to two days prior to class.

In the following weeks, 2 class members will each bring in 1 topic for discussion. (If there are not enough participants to have 2 different presenters each week some class participants may be asked to do 2 presentations.) Also, they will check with each other by e-mail 2 days prior to class to assure each has different topics, and will forward their topics, sources and links to a designated coordinator, who will send this information on to the entire class. If the topic is from the print media or the internet and is printable, the presenter is to bring a full printed copy to class, so that if questions arise, there is the original source to refer to. The presenter of the topic will give a 1–2 minute summary of the subject and pose a 1-3 questions to get the discussion started. Suggested questions are: Comparison questions to bring out similarities and differences, i.e. in what ways are Mitt Romney and Sarah Palin similar and in what ways are they different? Inference questions to explore possible conclusions or applications, i.e. what will state and city pensions look like 5 years from now? Application questions to see how certain information applies in different situations, i.e. how could this alternative energy source be used in your home? Problem solving questions to encourage thinking about solutions to real world problems, i.e. what would be the best way to reduce our dependence on foreign oil? Cause and effect questions, i.e. why do powerful politicians continually stumble over their sexuality? Questions could also be as simple as: what do you think about this situation? Why? Once the class feels that we have exhausted a topic, we will move on to the next one on the list.

Topics that may be presented are just about anything, i.e. local news, sports, national news, world news, economy, military, etc. We should be able to cover all 4 topics every week by giving 25-30 mins. to each topic.

We suggest that all members of the class read the Providence Journal and either the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal or both. However, all news sources, such as Time, Newsweek, The Economist, etc. are acceptable. Suggested web sites are: The Christian Science Monitor, www.csmonitor.com (neutral on-line newspaper); The Huffington Post, www.huffingtonpost.com (liberal on-line newspaper); The Drudge Report, www.drudgereport.com (conservative on-line newspaper); Gary Bauer's Campaign for Working Families, www.cwfpac.com (conservative); Slate Report, <http://slatest.com> (neutral); Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com> (neutral); Politico, www.politico.com (neutral); Conservative Byte, www.conservativebyte.com (very conservative); and Propublica.org, www.propublica.org (liberal); The Patriot Post <http://patriotpost.us/> (conservative), www.politifact.com (neutral scorecard separating fact from fiction). A Google search of any topic would offer plenty of sources of information. If a search does not turn up much, it is probably too local or arcane to be “hot”. The Voice of America, www.namesvoa.gov (short list, which is good for helping prepare presentation with unpronounceable names); and any others you may find.

Since this is the election period, we decided last year to allow only 1 topic regarding the Presidential race at any session of the class. We will stick to that policy this upcoming class. It is up to the 2 presenters to decide who may do that topic.

The coordinators expect that the class will be conducted with decorum. All of us have been in classes where participants spoke spontaneously after someone else had raised their hand to speak. We request this not be done. The coordinators will try to be aware of the order in which hands are raised and call

on class members in that order. Some topics may lead to hot debate. However, we expect everybody to behave courteously.