**ENG1123: Research Topics**

**Adoption**

* Should adoptions be encouraged?
* Whose rights should be protected in the adoption process? What if birth parent rights conflict with the child’s rights or the adoptive parents’ rights?
* What types of adoption should be encouraged? Cross racial? International?
* Should adoption records ever be opened? If so, when?

**Aging**

* How does society view aging and the aged? Is this different from 10 years ago? 20 years ago?
* How will a growing aging population affect American society?
* Should the current Social Security program be reformed? How?
* Are improvements needed in the way we care for the health of the elderly? If so, what?
* What quality of life do seniors face, now and in the future?

**Alcohol**

* Are there any health benefits to alcohol consumption?
* Does the alcohol industry behave responsibly in marketing their products?
* How should society treat alcoholism and alcoholics?
* What can we, as a society, do to reduce the problems associated with alcohol use?

**American Culture**

* Is there an “American” culture or is this country made up of many cultures? Have we ever had one culture?
* How does mass media and entertainment affect our culture?
* What cultural influences benefit our society? Which ones harm it?
* What should be the role of government in our culture?

**America’s Prisons**

* Are prisons an effective means of preventing crime?
* How should inmates be treated while they are in prison? Where do you draw the line between excess and inadequate punishment?
* Should prisons use inmate labor? Why? Why not?
* What are some alternatives to prisons? How effective are they?
* With the prison overcrowding, should we continue to have minimum sentencing guidelines? Why? Why not?

**Censorship**

* Should the right to free speech ever be restricted? If so, under what circumstances?
* Should schools and libraries censor materials used by children?
* Should free speech laws cover the arts and/or the entertainment industry?

**Civil Liberties**

* Should there be limits placed on freedom of expression?
* Is there a right to privacy? If so, what currently threatens it?
* How is the Internet affecting our civil liberties?

**Colleges and Universities**

* Who should bear the largest portion of the tuition bill? College students? State government? Federal government?
* Who should control the programs offered at public colleges and universities? State government? Local boards of directors? Faculty?
* Should curricula have certain courses that are required for all college freshmen and/or sophomores, no matter what their major? If so, which courses?
* Do online courses teach students as well as classroom-based courses? Are they suitable for all students?

**Crime and Criminals**

* What are the causes of most crimes?
* How should criminals be treated, after trial?
* What can we do to reduce crime?
* How can we control white collar crime?
* Would gun control reduce the number of violent crimes?

**Disease**

* How has the use and abuse of antibiotics changed the way we treat diseases? What further reforms are needed?
* What can be done to prevent the so called “lifestyle” diseases? (Pick one of these: cardiovascular disease, diabetes, skin cancer)
* What role should vaccinations play in health care? Should childhood vaccination for certain diseases be mandatory?
* How should the health care system deal with the new epidemics such as SARS and the return of old ones such as TB?

**Eating Disorders**

* Are eating disorders a serious problem in the United States?
* Which part of the population is most at risk of developing an eating disorder? Why?
* What are some of the causes of eating disorders? How can they be prevented?
* How should eating disorders be treated?

**Education**

* Should charter schools receive government funding? Why? Why not?
* How should we pay for public schools?
* Is property tax a fair way to pay for local schools?
* Should public schools be funded at the federal, state, local level, or some combination of these?
* Who should control the curriculum of public schools? Parents? Community? Teachers? State? Federal government?
* How should teachers be trained before they are allowed to teach? Who should pay for this training?

**Endangered Species**

* Is the rate of extinction a serious problem?
* Are efforts to preserve endangered species working? Should saving an endangered species take priority over jobs? Development? Property rights?
* What can we do to protect endangered species in other countries?

**Entertainers (Actors, Musicians, Professional Athletes)**

* Are entertainers, including actors, musicians, and professional sports figures, overpaid for what they contribute? Why? Why not?
* Should entertainers be role models for children or is that not part of their “role?”
* Should entertainers be allowed the same right to privacy as the rest of the population, or is that something they sacrifice for fame and money?

**The Environment**

* Is there an environmental crisis in the world today?
* How can we prevent pollution as individuals? As a society? As a nation?
* Is the American lifestyle bad for the environment?
* What principles and values should guide American environmental policy?
* Who should pay to clean up environmental messes from the past?
* If the company responsible for a toxic waste site no longer exists, who should be responsible for the clean up?

**Evolution**

* Are there cases where you can see evolution at work, today? Explain them and what adaptations are being made?
* Will we ever be able to reverse engineer extinct animals from preserved DNA?
* How complete is the fossil record for (any species you want to investigate)?

**Families**

* In the United States, do you feel the family is still respected? Why? Why not?
* How have divorce law changes affected families in the United States?
* How does the workplace affect families?
* Should adoption receive more support than it currently receives? If so, what type of support?

**Feminism**

* Is the status of women better now than it was 50 years ago? In all ways?
* How has feminism affected U.S. society?
* Is the feminist movement obsolete?
* What political or economic goals should current feminists have?

**Gangs**

* What factors influence gang behavior?
* How widespread is the problem with gangs?
* What can the criminal justice system do to reduce gang violence?
* What can society do to reduce the threat of gangs?

**Garbage and Solid Waste**

* Is there a problem finding a place to store our garbage? If so, what is the cause?
* How effective is recycling? Under what circumstances does it work best?
* Is there a problem with disposing of toxic waste?
* What changes could society make to reduce the amount of waste produced?

**Genetic Engineering**

* How will genetic engineering affect society?
* Is it ethical to use genetic engineering on humans?
* How does genetic engineering affect the food we eat?
* Who, if anyone, should regulate genetic engineering?

**Global Resources**

* Are there mineral and other resources that the world is starting to run out of?
* How important to the world are the agricultural resources of soil and climate?
* How realistic is the current U.S. energy policy? What would you change? What would you keep?
* What is the relationship between global population and resource use?
* How does a market economy help preserve global resources? How does it use up global resources in an unfair way?

**Global Warming**

* Is global warming a serious threat? In the future?
* What are some causes of global warming?
* How will global warming affect us? Is it affecting us now?
* What measures should we, as a society, use to combat global warming?
* What measures should you, as an individual, use to combat global warming?
* How can we preserve the rainforests and will this help global warming?

**Hate Groups**

* Are hate crimes a serious problem in the US?
* Do certain groups promote violence and hate crimes?
* Do extremist groups within the US present a serious threat to the US?
* How can we reduce the number of hate crimes?

**Health Care**

* Should insurance companies be allowed to influence treatments since they pay for them?
* Should we have a level of health care that is a basic right to all citizens? If so, who should pay for it?
* How can we, as a society, provide health care for the uninsured poor or should we?
* Medical costs are rising faster than the rate of inflation. What are some policies that the U.S. government could implement to curb this?

**Homeless**

* Is homelessness still a serious problem in the U.S.?
* What are some of the causes of homeless families? Individuals?
* What housing policies would benefit the homeless?
* How should we, as a society, deal with homeless families? Homeless individuals?

**Human Rights**

* Are there universal human rights that should be recognized worldwide?
* What is the current state of human rights in the United States?
* What can the United States do to stop human rights abuses in other countries?
* How should the United States respond to crimes against humanity as defined by the International Criminal Court?

**Immigration**

* Should we have any restrictions on who is allowed to immigrate to this country? If so, which ones?
* Is immigration a problem for the United States or is the problem illegal immigration?
* How would you control illegal immigration?
* How should US immigration policy be reformed?

**Internet**

* How has the Internet affected the way we live today?
* How serious is illegal activity on the Internet?
* Should the Internet be regulated? If so, by whom?
* What is the future of the Internet as a network? As a tool?

**Juvenile Crime**

* Are juvenile crime and violence really increasing or is it perceived as a problem because of increased media reporting?
* What are some of the causes of juvenile crime and violence?
* What are some of the factors that contribute to gang membership among juveniles?
* How can we, as a society, decrease juvenile crime and violence?

**Legal System**

* What are the problems with the United States’ civil justice system? What changes would you make?
* Is the jury system still effective in a world with instantaneous communication? If not, how would you change it?
* Is there bias in the current United States criminal justice system? If so, who is favored?
* What role should the media play in trials?

**Mass Media**

* Is bias in the media a serious problem?
* Do you see a problem with a few companies owning most of the mass media in this country?
* What affect does mass media have on our society?
* How will the Internet affect broadcast and publishing media?

**Media Violence**

* Is the amount of violence in the media (all media) a problem? If so, for whom?
* Should the government be allowed to control the amount and type of violence in the media?
* What can society do about excessive violence in the media?
* Is there an artistic value to the violence seen in the media?

**Military**

* What are the advantages of the all volunteer services as opposed to the draft and vice versa?
* Do you think that the emphasis on technology over increased manpower in the various military services is a good thing? Why? Why not?
What should women’s role be in the military services? Why?
* What should the role of the U.S. military be in today’s world?

**Music**

* Does listening to violent lyrics create violent youth?
* What is the “Mozart effect” and how valid is it?
* What are the benefits of having children learn to play a musical instrument?
* What are the problems of children listening to excessively loud music? How loud is too loud?

**Nutrition**

* With the media saying eat low fat/high carbohydrate diets and then saying eat low carbohydrate diets, is there a “normal” diet that most people should follow?
* Do you feel that increased portions in restaurants have contributed to the obesity epidemic? If so, how?
* What should be the role of the schools in teaching/ modeling nutrition to children?
* What role has the media (television, newspapers, magazines) played in the growing epidemic of obesity?
* Should restaurants be held legally liable for a customer’s health problems because of the type of food on the menu or the amount served?

**Oil**

* Do we have a shortage of petroleum or are the oil producers engaged in price gouging?
* Should the U.S. government invest in alternative fuel technology?
* What responsibility do auto makers have for our use of gasoline in the U.S.?
* Should the U.S. government invest in public transportation in rural areas?
* Do we need to ration gasoline?
* To what extent does our use of petroleum influence U.S. foreign policy?

**Paranormal**

* Is there any proof of any phenomenon usually called paranormal that meets the rigor demanded by science?
* Why do some people want to believe in paranormal phenomenon even when they are shown natural causes for the activity?
* Is there a possibility that there is life on other planets? How likely is it that the life forms are sufficiently scientifically advanced to regularly cross the vast distances between solar systems?
* Is there a physical potential for ESP? (Here physical means something physically present in the brain)

**Police Brutality**

* Is police misconduct a serious problem in the United States compared to other countries?
* What factors contribute to police brutality?
* Do modern police methods lead to more police brutality or less?
* Who should police the police?

**Political Scandals**

* How serious is the problem of political corruption in the U.S.?
* How relevant is a person’s private behavior to their ability to hold public office?
* Should politicians be held to a higher moral standard than the average citizen? Why? Why not?
* What reforms would help to prevent political corruption?

**Popular Culture**

* What are the values shown by today’s popular culture?
* Is today’s popular culture too coarse? Too violent?
* What values would you like to see popular culture promote?

**Population**

* Is there a population problem? In this country? World wide?
* What are the problems that come from population growth?
* How does immigration affect the US population?
* If there is a world wide population crisis? What policies should be pursued to solve it?

**Religion in American Politics**

* Is America a religious nation? Should it be?
* Can religion solve America’s social problems? How?
* How can we protect religious freedom in America?
* What role should religion play in America’s public schools?
* Should religious values guide public policy in America? Which values from which religions?
* Does religious discrimination still exist in America?

**School Sports**

* What are the physiological effects of children with growing bodies playing contact sports?
* What are the psychological effects of children playing team and other competitive sports?
* Should student athletes be subsidized by colleges and universities? If so, in what way?
* What role should inter-mural sports play in the schools?
* Who should pay for the small part of the school population who participate in inter-mural sports?

**Sports and Athletes**

* Does playing organized sports benefit children?
* What reforms would you suggest to college sports?
* Is there a discrimination problem in sports? At the professional level? At the amateur level?
* Is drug use by athletes a problem? If so, what would you do about it?

**Terminal Illness**

* Do the terminally ill receive quality care in this country?
* How should the physical and emotional pain of a terminal illness be dealt with? By the medical professionals? By family members? By the terminally ill patient?
* Should physicians be permitted to hasten the death of terminally ill patients (euthanasia)? If so, under what
circumstances?
* Is there a right to die for the terminally ill? Should the ill be allowed to decide when they want
to die?

**Veterans**

* Is the U.S. obligated to provide lifelong medical care to all veterans? Why? Why not?
* Should veterans get preferential treatment when they apply for jobs? If so, to what extent?
* Is counseling necessary for all veterans of conflicts to prevent post-traumatic stress disorder?
* Should the orphaned children of veterans receive money for higher education?
* How far should the U.S. go to rehabilitate wounded veterans? (Medical care, physical therapy, psychological therapy, job training, etc.)
* What does the United States owe to the families of veterans?

**War**

* What are some of the causes of war?
* Is war ever justified? Are there “good” wars?
* Should we have international rules for conducting war such as the Geneva Conventions?
* What can we, as a country, do to prevent war?

**War on Drugs**

* Is the “war on drugs” succeeding? If so, in what ways?
* Are any of the current drug policies working? If so, in what ways?
* Should some or all illegal drugs be legalized? If so, which ones and why?
* Should marijuana be legalized for medicinal purposes, if not for recreational use?
* What would you do to improve the war on drugs, in the United States?

**War on Terrorism**

* Is the War on Terrorism as currently being waged justified?
* Is the War on Terrorism on the home front, a threat to our civil liberties?
* Are the War on Terrorism measures taken so far making us safer?
* How has our War on Terrorism affected our role in the world?

**Weapons of Mass Destruction**

* How much danger is there of our country being attacked by a weapon of mass destruction?
* How should the world deal with countries that develop weapons of mass destruction?
* What should be the US policy toward nuclear weapons both its own and those of other countries?
* How can the US defend its citizens against weapons of mass destruction?

**Welfare**

* Does welfare encourage a sense of dependence and kill independence?
* How common is abuse of the welfare system?
* Can charities totally replace the welfare system? Are there parts they can replace?
* What reforms of the current welfare system would you suggest? Why?