

Political/Public Figure Interview and Write-Up

Purpose. To dig deeply into what an American involved in politics at the national, state, or local level thinks about where our country is now, where we are headed, what should be our moral underpinnings and values, and what values and concepts would underlie a new Preamble to the Constitution.

Interview someone involved in politics at the national, state, or local level

Elected politician, high-level appointed executive, political science professor, local campaign consultant, declared candidate for elected office, political party staff, media person with politics as their beat, etc.

For example:

Elected: Member of Congress or state legislature, County supervisor, City councilmember, school board member, parks and recreation district member, elected judge, elected Sheriff, elected District Attorney, etc.

Appointed: County CAO, city manager, school superintendent, general manager of a parks and recreation district, etc.

Solo or Teams. 1, 2, or 3 of you may work together. (If you work as a team, you must have totally different team members for writing your preamble, in order to get different perspectives.)

Value: 25 points. All team members who participate in the interview will receive the same score. You will be graded on the quality of the questions asked, your use of follow-up questions, the extent to which the interview met its goals, and the quality of your write-up.

Schedule

Nov 9-Dec 11	Select your team and call or visit to set up the appointment
By end of 1 st semester	Conduct the interview during or after winter break
Jan 9 or 10	Submit your results

Target a 45-60 minute duration

Be sure to let your interviewee know that this is the amount of time you will need

Send the purpose and initial questions to your interviewee in advance; you won't want them to be taken off guard

In-person is best; use Zoom or Teams, if necessary. Not by phone.

To avoid duplicates

Once you have confirmation of your interview, enter into the website list

The best people may go early, so don't procrastinate; you may have to call several times to get a response

Interview Questions

The following are strongly suggested questions. You must include either these or similar questions designed to elicit the same information. Your team may reword these if you believe that will make them more easily understood. Add any questions that you feel are appropriate. Write down your questions in advance and ensure all team members have a copy. You may also ask questions that follow up on something the interviewee said (or didn't say). The order of the questions is important:

How would you describe your political ideology?

(If they give a short, summary answer, ask them to expand on it.)

What are your core beliefs politically? Which of these beliefs is most important to you? Why?

How well do you believe America is doing right now? Why?

How is America doing compared to the way things were one or two generations ago? Why do you believe that?

Do you see the 2024 Presidential and national elections as a potential turning point or point of inflection for our nation? (You may need to describe what you mean.) Why or why not?

What do you see as the most likely outcomes of those elections, focusing not on who wins or loses, but, given how polarized we are right now, how the country is likely to react?

America is generally perceived as a "liberal democracy" or "constitutional republic" (there are a number of different names people use, all intended to describe the same thing).

What do you consider to be the primary concepts and values upon which our Constitution and form of governance are based? (If they have difficulty with this one, you might mention a few—such as rule of law, limited government, and sovereignty held by the people—but try not to put words in their mouth.)

The country has changed dramatically since our founding. Are the concepts and values that provided the foundation for our liberal democracy still the most important? Are there other concepts and values that you would consider to be high priority today, so that we can be a better country going forward?

The Preamble to our Federal Constitution reads as follows:

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Is it still relevant as written? If it were up to you, how might you change it? What would you say differently to help guide the country going forward?

If you were to make a few key changes to the Constitution, what would they be?

All answers must be accurately recorded and reported. You may want to take a recording device of some kind with you to ensure accuracy and facilitate your write-up.

After you leave the interview, the team should answer the following questions:

How well informed do you think this person is about our national government and where we are headed as a country?

Did this person surprise you or say things you didn't expect? Please describe.

In sum, what do you think of this person's views? Are they reasonable, based on facts, and coherent?

Include the answers to these questions in your write-up as well.

Write-Up. Use the following format for your write-up:

Starting at the top of the first page:

Name of the person you interviewed

Their title, or the title of their position

Their organization

The names of any other people present for the interview (except your team members).

Include their position titles, relation to interviewee, or other reason for being present, as appropriate.

The date of the interview and the time the interview actually started and ended.

Next:

The names and period numbers of the members of your team.

Indicate whether they were present or not for the interview (all should be there!)

Then:

Identify each question asked (in order) and, starting on a new line, a complete summary of the answer.

Then include the questions and answers your team addressed after the interview.

The write-up should be approved and signed by all team members.

Submit only one copy for your entire team.

Typed; single spaced; 12 point; using a standard font, such as Times New Roman (serif font) or Arial (sans-serif font)