

## CURRENT THINKERS GROUP PROJECT (15% OF FINAL GRADE)

This project is based on Howard Fineman's book *The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates that Define and Inspire Our Country* (2008). Over a period of six weeks, you will work in groups to explore and consider one of his "thirteen original arguments" in historical perspective and in intellectual debates going on now.

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Who is a Person?            | 8. Local v. National Authority   |
| 2. Who is an American?         | 9. Presidential Power            |
| 3. The Role of Faith           | 10. The Terms of Trade           |
| 4. What Can we Know and Say?   | 11. War and Diplomacy            |
| 5. The Limits of Individualism | 12. The Environment              |
| 6. Who Judges the Law?         | 13. A Fair, "More Perfect" Union |
| 7. Debt and the Dollar         |                                  |

The groups will be organized on Blackboard under "Thirteen Arguments Groups" – in that space you can discuss, divide up work, track progress, and share materials so that only the members of your group can see them. You have from February 4 to March 13 to complete this project.

**Goal:** Connect these "enduring debates" to intellectual currents flowing in American culture, news, law, academia, politics, literature and/or art today.

**Process:** As a group, take your assigned chapter and read it closely. Find multiple opportunities (online, in the café, over pizza, it's up to you) to talk about and debate the issues involved, including all group members in the conversations. Familiarize yourselves with any thinkers, texts, or events mentioned in the chapter. Fineman's book ends around 2009 – so where has this debate gone since then? Who is talking about this now, and in what contexts? Find some current examples, controversies, or thinkers to extend Fineman's discussion into 2014 and to make it relevant to our course. Do not procrastinate; start on this process immediately.

**Products:** An oral presentation of 2-3 minutes long (this is almost ridiculously brief, so PRACTICE your presentation carefully for timing and polish; not all group members need present) + one permanent digital artifact which can be posted online (a Powerpoint, video, Prezi, or podcast). Also each member of the group will turn in her/his own reflection paper on the group dynamics and contributions (see the template online under the "Group Project" tab). **All of these items are due on March 13.**

**Grading:** Everyone in the group receives the same grade, unless there are truly extenuating circumstances, so please divide the work fairly among the group members.

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| 5% | Group work                                                         |
| 5% | Oral presentation, quality of connection to your assigned argument |
| 5% | Digital artifact                                                   |