**Media Reflection**

1) Choose a news story from that week that a) *you personally find interesting* and b) appears to be a story of *significant public interest* (i.e. the story is being covered enough that it is likely to be discussed by a variety of news sources). The story you focus on should relate to American politics, broadly construed. It may involve coverage of a person, event, controversy, movement, or policy.

2) Choose one news source from each of the following groups to track how this story is being covered:

* **Group A: Highly Reliable, (Relatively) Low-Bias, Mostly Fact Reporting**
	+ [CBS News (Links to an external site.)](https://www.cbsnews.com/)
	+ [NBC News (Links to an external site.)](https://www.nbcnews.com/)
	+ [ABC News (Links to an external site.)](https://abcnews.go.com/)
	+ [Bloomberg Politics (Links to an external site.)](https://www.bloomberg.com/politics)
	+ [CNBC Politics (Links to an external site.)](https://www.cnbc.com/politics/)
	+ [National Public Radio (Links to an external site.)](https://www.npr.org/)
	+ [Pro Publica (Links to an external site.)](https://www.propublica.org/)
	+ [The Hill (Links to an external site.)](https://thehill.com/)
	+ [BBC News US & Canada (Links to an external site.)](https://www.bbc.com/news/world/us_and_canada)
	+ [Al Jazeera US & Canada (Links to an external site.)](https://www.aljazeera.com/us-canada/)
	+ [US News & World Report (Links to an external site.)](https://www.usnews.com/)
	+ [USA Today (Links to an external site.)](https://www.usatoday.com/)
	+ [New York Times (non-editorial page) (Links to an external site.)](https://www.nytimes.com/)
	+ [Wall Street Journal (non-editorial page) (Links to an external site.)](https://www.wsj.com/)
	+ [Washington Post (non-editorial page) (Links to an external site.)](https://www.washingtonpost.com/)
* **Group B: Reliable but Biased, Mix of Fact and Analysis, Left-Leaning**
	+ [CNN (Links to an external site.)](https://www.cnn.com/)
	+ [Five Thirty Eight (Links to an external site.)](https://fivethirtyeight.com/)
	+ [Vox (Links to an external site.)](https://www.vox.com/)
	+ [The Atlantic (Links to an external site.)](https://www.theatlantic.com/)
	+ [Washington Post (editorial page) (Links to an external site.)](https://www.washingtonpost.com/)
* **Group C: Reliable but Biased, Mix of Fact and Analysis, Right-Leaning**
	+ [Quillette (Links to an external site.)](https://quillette.com/category/politics/)
	+ [Reason (Links to an external site.)](https://reason.com/)
	+ [Independent Journal Review (Links to an external site.)](https://ijr.com/)
	+ [National Review (Links to an external site.)](https://www.nationalreview.com/)
	+ [Rasmussen Reports (Links to an external site.)](https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics)
	+ [Wall Street Journal (editorial page) (Links to an external site.)](https://www.wsj.com/)
* **Group D: Biased Analysis and Opinion, Left-Leaning**
	+ [MSNBC (Links to an external site.)](https://www.msnbc.com/)
	+ [Huffington Post (Links to an external site.)](https://www.huffpost.com/)
	+ [The Daily Beast (Links to an external site.)](https://www.thedailybeast.com/)
	+ [Slate (Links to an external site.)](https://slate.com/)
	+ [The Root (Links to an external site.)](https://www.theroot.com/)
	+ [Jacobin (Links to an external site.)](https://jacobinmag.com/)
	+ [Jezebel (Links to an external site.)](https://jezebel.com/)
* **Group E: Biased Analysis and Opinion, Right-Leaning**
	+ [Fox News (Links to an external site.)](https://www.foxnews.com/)
	+ [Breitbart News (Links to an external site.)](https://www.breitbart.com/)
	+ [Daily Caller (Links to an external site.)](https://dailycaller.com/)
	+ [Daily Wire (Links to an external site.)](https://www.dailywire.com/)
	+ [Townhall (Links to an external site.)](https://townhall.com/)
	+ [The Blaze (Links to an external site.)](https://www.theblaze.com/)

3) For each of the above news sources that you chose, search their recent content for coverage of the topic you chose in Step 1. Find at least one article covering the story and read it in full. For each article, you may wish to pay close attention to the following:

* What is the tone of the coverage? Positive? Negative? Neutral? Why do you think this tone is being used by this source?
* What elements of the story does this source focus on? Do the various elements covered in the story differ from source to source?
* Is the article fact-reporting, or analysis? Fact-reporting articles generally try to maintain a somewhat neutral stance, avoid emotional language, and largely stick to simple reporting of what has occurred, or what appears to be empirically true. Analysis articles may overtly or covertly argue for a particular position, evince more personality and style, and may draw from a variety of sources in discussing the topic.
* Does the article make any claims that you feel are incorrect or at least questionable? Do you have this reaction to the other sources?
* How may this article serve the political or financial motives of the news organizations who created it?
* Is this story *not covered* by one or more of the sources you used? Why do you think that is?

4) Once you have completed the above steps, write a response (one long paragraph) in which you do the following:

* Briefly introduce the topic and the basic facts of the story (about 1-2 sentences).
* Discuss how coverage of the story differs across the various sources you used (about 3-4 sentences).
* Synthesize the various elements of the story together into a single account that you personally think is closest to correct (about 3-4 sentences).

5) In addition to the above, *you will also provide the links to each of the five stories you read.* You do not need to do so using a formal Works Cited format – simply provide the links at the top of your submission, properly identifying the title of the article and source (e.g. Wall Street Journal, New York Times, etc.).

***Sample Exemplar Assignment***

Story: The Withdrawal of Troops from Afghanistan
Sources: Group A ([New York Times (Links to an external site.)](https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/08/20/world/biden-afghanistan-taliban)); Group B ([Vox (Links to an external site.)](https://www.vox.com/world/22627049/planes-afghanistan-evacuation-refugees-taliban)); Group C ([National Review (Links to an external site.)](https://www.nationalreview.com/news/biden-denies-allies-angry-over-afghanistan-chaos-despite-evidence-to-contrary/)); Group D ([Huffington Post (Links to an external site.)](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/biden-speech-afghanistan-evacuations_n_611fdfd1e4b029c152b4af8b)); Group E ([Daily Caller (Links to an external site.)](https://dailycaller.com/2021/08/20/joe-biden-helped-french-left-americans-kabul-afghanistan/))

Reflection: Last weekend, the scheduled American withdrawal from Afghanistan lead to the swift retaking of the country by the Taliban, and since then our country's focus has turned to the federal government's performance in evacuating American troops and allies. This week, of the five sources I looked at, four of them were generally critical of Biden's job, including Vox, a left-leaning source, while one of them (Huffington Post) had neutral or mildly positive coverage. There were fewer differences than I expected to see across the partisan spectrum, given that these sources are usually pretty loyal to their aligned party figures. One thing that differed was the focus of the coverage – Huffington Post, National Review, and Daily Caller focused way more on Biden's role, while Vox and New York Times talked more about Afghanistan policy and the impact on people in the area. It felt to me like those first three sources were trying to score partisan points more than providing accurate or thoughtful analysis. Overall, given that even left-leaning sources were critical of the Biden Administration's work, it seems like the evacuation really is going poorly, and it's probably their fault in many ways. The articles pointed out several problems that the administration probably could have solved, but didn't, and it feels to me like we're abandoning or being careless with a lot of the people that have helped us for decades. That said, it was also clear from reading these articles that foreign policy problems are really complex, and it's hard to get a sense of how to assign blame without reading a lot more. I think people should try to avoid having knee-jerk reactions towards this issue unless they're willing to spend a lot more time trying to figure out what happened.

# Supplemental Reflection

Requires you to read, watch, or interact with the media listed below.

Once you have consumed this media, you will then write a reflection based on your experience with the material(s). This reflection will constitute one long, thoughtful paragraph (around 7-8 sentences), but does not need to be written in an overly formal fashion and should be submitted directly in the text box below. Some of the things you might consider writing about:

* What did you learn from the materials this week? Did you encounter something new, or was your previous belief about something changed?
* How do the different materials you encountered this week relate to one another? Think of interesting ways to draw connections between whatever you read, watched, and/or interacted with.
* How do these materials relate to something that we talked about specifically in lecture this week?
* Do the materials relate to your own personal life in some way? How so?
* Do you agree or disagree with the materials presented? Why or why not? Did the creators miss something, or get something wrong?
* Some materials will be primarily evidence-based, but others may involve reading/watching people relate their personal experiences on some political topic. Were you emotionally affected by any of the materials in the latter case?
* Did any of the materials help you to gain some greater insight into what you believe or care about?

In writing your reflection, be careful to make sure your response reflects evidence of having read/watch/interacted with all the required materials! For instance, if you watched a movie and took a personality test, your response should thoughtfully discuss BOTH these materials in some way. It is entirely up to you how to divide the space in your reflection – you might devote most of your writing to a single material, and only discuss the other materials in 1 or 2 sentences. No matter what you choose, however, be sure to write in enough detail that it is clear that you are not "pretending" to have consumed the material!

***Watch ONE of the following:***

* **Film –** **Confirmation (**[Amazon Prime (Links to an external site.)](https://www.amazon.com/Confirmation-Kerry-Washington/dp/B01MSPG0DO); [HBO Max (Links to an external site.)](https://www.hbomax.com/feature/urn%3Ahbo%3Afeature%3AGVsOk1ws623BxDN4IAAAe)**):** This film covers the events of the highly contentious confirmation hearings for Justice Clarence Thomas in 1991, involving Anita Hill who accused him of sexual harassment. In this hearing, you will see echoes of the conflict that have more recently come to characterize most Court nomination battles.
* **Documentary –** **War on the EPA (**[YouTube (Links to an external site.)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFfYKOTj-48)**):** A Frontline documentary focusing on the changes made to the Environmental Protection Agency by President Trump, particularly his nomination of Scott Pruitt to head the agency. A good demonstration of the relationship between industry, their regulators, and political actors.
* **Documentary –** **The Fight (**[Hulu (Links to an external site.)](https://www.hulu.com/movie/the-fight-291b4359-2f06-49a7-9aa0-1e1201bd5671); [Amazon Prime (Links to an external site.)](https://www.amazon.com/Fight-Brigitte-Amiri/dp/B08DP6FDG5)**):** This recent documentary follows a set of ACLU lawyers as they file legal actions against the Trump administration on a variety of different policy matters. Does a good job of showing the actual work of using the law to change policy.

***Read ONE of the following:***

* **Short Article –**Rice, Andrew. [“This is Ajit Pai, Nemesis of Net Neutrality.”](https://canvas.unf.edu/courses/70412/files/10409426?wrap=1)[Actions](https://canvas.unf.edu/courses/70412/assignments/774996) *Wired*. May 16, 2018: A (somewhat comical) profile of the recent head of the FCC. Does a good job of covering net neutrality as a policy issue while also demonstrating the role of bureaucrats in shaping policy.
* **Short Article –**Tsai, Robert. [“How SCOTUS Nominations Became All-Out War.” (Links to an external site.)](https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/10/13/how-scotus-nominations-became-all-out-war-429152) *Politico*. Oct. 13, 2020: A brief and solid walkthrough of why SCOTUS nominations have become increasingly contentious over time.

**Sample Exemplar Assignment**

The following submission would earn the full 6 points on these weekly assignments:

Chosen Materials: John Adams HBO Miniseries Episodes 1 and 2; Excerpt from "How Democratic is the Constitution?" by Dahl

Reflection: I wasn't sure what to expect going in, but I found the Adams miniseries really interesting and I think I might want to watch the rest of it. I didn't know much about John Adams, and history classes can sometimes make the presidents seem boring and lifeless, but Adams had so much personality and was played so well by Paul Giamatti. One thing I found surprising was how much disagreement and animosity there was among the founding fathers, who are often presented as mostly just working together to solve problems. The argument between Jefferson and Adams was a good example of this – even though they were in the same administration, they wanted such different things, and their competing ideas related right back to what we talked about in class regarding the different plans put forth at the Constitutional convention. I think if I had been in the room during that argument, I probably would have agreed with Jefferson, as it would have been too dangerous to give the federal government too much unchecked power, especially if the president held a lot of that power.

I also thought the Dahl excerpt was really interesting, as the Constitution wasn't presented in a critical way in my high school classes. I agree that there were a lot of problems left in the Constitution – not just the decision to not address slavery more, but the lack of guaranteed voting rights for so many groups in society, and also the design of the electoral college. That said, I disagree with Dahl that the Supreme Court was designed in an unfair way, as the law is really complicated and that justifies that area of politics being less democratic.