

Political Science 380  
Seeking Truth in an Age of Misinformation, Cynicism, and Political Polarization  
Autumn 2022  
Professor Mark Alan Smith

### Final Exam Study Guide

The final exam is not cumulative. Instead, it covers only material after the midterm exam, from Nov. 3 to Dec. 9.

The final exam will consist of five medium-length questions, worth 20 points apiece. You'll write approximately two paragraphs for each of them. All material from the lectures will be eligible. You'll be able to answer some of the questions by drawing solely from the lectures.

As I explained on the first day of class, the readings/videos/podcasts are also eligible to the extent that they have contributed to your general knowledge. Most of them are out of consideration for specific questions. In other words, you won't need to know the names of authors and who said what, though you are welcome to use material from them if you find it helpful. I also indicated on the first day of class that you'd get advance warning on some of the readings/videos/podcasts that could form the basis of specific questions. This memo gives you that promised information. You'll want to pay special attention to the following ones while studying, being sure to remember their main points:

From Nov. 3: Edge, *The Argumentative Theory*, A Conversation with Hugo Mercier, 2011  
From Nov. 17: Lara Schwartz, *False Equivalence*, interviewed by Chris Martin on *Half Hour of Heterodoxy*, 2019  
From Nov. 22: Society of Professional Journalists, *Code of Ethics*, 1926 version  
From Nov. 22: Society of Professional Journalists, *Code of Ethics*, 2014 version  
From Nov. 29: Danah Boyd, *Did Media Literacy Backfire?*, 2017  
From Dec. 1: Thomas Harper, *On Pleasurable Beliefs*, 2021  
From Dec. 1: Lindsay Beyerstein, *On Bullshit: Harry Frankfurt, Donald Trump, and Indifference to Truth*, 2016

The questions (whether based on the lectures, the authors listed above, or both) will require you to be prepared. However, the questions won't be of the sort where you can answer them by simply reciting something from the lectures or readings. Instead, you'll need to think on the spot to formulate your answers. The questions will thus require you to engage with and reflect on course material instead of simply writing it down. For example, a question might ask you to use one idea or concept from the class to think about another one. Or a question might ask you to compare and contrast certain themes or authors.