Assignment: Human beings have severe limitations as truth seekers, owing to tribalism, fallacies and biases, errors in intuition and perception, etc. These problems are especially pronounced in our current media and political landscape. How can a person who attends college use their college experience to become a better truth seeker across a range of topics? Be sure to explain why your recommendations help a person overcome the challenges of tribalism, fallacies and biases, errors in intuition and perception, etc.

Experiences: You can draw selectively from your personal experiences in college where appropriate. However, be careful to avoid writing a paper that reads as if it was a memoir. Instead, aim to write a paper that could potentially inform any actual or prospective college student. In other words, your personal experiences (if you choose to write about any of them) will support broader claims that you are making.

Process: Your essay should reference and engage many of the concepts, authors, and research findings we examined this quarter. At the same time, your paper should not merely recycle the ideas you have encountered through lectures and various readings/videos/podcasts. Instead, use the course materials as a springboard to finding your own voice. You are welcome to incorporate additional materials from outside the class, but you need not do so to write an excellent paper.

Expectations:
Length: 6-8 double-spaced pages in 12 point Times Roman font, one-inch margins, plus a title page.

Citations: There is no need for you to make formal citations unless you’re referencing something from outside the course materials. Anything from the course can be cited informally within the body of the paper itself, e.g.

“The lecture from October 26 highlighted . . .”
“Elizabeth Loftus’s research indicates that . . .”
“John Stuart Mill pointed to the value of . . .”

Scope: The assignment is intentionally designed to be broad, something a person could write entire books about. Given that you’re limited to 6-8 pages, you will be well-served in carving out a space where you can develop and explain your points. Trying to cram too many different ideas into your paper is unlikely to lead to a successful result.

Deadline: Monday, November 22 at 10:00 PM. You will upload your paper to the Canvas site for this course in DOC, DOCX, or PDF format. All electronic submissions will be assessed for plagiarism using Turnitin. Late papers will be penalized by ½ point (on the 4.0 scale) for each
day late. For example, a paper that otherwise would have been a 3.5 becomes a 3.0 if it is one day late. The clock for lateness begins at the time for submission, with a ten-minute grace period to account for potential connectivity problems. Thus, a paper will be one day late if it arrives between 10:11 PM on Monday, November 22 and 10:00 PM on Tuesday, November 23.

**Grading criteria:**

1. Engagement with materials from the quarter. Does the paper look like it was written by someone in this course? Do you engage systematically with authors and concepts from the quarter, which could include building upon or challenging them?

2. Originality. Do you have original claims of your own, different from those that emerge straightforwardly from the course materials? Does your paper take some intellectual risks? Your originality could include synthesizing or extending certain ideas, or resolving the tensions between them.

3. Arguments and evidence. Do you develop and support your claims with arguments, evidence, and examples? Does your paper succeed on its own terms in making the best possible case for the claims you are offering? Are your claims persuasive?

4. Coherence. Do you lead the reader systematically from point to point? Is your paper organized clearly? Do you tie your paper together at the level of sentences, paragraphs, and the paper as a whole? Do you avoid tangents and filler?

5. Style. Is your paper free of errors in syntax, grammar, spelling, and word choice? Is your paper elegantly written? Have you followed the prompt’s formatting and submission instructions?

**Grading benchmarks:**
The paper will be graded holistically on a 4.0 scale, with all points on the scale being possible (including 3.9, 3.8, etc.). The summaries below are benchmarks for the grades that different kinds of papers will receive.

4.0: An outstanding paper that is creative and original, without being so provocative that it cannot adequately defend its claims. The paper uses the course materials but goes well beyond them. The paper develops and builds its points in a clear fashion, sustaining its persuasiveness at each step along the way. The paper is smoothly written and free of errors.

3.5: A strong paper that doesn’t fully meet one or more of the criteria. For example, it might have problems in its evidence and arguments at certain points, or it might be somewhat lacking in originality. Overall, the paper makes a persuasive case for its main claims.

3.0: A solid paper meeting the standards of college-level work. It has some limitations in two or more of the criteria. The paper is an enjoyable read and shows that the author has engaged the prompt and done a reasonable job in staking and defending a position.
2.5: A paper with some strong elements, counterbalanced by some weak elements. It might be somewhat incoherent, or it might make points that are either banal or easily refuted. The reader emerges from the paper without a clear sense that the author has successfully advanced and defended a thesis.

2.0: A paper that has fallen short in important ways. Either the paper doesn’t say much beyond the obvious, or its problems accumulate to the point where the reader has to struggle to figure out what the author is trying to say. The paper has errors in writing and exposition, and it doesn’t engage systematically with materials from the course.

1.5: Papers receiving this score have major flaws. For example, the paper might have failed to follow the instructions on the prompt and, in effect, written a paper for a different prompt. Or the paper has serious problems building evidence for its thesis, or it might lack a thesis altogether. The paper lacks coherence, has too many errors, and isn’t grounded in the materials from the course.