**DIGI300: Legal & Ethical Perspectives**

**Major Research Project**

**First Amendment Week—November 16-20**

**Final Paper Due—Wednesday, December 2**

The bulk of this class is concerned about the applications of and the challenges to our interpretation of the First Amendment. As you know, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees five specific freedoms:

Congress shall make no law respecting:

• *an establishment of religion,* *or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,*

• *abridging the freedom of speech*

• *or of the press,*

• *or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble*,

• *and to petition the government for a redress of grievances*

Those 45 words ultimately guarantee freedoms that are the envy of many other countries around the world, but have also been the source of some amount of tension—both in court and outside of it—since the inception of the Bill of Rights.

As you know, the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment are constantly tested and interpreted; thus, it makes sense this semester to base the major project for the term on how we might *apply* those freedoms to our lives.

For your major research project, I am asking you to research, execute and analyze a First Amendment event that celebrates one of the guaranteed freedoms. During the week of May 6 we will celebrate different aspects of the First Amendment using your projects as the centerpiece of that awareness building campaign. We are officially declaring that week to be First Amendment Week at BVU, and it will be acknowledged as such on the university calendar. You should plan to promote them appropriately, because this is about *public awareness*. You want an audience—this is **not** just about jumping another silly hoop for a grade. It’s about community advancement.

You may be creative with your approach to this assignment. There are many ways to raise public awareness. Ideas might include:

* An hour-long KBVU radio show dedicated to historically censored music with commentary about how and why the censorship occurred
* A panel that discusses from a variety of view points issues of freedom of religion
* The creation of a “Free Speech Wall” or “Liberty Tree” that encourages community members to speak out on issues that matter to them.
* A photo exhibit that illustrates civil disobedience as a means of public protest
* A short video documentary that illustrates local attitudes about press freedom or awareness (the lack thereof?) of the First Amendment
* A display and raffle of “banned books.”

Do not feel limited in any way by these ideas. Develop your own unique, creative approach to this assignment.

You will be graded on two major components of the assignment: 1) the event you create to raise awareness, and 2) the research paper that will accompany it.

You may work individually or in small groups (no more than 3 people to a group) to research several aspects of the First Amendment freedom of your choice. Your paper will be required to offer the following sections:

* Section 1: **Literature review**—Here you will offer research that illustrates how the freedom you have chosen to highlight has been historically defined using U.S. Supreme Court case precedent and legal challenges over time (how has it been interpreted, challenged throughout the years?)
* Section 2: **Problem definition**—Here you will analyze why you believe the public needs to have better awareness of the freedom you have chosen. You will offer an analysis of how this is an issue for people today.
* Section 3: **Proposed event/solution—**In an effort to raise awareness, you have planned a public event of some sort. Offer an overview of that event, its goals, its costs, and how you see this event raising awareness. I will be looking for specifics here, so if you partnered with an outside entity (i.e. Sodexho, a library, a local newspaper, a BVU student medium, etc.) it will be important to offer insights into how that partnership was necessary to the success of your event/campaign. *You must secure appropriate permissions from authorities to engage in public efforts (i.e., if you are staging a protest, you must get a local permit to do so; if you are launching a chalk drawing campaign, you must get the OK from Student Life and Public Safety).*
* Section 4: **Analysis of impact & future needs**—Analyze how the public event met goals and how/if there are future forms of action necessary for sustaining awareness on this issue. It’s OK to be self-critical here. If your project lacked proper funds, didn’t reach the audience you intended, or something else, acknowledging how or why it came up short is very useful.
* Section 5: **Works Cited—**I will expect all of you to provide careful citation of all sources used in your research, including interview sources. You must use APA citation style.

Small groups will be required to jointly research and write about your proposed event; however, you will be graded individually based on the following:

• The final paper your team produces

• Your role in the actual project

• A required self-analysis of your role in the development of the project

I will be looking for probably 6-8 pages per individual; thus, if you do this in a team of two, I will be looking for a 12-16 page paper, and for a team of three, I will be looking for one 18-24 page paper. Your paper will be graded on the following:

**• Historical research/use of precedent (40 points)**

**• Careful citation of all sources and appropriate use of APA style (20 points)**

**• Creativity and thoroughness in your application of the “problem” to today (30 points)**

**• Creative solution (25 points)**

**• Grammar, spelling, accuracy, flow and organization (25 points)**

**• Planning and execution of Public Event (50 points)**

**• Specificity and detail in your self-analysis (10 points)**