Civic Engagement Essay #2: War, Democracy, and Freedoms

An important theme in our course is to learn more about the many ways in which every day Americans have participated in democracy. This assignment asks you to think about the United States as a force for democracy in war, and the ways in which American freedoms are protected and promoted (or not) in wartime.


STEP TWO: Explore these resources to learn more about FDR’s ‘Four Freedoms’ Speech on January 6, 1941:

- “Four Freedoms” Speech Remastered (National Archives)
- FDR and the ‘Four Freedoms’ Speech (January 6, 1941)

STEP THREE: Explore these resources to learn more about President Obama’s ‘Four Big Questions’ Speech (2016 State of the Union address):

- Obama’s “Four Big Questions” Speech (2016 State of the Union)
- Obama’s State of the Union (transcript)

STEP FOUR: After having read, listened to, and analyzed the two speeches, respond to the following set of questions:

Compare and contrast FDR’s “Four Freedoms” to President Obama’s “Four Big Questions.” How are each president’s points similar? How do they differ? Both speeches attempt to instill confidence in American democracy and freedoms. In what ways were the presidents successful, and in what ways do their respective speeches fall short? Explain your answer by citing specific examples and quotes from the sources.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOLID ACADEMIC WRITING

- **Address every question.** Be sure to answer every question in the prompt.

- **Organize your thoughts and your argument.** Include an introduction that lays out the main argument (thesis). Develop your argument and provide evidence in the body of the response. Conclude the essay with a brief summary.

- **Prove your point.** Provide ample evidence to support your argument(s) by providing concrete examples and quotations from your reading. Cite relevant people, places, and events. At a minimum, you are required to rely on the textbook and the sources identified in the prompt as evidence. You may consult additional sources of evidence, but you must cite them very carefully.

- **Write clearly and carefully.** Does every sentence make sense? If you need help organizing your thoughts into words, you are strongly encouraged to consult your instructor’s office hours and/or the CSUSM Writing Center for assistance. Poor spelling, syntax, punctuation and grammar are often a sign of sloppiness and will weigh heavily against your grade.

- **Think for yourself.** Answer the questions with your own brainpower, in your own words.

- **Avoid personal sentiments.** Voice your view, but avoid using the first person and personal sentiments such as “I feel that…” or “I believe that…” Your essay should make an academic argument based on evidence—not opinion.

- **Follow standard formatting and citation.** Your essay should be a minimum of 500 words and a maximum of 750 words, typewritten (Times New Roman, 12 point font), double-spaced with 1-inch margins. Use standard citation style such as MLA, APA, or Chicago.

This essay is due to Cougar Courses before 10:00 AM on Friday, April 8. Bring a hard copy of your paper to class that day.