

Oklahoma HUMANITIES

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES COUNCIL



EXTRA!

What Isn't For Sale?

By Michael J. Sandel | Summer 2013 | Vol. 6, Issue No. 2

For Discussion

Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012). Read excerpts of the book, watch videos of Michael Sandel speaking, and download the discussion guide, from which the following questions are adapted. <http://us.macmillan.com/whatmoneycantbuy/MichaelSandel#top>

1. How did you react to the list of price tags in the article's opening paragraphs? How has this trend manifested itself in your workplace and your community?
2. Among the list of price tags, which ones made you uncomfortable? Which ones made you curious about trying to profit from them yourself?
3. Is there anything wrong with using your body as a billboard, as long as it's your choice to do so? If you're doing it because you are in deep poverty, does this mean you really didn't have a choice?
4. Where do you draw your own line in response to the question "What can't money buy?"

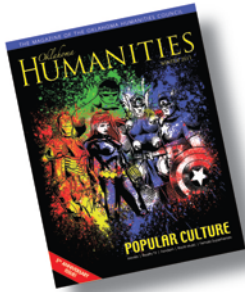
EXTRA! Reading

- Eliot Brown, "Help Fund a Project, and Get a Green Card," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 2, 2011. (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704124504576118500940803720.html>)
- Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010). Shows how a surer grasp of philosophy can help us make sense of politics, morality, and our own convictions.
- Jennifer Steinhauer, "For \$82 a Day, Booking a Cell in a 5-Star Jail," *The New York Times*, April 29, 2007. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/29/us/29jail.html?pagewanted=1&ref=jennifersteinhauer>)

EXTRA! Links

- "Justice" with Michael Sandel (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/>). Videos of Harvard University's famed "Justice" course with Michael Sandel; subjects include justice, equality, democracy, and citizenship.
- BookTV (<http://www.booktv.org/search.aspx?For=michael%20sandel>): Watch videos and interviews with Michael Sandel discussing his books *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012) and *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010).
- *Digital History*, Univ. of Houston, S. Mintz and S. McNeil <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/index.cfm>). Find readings, handouts, and lesson plans on markets, advertising, and consumer persuasion throughout American history.
- EDSITEment, "The Industrial Age in America: Robber Barons and Captains of Industry." Readings, discussion questions, and classroom resources on the rise of wealth in America and the questions that still apply today: Where do we draw the line between unfair business practices and competition that leads to innovation, investment, and improvement in the standard of living for everyone? Can market forces exert sufficient influence to rein in potentially harmful practices or does government have to intervene? (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/industrial-age-america-robber-barons-and-captains-industry>)

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EXTRA!

Beyond Partisanship

Mickey Edwards | Summer 2013 | Vol. 6, Issue No. 2

For Discussion

1. Read George Washington's "Rules of Civility" [find links to online text below]. Would these rules help legislators today? If you could design your own modern rules of civility for Congress, what would they entail?
2. Give an example from American history in which opposing views in the U.S. Congress made a compromise. How would history have been changed if no compromise had been met?
3. How do media, social interactions, and other personal choices contribute to "myside bias"? As individual citizens, what steps can we take to minimize "myside bias"?
4. Discuss your answers to the author's questions: *Does government spending hurt or harm economic growth? Do relaxed college admissions requirements help or hurt disadvantaged students?* After hearing opposing views, are you more or less likely to change your opinion?
5. To encourage cooperation, Benjamin Franklin told the Continental Congress that each member should "doubt a little of his own infallibility." Do you think your opinions are always right—or, like Franklin, do you accept that you may, at times, be wrong?
6. If you were an elected official, are there issues of public policy on which you would not compromise?

EXTRA! Reading

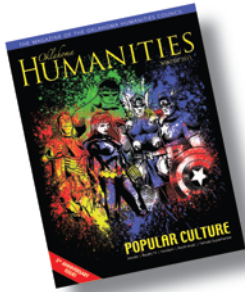
- Mickey Edwards, *The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans* (Yale Univ. Press, 2012). Discusses how the U.S. political system has become dysfunctional and suggests solutions to the negative effects of partisan warfare.
- Daniel B. Klien, "I Was Wrong, and So Are You," *The Atlantic*, December 2011. Explains how our political leanings leave us more biased than we think.
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/12/i-was-wrong-and-so-are-you/308713/>)
- Jackson Turner Main, *Political Parties Before the Constitution* (Norton [published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA], 1974). Author analyzes national politics by studying the voting patterns of state legislatures in early America. Shows how issues of funding of debts, paper money, and land prices provided a battleground that divided legislators along two "parties" or factions.
- Robert V. Remini, *At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise that Saved the Union* (Basic Books, 2010). Historian Robert Remini shows how Henry Clay's recognition of the need for bipartisanship in times of crisis saved the Union. Watch video of Remini discussing the book at a National Archives event:
(<http://www.booktv.org/Watch/11464/Robert+Remini+19212013+At+the+Edge+of+Precipice+Henry+Clay+and+the+Compromise+that+Saved+the+Union.aspx>)
- George Washington's "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation." Read the text and view images of the original manuscript on the following sites:
Colonial Williamsburg: (<http://www.history.org/almanack/life/manners/rules2.cfm>)
The Papers of George Washington, Univ. of Virginia: (<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/civility/>)
Library of Congress: (<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm077.html>)
Teacher's guide from the Smithsonian Institution: (<http://www.georgewashington.si.edu/kids/activity5.html>)

(continued)

EXTRA! Links

- Public Affairs Television, *Moyers & Company*, host Bill Moyers: Mickey Edwards discusses Congress, party politics, and reforms that could encourage cooperation and bipartisanship. (<http://billmoyers.com/segment/mickey-edwards-on-how-conservatives-have-lost-their-way/>)
- *Intelligence Squared U.S.*, Moderator John Donovan. This debate-style program shows civil discourse in action. It is filmed in New York and aired on NPR and PBS stations and as a live webcast. Among many topics, you can listen to a podcast or read a transcript from the April 2013 broadcast of “The GOP Must Seize the Center or Die,” in which Mickey Edwards and David Brooks argue *for* and Laura Ingraham and Ralph Reed argue *against* the following motion, as quoted from the show’s transcript [moderator John Donovan speaking]: *The rules say that political parties cannot have power unless they first have our votes, and when they fail to get them, as the Republican Party did in sufficient numbers in the race to the White House in 2012, it inevitably sets off soul searching within the party. How did we fail to connect to the American voter? Do we need to change to do better next time? That is the debate that’s taking place right now inside the Republican Party, and we are bringing it out now onto this stage. Yes or no to this statement, “The GOP must seize the center or die,” a debate from Intelligence Squared, U.S.* (<http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/upcoming-debates/item/801-the-gop-must-seize-the-center-or-die>)
- Wonderopolis (<http://wonderopolis.org/wonder/should-you-believe-everything-you-hear/>): “Should You Believe Everything You Hear?” Short essay discusses how to evaluate the content of political campaigns and advertisements.
- Museum of the Moving Image: (<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>). *The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2012* is an online exhibition presenting more than 300 television commercials from every election year since 1952, when the first campaign TV ads aired. Includes a searchable database, commentary, historical background, election results, and navigation organized by year, type of ad, and issue. Includes links to online resources and lesson plans.

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EXTRA!

One's Self I Sing: Writing the American Spirit **By Lori Lindsey | Summer 2013 | Vol. 6, Issue No. 2**

For Discussion

1. Discuss other authors you have read (besides Emerson, Whitman, Twain, Hemingway, and Kerouac) that convey the themes of American individualism and self-reliance in their work. Compare and contrast the writing styles and philosophies with the five authors mentioned in Lori Lindsey's article.
2. Which author(s), if writing today, would be a smash hit in contemporary American? What elements of their ideas, writing, or persona translate to modern American society?
3. Are the themes of individualism and self-reliance uniquely American—or do other cultures also value these ideals? Discuss the similarities and differences in how cultures express these characteristics.
4. What are the outcomes (the strengths and weaknesses) of our nation's ideals regarding self-reliance and individualism? Do they contribute to the common good?
5. In the nineteenth century, the lack of instantaneous mass communication, geography, and poor transportation forced people to be self-reliant. What factors contribute to self-reliance and individualism today?

EXTRA! Reading

- Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's* (Yale Univ. Press, 1959). Selected by the Organization of American Historians as one of the ten most significant works published in American history during the decade of the 1950s.
- Emory Elliott, ed., *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1988). A survey of American literature, from prehistoric cave narratives to the radical movements of the sixties and experimentation of the eighties; an interpretation of the rise of American civilization and culture.
- Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, eds., *The Reader's Companion to American History* (Houghton Mifflin, 1991). A portrait of the United States, from the origins of its native peoples to the nation's complex identity in the 1990s; covers social history, critical events, issues, and individuals that have shaped our past.

EXTRA! Links

- Library of Congress: Search the Digital Collections (<http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html>) and Teachers pages (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/index.html>) of this rich national treasure for access to photos, historical documents, readings, lesson plans, and other links. Just enter your selected topic, person, time period, etc. in the search box.
- National Archives: Archival Research Catalog (ARC) (<http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>). View photos and historical documents that span our nation's history. Click the yellow "ARC Search" box on the left side of the page, which will take you to the search page; next, click the "Digital Copies" button at the top of the page, then enter your topic, person, place, etc. in the Search box.

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Ralph Waldo Emerson

- American Transcendentalism Web, Virginia Commonwealth University: Biography and annotated readings, online texts of Emerson's work, and commentary and criticism on those works. (<http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/authors/emerson/index.html>)

Walt Whitman

- The Walt Whitman Archive (<http://www.whitmanarchive.org/about/index.html>), University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Comprehensive collection of Whitman's manuscripts, published writing, and letters; draws from libraries and collections around the world.
- *Revising Himself: Walt Whitman and Leaves of Grass*. This Library of Congress exhibit examines Whitman's life and work with photos, manuscripts, diary pages, and artifacts. (<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/whitman-home.html>)
- Karen Karbiener, "Walt Whitman and the Birth of Modern American Poetry." Course guide with lecture notes, discussion questions, suggested reading, and bibliographies. (http://www.oneclickaudio.com/courses_pdf/UT054.pdf)

Mark Twain

- EDSITEment (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>): Enter "Mark Twain" in the search box to find links to lesson plans, readings, and websites.
- Mark Twain in His Times (<http://twain.lib.virginia.edu/>): website directed by Stephen Railton, University of Virginia. An interpretive archive, drawn largely from the resources of the Barrett Collection; contains texts and manuscripts, contemporary reviews and articles, images, and interactive exhibits.

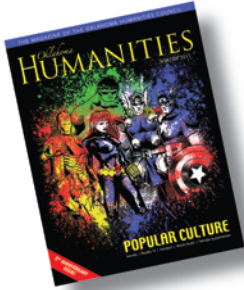
Ernest Hemingway

- PBS, "Michael Palin's Hemingway Adventure" (<http://www.pbs.org/hemingwayadventure/index.html>). Online exhibit drawn from the original broadcast series; features readings, lesson plans, bibliography, and links.
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Library: *Hemingway's Letters: From Childhood to Paris* (<http://www.ifklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/11Yi-7yxkkCG8XWueOIBqA.aspx>). In this hour-long video, book editor Sandra Spanier; novelist Ward Just; and moderator Scott Simon, host of NPR's *Weekend Edition Saturday* discuss the book *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway: Volume 1, 1907-1922* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), and the importance of Hemingway in American literature. Actor Corey Stoll, who played Hemingway in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* reads selections from the letters.
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (<http://www.ifklibrary.org/>): Enter "Ernest Hemingway" in the search box to view hundreds of digitized photos from the Ernest Hemingway Collection.

Jack Kerouac

- The Jack and Stella Kerouac Center for the Public Humanities, University of Massachusetts-Lowell. Includes a biography, photos, audio and video archives discussing Kerouac's work, and video links of Kerouac appearances and documentaries. <http://www.jackkerouac.com/home/bio/>
- Academy of American Poets website (<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/1016>): includes a Kerouac bio and several of his poems.
- The Jack Kerouac Archive at The New York Public Library: Three-minute video on Kerouac (<http://www.nypl.org/audiovideo/jack-kerouac-archive>)
- Five-minute video of Jack Kerouac on the *Steve Allen Plymouth Show*, 1959. Includes interview and Kerouac reading from his novel *On The Road*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzCF6hgEfto>
- NPR, *Present at the Creation* series, "Kerouac's *On the Road*." Correspondent Renee Montagne explores the story behind the novel's creation. Features audio and video clips and links to web resources. (<http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/patc/ontheroad/#tapes>)

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EXTRA!

Civil Discourse in a Divided America

By Scott Gelfand | Summer 2013 | Vol. 6, Issue No. 2

For Discussion

1. How would you define “civil discourse”? What atmosphere, ethics, ideals, etc. are necessary to achieve civil discourse?
2. What were your views on affirmative action before reading Scott Gelfand’s article? Did his presentation of arguments change your thinking? Did he convince you that people on both sides of an issue can embrace the same moral principles?
3. Discuss other actions in our country’s history that state and federal government have taken to serve “the common good.” What were the long-term results of those actions?

EXTRA! Reading

- Peter Gilbert, “Doubt and Conviction,” *I Was Thinking ... Travels in the World of Ideas* (Wind Ridge Publishing, 2012). The author has generously provided free access to this essay [[attached below](#)].
- J. Edward Kellough, *Understanding Affirmative Action: Politics, Discrimination, and the Search for Justice* (Georgetown Univ. Press, 2006). Covers the history, legal status, controversies, and impact of affirmative action in both the private and public sectors.
- Judith Rodin and Stephen P. Steinberg, Eds., *Public Discourse in America: Conversation and Community in the Twenty-First Century* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Contributors consider whether rationality is the best standard for public discussion and argument, and isolate features that characterize an exemplary, more productive public discourse. Examines why public conversations work when they work well, and why they often fail when we need them the most.
- Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience.” EDSITEment ([www.edsitement.neh.gov](http://edsitement.neh.gov)) has selected excerpts from “Civil Disobedience” and discussion questions to guide readers through Thoreau’s arguments. (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/launchpad-henry-david-thoreaus-essay-civil-disobedience>)

EXTRA! Links

- Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (<http://icdd.k-state.edu/primarytexts>): Primary Texts page links to texts from political leaders, authors, and philosophers collected for the Institute’s class entitled *Dialogue on Democracy*.
- FREEDOM.OU.EDU: website of the Institute for the American Constitutional Heritage at the University of Oklahoma. Freedom 101 is an ongoing series of video explorations into American constitutional law and history. In *Episode 4: Equal Protection: Affirmative Action*, Dr. Lindsay Roberts explains the recent history of the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause as it applies to affirmative action. (<http://freedom.ou.edu/lindsay-robertson-equal-protection-affirmative-action/>)
- Teaching Tolerance: “Civil Discourse in the Classroom and Beyond.” Activities, worksheets, and readings explore dissent, discussion, and debate. Teaches students to turn unsubstantiated opinions into reasoned arguments and how to apply these skills in a variety of situations. Meets language arts, social studies, and life skills standards. PDF booklet may be downloaded. (<http://www.tolerance.org/publication/civil-discourse-classroom>)

- National Issues Forums (<http://www.nifi.org/educators/index.aspx>): Under the “Educators” tab you’ll find free readings, PowerPoint presentations, discussion questions, and lesson plans. Resources are equally relevant for community adult discussions and classroom use. Topics include: how to convene and moderate forums, and how to frame issues for productive civil discourse. Specific issues include: (1) “Working Through Difficult Decisions”; (2) “God and the Commons: Does Religion Matter,” which discusses the role of religion in public life; and (3) “Slavery or Freedom Forever: An Historical Issue Framing,” which illustrates the deliberative process using the frame of the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, which determined the fate of slavery in U.S. territories.
- PLATO (Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization): Links to videos, radio podcasts, and readings on philosophy, ethics, and issues. (<http://plato-apa.org/>)

EXTRA! FOOD FOR THOUGHT

DOUBT AND CONVICTION

By Peter Gilbert

The critical balance between conviction and doubt in today’s volatile world

The intolerance of extremism is running rampant. It’s not just Al Qaeda. It’s murders of doctors at abortion clinics. It’s Timothy McVeigh, who saw himself as a modern-day John Brown and thought his attack on the Federal Building in Oklahoma City would inspire others to do likewise. It’s in the Middle East, and so many other places. You can see it in the total confidence that some people at both extremes of political or ideological spectrums have in the rightness of their views, confidence that can become self-righteousness. Perhaps it was ever thus.

Robert F. Kennedy observed that “[w]hat is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme but that they are intolerant.” That dangerous intolerance comes from their utter confidence in their means and ends.

In May of 1944, in the midst of World War II, New York City celebrated “I am an American Day” with speeches in Central Park. One speaker was Judge Learned Hand, a jurist so eminent that many called him the tenth Supreme Court Justice. He said, “The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the mind of other men and women ... which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias ...”

How do we teach our children to have the courage of their convictions on the one hand, and, at the same time, to keep open to the possibility that they may be wrong? That is a difficult, even metaphysical, challenge.

You see that mindset in Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was deeply, profoundly convinced that slavery was wrong and that the Union must be saved, and he gave his all for the cause. And yet he knew that the South, too, saw its cause as right. He does not judge the South. “It may seem strange,” Lincoln observed in his second inaugural address, “that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged.”

Despite this uncertainty, Lincoln concludes that the North should pursue the war to a successful conclusion: “[W]ith firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in...” Lincoln was a great president and great man because while wholly dedicated to his cause, he retained his humility.

The real world is not an ivory tower ethics seminar; it requires decisions—actions and reactions—often when there are no good choices. The challenge is to act out of one’s deeply held convictions but not to lose that speck of humility—of doubt—that checks our intolerance, keeps us open to others’ points of view, deters us from dehumanizing our enemies, and guards us against overstepping.

“Doubt and Conviction” was originally broadcast in a different form, September 16, 2003, on Vermont Public Radio, copyright VPR 2003. The essay was also published in Peter Gilbert’s book, *I Was Thinking ... Travels in the World of Ideas* (Wind Ridge Publishing, 2012). http://windridgebooksofvt.com/?page_id=502

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There are some things money can't buy but these days, not many. Almost everything is up for sale. For example: Stand in line overnight on Capitol Hill to hold a place for a lobbyist who wants to attend a congressional hearing: \$15-\$20 an hour. Lobbyists pay line-standing companies, who hire homeless people and others to queue up. If you are a second-grader in an underachieving Dallas school, read a book: \$2. To encourage reading, schools pay kids for each book they read. We live in a time when almost everything can be bought and sold. Over the past three decades, markets and market values