Exercise 1: Three Potential "Big Question" Ideas | Due: August 24

Goal:
The goal of this assignment is to brainstorm possible "Big Questions" you may be interested in investigating and the related conversations you may be joining.

Assignment:
Before embarking on any research project or joining any scholarly conversation, we must identify the questions we want to answer and the conversations we may want to join and explore those topics. **Your assignment for this exercise, specifically, is to identify three potential "Big Questions" (i.e., important but broad research topics) related to our theme of "identity and public policy" for Essay 1 (and the rest of the semester). For each potential Big Question idea, you will write a ~150-word statement briefly identifying the Big Question and explaining why you are interested in it and why it is worth researching/answering.**

The final product should do the following, in **one to two double-spaced pages** (12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins on all sides, no extra space between paragraphs, no superfluous spacing)**:**

- Identify three distinct Big Questions (about relevant and debatable public issues) you are interested in researching/answering
- Present a paragraph or two for each Big Question that introduces the topic and explains it's *exigency* (i.e., what makes it relevant—why the research/conversation is worth undertaking) and explain why you are interested in each topic

Invention and Inquiry:
So what is a "Big Question?" A Big Question (BQ) is a complicated question that doesn't have any easy (or even a single) answer. Think of complexity as a scale: a simple question is something that you could answer with a quick google search; a moderately big question is something you could find an answer to after reading a few articles/books on the topic; a Big Question is one that would take a lot of work and research to understand. *Your* Big Question is the question that you are going to be searching for an answer to throughout this semester. Don't worry if your BQ is too big! Think of your Big Question as a goal to drive your research and inquiry onward. You'll discover answers to many other questions you didn't know to ask until you tried to understand and answer the BQ. That's how research usually goes!

In preparing this assignment, brainstorm several (i.e., more than three) **topical and debatable public issues related to our theme of "identity and public policy"** that interest you. For these topics, brainstorm a few Big Questions you are curious about and want to find an answer for. You are looking for a BQ/topic on which all your subsequent papers in this class will focus, so choose topics that can sustain extended investigation (and your interest!). Consider topics that have special interest to you, your community, your major, your intended profession, an organization you belong to, etc. What are you curious about or want to understand better? Think about topics that affect your life and that you actually care about! You also don't have to have any prior knowledge about the BQ. **Remember that you are not providing an answer yet but investigating the ideas you are interested in researching**.

Brainstorm several reasons each BQ should be of interest to others and identify 5 key words/phrases you could use to search each topic online. Consider obstacles you might face in your research. Reflect on any preconceptions you have about each topic and perspectives you might encounter in your research.

Audience and Tone:
The audience is your instructor and your peers. Your tone should be informative, but not overly formal.

If you have any questions or concerns about this assignment, I encourage you to e-mail me or come see me during my office hours. Also consider visiting the Miller Writing Center for help.