

*Preparation for the September 13 topical seminar at the Lewes Library at 3 pm*  
*Topic – Thinking about the Public, Elitism and Pluralism in the 21st Century*

Instructions

To prepare for the seminar, read the following materials, watch the recommended videos and pursue one or more threads of your own. After considering what you've read and watched, write a response of between 200 and 400 words that addresses some of the writing prompts found at the end.

Email your written response to [lewesseminar@gmail.com](mailto:lewesseminar@gmail.com) no later than Monday, September 11. Participants are asked to read these responses prior to the seminar meeting on September 13.

Introduction

**“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results” - attributed incorrectly to Einstein, but ubiquitous throughout schools of management and decision-making.**

**“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them” - Albert Einstein**

Much has been written, spoken, podcasted, broadcasted, analyzed and discussed on the contours of our political life - especially trying to understand the forces and value systems that drive our behavior. Implementable solutions seem to be further away today than eight years ago. However, excursions into the history books show us that the writers and early defenders of the Constitution of the United States were very much aware of the human behaviors we have observed and aspired to building a government based on diverse and different points of view.

This month's question provides a deeper dive into the thinking of James Madison, best known as Federalist 10 - which establishes the importance of different voices at a table while avoiding the pitfalls of "Factionalism". The counter frame calls for a deeper dive into the writings and thinking of Martin Gurri whose 2014 book *The Revolt of the Public* challenges us to look at our political and social lives through a 21st century lens.

In essence - Is the pluralist world aspired to by James Madison in Federalist 10 even possible in the world described by Martin Gurri?

### Materials to Be Read or Watched

In the readings and clips below, you'll find three recent essays by John Halpin (former pollster and analyst of elections and political behavior in the US and UK) summarizing Federalist 10 and directly addressing the potential of its relevance in the 3rd decade of the 21st century. You will also find two excellent (and brief) summaries of Gurri's book, video links to Gurri in his own words and an extended interview captured in print. I am also throwing in a recent NYT column by David Brooks asking us to rethink the costs and benefits of our meritocracy.

Three Essays by John Halpin - (don't let "Liberal Patriot" put you off – be curious)

Halpin 1 - <https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/what-can-federalist-no-10-teach-us> (June 2023)

Halpin 2 - <https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/a-path-to-civic-pluralism> (July 2023)

Halpin 3 - <https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/a-path-to-institutional-pluralism> (August 2023)

The writings and thoughts of Martin Gurri

1. [The Revolt of the Public](#) - limited availability through Delaware Public Libraries or <https://www.browseaboutbooks.com/search/site/Gurri%2C%20Martin> - Browseabout Link
2. Gurri 101 - in his own words (2020) – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhSaPi\\_zAyY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhSaPi_zAyY)
3. Book Overview by Ashley Hodgson (Economics Professor) - good outline of key points and terms <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXBI2DKpBJI>
4. Extended interview - recommended by Rich Harris – September 2020 – more comprehensive than the above if you're interested - The Prophet of the Revolt <https://www.thepullrequest.com/p/the-prophet-of-the-revolt>

Also review the following posted documents:

1. Federalist Papers #10 - 1787
2. Matt Taibbi 24 Campaign
3. Chart – Congressional Districts (Red/Blue) sorted by Median Income

### Writing Prompts

As you consider what to write as a reaction to these materials, you may wish to consider one or more of the following writing prompts.

1. Critique the Halpin recommendations
2. Make the case for the Halpin recommendations
3. Has Federalist 10 always been an aspiration for something beyond human capability?
4. Pull together thoughts of your choosing based on threads from Halpin or Gurri

These questions are meant only to prompt your thinking. Use this exercise as an opportunity to reflect upon the prospects for holding on to the aspiration of a diverse, pluralistic form of self-governance in a world of Gurri's "public."

Submitted by Pat Newcomb

August 18, 2023