

系所別： 客家社會文化研究所

科目： 英文

First, write down the main ideas of the following passages in Chinese. And then write down your critical comments on the passages in English. (each 50%)

1. For most people in most eras, change seems anything but normal. Periods of social change can evoke much social anxiety because the unknown is inherently unsettling and because many people are stakeholders in the status quo. Those who seek change generally want to effect a shift in the relations of power, either for themselves or for others. But such shifts are always unpredictable, and they can seem treacherous to those who hold the reins of power as well as to those who feel their social, economic, or political power eroding. The groups with eroding power are the ones most likely to resist, through active strategies and passive resistance, the ideas, values, symbols, and behavior associated with change. This describes such groups in the contemporary United States as militias who see minorities, foreigners, and new cultural values as a threat to the American way of life; whites who see blacks, Latinos, and Asians as challenging their privileges and claim on limited resources in a zero-sum game; pro-life advocates who see pro-choice supporters as threatening traditionally defined family roles; and antigay proponents who see gays and lesbians as subverting gendered social order. Although social structural forces are ultimately responsible for the realignment of prestige and power among social groups in any society, these forces are always complex, abstract, intangible, and invisible. So those who symbolize or represent the forces of the new—women, minorities, immigrants, the poor, and other marginalized groups—tend to be singled out and blamed for the disruptions and upheaval associated with change. Social psychologists identify this process as scapegoating, the act of displacing generalized anxiety onto a conveniently visible and available target. Scapegoates have been identified in every era, but in periods in which the pace of change is particularly fast and a sense of unsettling disruption is acute, those social newcomers who challenge established values and behavior can all too readily become targets of the rage, fear, and ambivalence of people feeling the earthquake tremors of social change.

2. Why are more news and public-affairs shows turning into shouting matches between left and right, liberal and conservative, Democrat and Republican? For one thing, with round-the-clock news, the airwaves have to be filled, and these shows are easy and economical to assemble: Find a conservative and a liberal and you've got your show. Also, with the advent of cable has come increased

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competition, so producers need to make shows entertaining. But where do they get the idea that watching fights is fun? The answer is the argument culture.

The argument culture is a pervasive war-like atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue, and just about anything else we need to accomplish, as if it were a fight. It rests on the assumption that opposition is the best way to get anything done: The best way to discuss an idea is to set up a debate; the best way to settle a dispute is litigation that pits one party against the other; the best way to begin an essay is to attack someone; the best way to show you're really thinking is to criticize; and—as we see in the scream TV shows—the best way to cover news is to find spokespeople who express the most extreme views and present them as “both sides.” Conflict and opposition are necessary as cooperation and agreement, but the scale is off balance, with conflict and opposition overweighted.

By turning everything into a left-right fight, the argument culture gives us trumped-up, showcase “debates” between two oversimplified sides, leaving no room for the real arguments. What's wrong with lively debate? Nothing, when *debate* is a synonym for open discussion. But in most televised debates, the goal is not to understand but to win. You can't explore nuances or complexities; that would weaken your position. And few issues fall neatly into just two sides. Most are a crystal of many sides—and some have just one. Perhaps most destructive, if the goal is a lively fight, the most polarized views are best, so the extremes get the most airtime and are allowed to define the issues. Viewers conclude that if the two sides are so far apart, the problem can't be solved, so why try?