**Chapter Exercises**

**Chapter 14: The State, War, and Terror**

1. Over the course of a week, record how often you engage with contemporary political issues. What are the primary sources (e.g., online media, social media, newspaper, TV news programs) that you utilize when learning about and discussing political issues? Do an informal survey of a few friends about their political engagement. What trends do you notice? Are you and your friends engaged with political debates and issues? Hypothesize several reasons why students such as yourself may be engaged with or disengaged from contemporary politics.

2. Based on your reading of the chapter, list key ways in which the state exercises its influence in modern society. How do decisions made the government affect your life in concrete ways? Make a list of several specific ways and share them with a group of classmates. How does your list compare to theirs? What aspects of government power and influence did each of you emphasize?

3. Together with a small group of classmates, imagine that you are responsible for forming a new government for a new country named *Exploitistan*. You must consider the various forms of government available based on your reading of the chapter. Make a list of pros and cons for each government style, keeping in mind that the state of Exploitistan suffers from many social problems (poverty, violence, a poor economy, etc). Which form of government do you think would best address the problems in Exploitistan in the short term? Would this form of government be stable over the long term, or would you consider a transition to a different style of government after the country stabilizes? Be prepared to defend your choices.

4. War is a central topic in the media. Scroll through an online news site or examine a daily newspaper and count the number of references to wars across the globe that you find. Review the manifest and latent functions of war that are discussed in this chapter. How can these help explain the prevalence of war? What other “functions” could you identify that might help explain the existence and persistence of the phenomenon of war?

5. You saw in the chapter that there is not one single definition of *terrorism*, even within the U.S. government. Terrorism is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, which makes its definition challenging. Work with a small group of students to write a definition of the term that captures as fully as possible motivations, practices, and consequences. Compare your definition with that produced by other groups. How are they similar? How do they differ? How does this comparison and contrast illuminate difficulties with clearly identifying what constitutes terrorism and who is a terrorist?

6. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website features a “Who is at risk?” page that informs readers about communities and regions at risk of genocidal actions or places where genocides are underway (<http://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/take-action-against-genocide>). Visit the website and learn about at-risk areas. Explore the site further to learn about what individuals and groups can do in response to contemporary genocides. Make a list of ideas taken from the site and add some of your own. Share and compare your list with other students.

7. Examine a major news website or a major newspaper and select a highly controversial political issue. Then using the web conduct an investigation of who is supporting or opposing the issue and how much attention these supporters or opponents are getting in the major news media. Do both sides get equal amount of coverage? Is the coverage of each side neutral, supportive, or critical? Whose voices are not being represented by these groups? Are the people being affected the most by the issue being well represented in the discussion? How does this analysis compare with the predictions made by Dahl’s idea of interest groups?

8. With a group of peers discuss whether or not you voted in the last election and whether you plan on voting in the next election. What reasons do you have for voting or not voting? Are the structural reasons that affect college students’ likelihood to vote discussed in the book the same as the reason you and your peers have for voting or not voting? Would the changes to how elections are run discussed in the book affect the likelihood of you and your peers to vote? What other changes to how elections are run can you envision that would increase college students’ likelihood to vote? Would these changes increase or decrease the likelihood of voting for other groups of people within the United States? What would the functionalist and conflict perspectives say would be the result of such changes?