

Round 1

(III – A: The role of social media, “news,” and other information outlets)

There are growing concerns that the algorithms that help decide what posts people see on social media could be driving us to political extremes. In a 2025 study published by the National Academy of Sciences, researchers found that the algorithm on X (formerly known as Twitter) amplified political tweets that were emotionally charged, or hostile toward other groups.

How can we help prevent the polarization of Americans through their social media? Should regulation of business or media play a role? As a group, examine this issue and outline a strategic plan to help address it.

Round 2

(III – C: Geographical divides in political fragmentation)

Divisions between different areas of the U.S. - including between rural and urban areas - have become a hot topic of discussion. But researchers say the stories behind these divides are often oversimplified. For example, a 2011 study found that in Minnesota, urban and rural areas depended on each other for things like infrastructure and economic prosperity.

Knowing this, how can we better bridge the gaps between rural and urban America so everyone benefits? Work together to identify key economic, political and other urban-rural divisions. Use your findings to brainstorm solutions for the group’s highest-priority divides.

Round 3

(IV – D: Resource disparities and their role in creating fragmentation)

Climate change is having a growing impact on vulnerable people all over the world. The United Nations reported that in 2024 alone, there were 150 record-breaking weather events around the globe, causing everything from floods to extreme heat and drought. Over the past decade, weather-related disasters have displaced about 250 million people from their homes.

You are members of a humanitarian advocacy group, concerned that the U.S. is not prepared for the impacts of climate change and climate migration – including migration within the country. What are the most pressing needs the nation will face in helping people affected by climate disasters, in both the short and long term? What should be done to help prevent people from being displaced? As a group, examine these questions and draft a position statement that can be shared with U.S. legislators.

Final Round

(III – D: Normalization of fringe elements in public life)

With tools like social media and smart phones, it's easier than ever before to share information and opinions with people around the world. However, not all of that information is accurate. The BBC recently reported that, in a survey of teens ages 13 to 18, more than half said they had seen conspiracy theories online. Another 18% of the teenagers weren't sure if they had seen conspiracy theories or not.

As a group of Minnesota high school students, you are interested in helping your peers avoid falling prey to conspiracy theories and disinformation. As a group, examine whether there are effective strategies or resources to help people deal with potential sources of disinformation. Use what you've learned to draft a plan for an educational campaign at your school.