Addressing Contemporary Concerns

When considering what to write about in ENGL 134, keep in mind the cultural and political moment surrounding you right now. Rather than rely on topics that have been explored by thousands of students before you (capital punishment, underage drinking, abortion), seek out topics that are current and relevant to you. For instance, writers in this section address issues that have affected their lives, sometimes in uniquely personal ways. For instance, Trevor Brumm shares his “coming out” experience, while Van Anh Ho profiles a peer who has devoted himself to Buddhism. Brian Middaugh, on the other hand, argues for a more favorable understanding of gaming culture—a culture which is often disparaged by media. As you read these essays, keep in mind the issues that affect you every day—issues which could use further exploration and critical engagement.

Zeroes to infinity addresses the complex financial issues that have consumed the nation for the past few years. Could an image such as this one actually help narrow an argument’s focus or support its claim(s)? What writing strategies might help you scale down a deeply complicated issue, such as the current state of the nation’s economy, to a topic that can be effectively argued in an essay?
The image below, titled *Freedom (Behind Bars)*, asks us to confront animal rights. Zooming in on the cow’s face forces us to look the cow in the eye and contemplate the dietary choices we make every day. What elements of the image highlight the irony of “Freedom” printed on the cow’s ear tag?