“Shout-show” Television has been the target of tremendous amount of criticism from many quarters, academic and otherwise.

The issue of contentiousness and incivility in political discourse ....

The tendency on television to highlight more emotionally extreme and less polite expressions of opinion... may have important consequences for attitudes toward the opposition.

And yet market forces seem to favor this kind of television that encourages polarization. Polarized political discourse and angry opposition makes for compelling television.

Even though viewers are just third-party observers of other people’s conflicts on television, they show heightened levels of emotional arousal, just as people do when encountering face-to-face disagreement.

The heightened arousal produced by incivility can make it difficult to process the substance of the exchange.

Clearly, there is a widespread perception that political discourse is much more uncivil now than in the past, but there is little historical evidence to confirm such a trend.

The underlying question that still needs to be confronted....