

# Political Polarization & American Democracy

Western Washington University, Fall 2022

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**Professor:** Dr. Catherine Wineinger

**Course Number:** PLSC 397T

**Class Time:** T/R 2:00-3:50pm

**Room:** FI 238

**Office Location:** AH 416

**Office Hours:** T/R 12:00-1:00pm

**Email:** cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu

**Office Phone:** (360) 650-4877

## Course Description

This course focuses on political polarization in the United States. We will explore the history of political parties and polarization in the United States; competing definitions/measurements of political polarization; recent trends in studies of polarization at the mass and elite levels; and the relationship between social identity and party politics. The main emphasis of this class is on whether/how our current state of polarization threatens American democracy and political institutions, as well as potential ways to address it.

## Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Evaluate the causes and consequences of polarization in American politics
- Analyze the relationship between social identity and political polarization in the U.S.
- See improvement in their written and oral communication skills

## Departmental Learning Outcomes

- Possess substantive knowledge in their area of concentration (1)
- Exhibit analytical skills in interpreting data (2)
- Demonstrate critical, independent thinking about politics and public life (5)
- Recognize the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of participating in, and contributing as a citizen in a diverse society (6)
- Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national and global communities (7)

## Required Readings & Assignments

All required and recommended readings – including articles, book chapters, podcasts, etc. – will be posted on Canvas within the corresponding module.

Assignment guidelines will also be posted on Canvas under the “Assignments” tab. All assignments should be submitted via Canvas by 11:59pm on the due date.

## A Typical Day

- Free-Write & Initial Questions (10 mins)
- Group Reading Summaries & Analysis (20 mins)
- Lecture (30 mins)
- Discussion: Revisit Initial Questions (10 mins)
- Free-Write Prompts (10 mins)
- Class Discussion (30 mins)

## Class Conduct and Expectations

In order for our class discussions to be meaningful and productive, it is essential that we treat one another with respect. This includes: recognizing that each person in this class is bringing with them unique life experiences and academic training; demonstrating self-awareness and a willingness to listen; and engaging in constructive critiques.

### Earning Your Grade

Meaningful Participation.....	20%
Synthesis Essays (x3).....	45%
Peer Review.....	10%
Final Paper.....	25%

*In order to receive a passing grade on your final paper, you must also submit the following assignments:*

- Topic Proposal
- First Draft

*Extra credit:* You may earn **up to 3% extra credit** on your final grade if you attend a political event or volunteer with a political organization and write a 1-2 page reflection about how that experience is related to this class. (**Each reflection is worth 1%**). *Please come prepared to share your experiences with the class!*

### Scale

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
<60	F

### Pass/No Pass Grades

Students opting for P/NP grading will receive a **P for grades of D and above**. A grade of D- or F will be recorded as an NP, which will not earn credits or be reflected in the GPA. In order to earn credits toward the **Political Science major or minor, a grade of C- or higher is required**.

## Attendance/Absences

A reminder: participation is **20%** of your grade, so it is worthwhile for you to come to class each day! The more everyone participates, the more fruitful our class discussions will be. **That said, if you are feeling sick, please stay home.** One or two absences will not affect your grade. If absences become an issue for you, please reach out to me so we can work something out!

## Extensions and Late Work

I expect you to turn in your assignments on time, but I understand that sometimes life gets in the way. If you need an extension on an assignment, please email me **before** the assignment is due. There are **no extensions on presentations, and I will not accept work after the last day of class.** *Note: I cannot guarantee you feedback on late work (that also means you may not have an opportunity to revise late assignments).*

## WWU Policies and Student Resources

Please visit [syllabi.wvu.edu](http://syllabi.wvu.edu) for a list of university policies and resources, including: plagiarism and academic integrity policies, disability resources, religious accommodation policies, etc.

### Office Hours/Contact Information

In addition to class time, please feel free to drop in during office hours. This is your time to ask any follow-up questions, discuss any readings/assignments, talk about your career goals, or just stop by to say hi. Office hours are for **you**, and they're a great way to connect with your professors!

- **When:** T/R 12:00-1:00pm
- **Where:** 1) In-person meetings: Arntzen Hall 416  
2) Zoom meetings: Click the "Virtual Office Hours" link located at the top of the Modules page on Canvas

**If you cannot meet during these hours, please email me at [cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu](mailto:cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu) to schedule an appointment.** I only read and reply to emails during regular business hours. Give me one full business day to respond to your email, but don't be afraid to follow up after that!

### A Note on Self-Care

Nothing is more important than taking good care of yourself! I expect you to give your best effort in class, but remember that **your physical and mental health is always a priority**. Please stay in communication with me so that we can work together to find solutions to any issues that may arise this quarter.

# Political Polarization: Fall 2022 Course Agenda

Below is the tentative schedule for this quarter. Please note that this course agenda is subject to change. If a change is made, I will send you an email and update the syllabus on Canvas.

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## WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION

### R/ September 22 – Introduction

- Video (12 minutes): [The Science of Thinking](#), Veritasium  
**\*\*DUE: Survey (Module 1 on Canvas)**
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## WEEK 2 – AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

### T/ September 27 – Threats to American Democracy

- **Group A:** Mettler, Suzanne and Robert C. Lieberman. 2020. *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*. St. Martin's Press, Ch. 1: "Threats to Democracy."
- **Group B:** Lieberman, Robert C., Suzanne Mettler, and Kenneth M. Roberts. 2021. *Democratic Resilience: Can the United States Withstand Rising Polarization?* Cambridge University Press, Ch. 1: "How Democracies Endure."

### R/ September 29 – American Party Politics

- **Group A:** Grossmann, Matt and David A. Hopkins. 2015. "Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats: The Asymmetry of American Party Politics." *Perspectives on Politics*, 13 (1): 119-139.
  - **Group B:** Goff, Sean and Daniel J. Lee. 2019. "Prospects for Third Party Electoral Success in a Polarized Era." *American Politics Research*, 47 (6): 1234-1344.
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## WEEK 3 – IDENTITY AND PARTY POLITICS

### T/ October 4 – Which Identities Influence Political Behavior?

- **Group A:** Nelson, Matthew D. and Christopher D. Petsko. 2021. "Race and White Rural Consciousness." *Perspectives on Politics*, 19 (4): 1205-1218.
- **Group B:** MacDonald, Jared and Melissa Deckman. 2021. "New Voters, New Attitudes: How Gen Z Americans Rate Candidates with Respect to Generation, Gender, and Race." *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 1-22.
- **Everyone:** Hong, Jane. 2021. "What the election of Asian American GOP women means for the party." Made by History, *The Washington Post*. March 8.

### R/ October 6 – Social Group and Party Identification

- **Group A:** Ahler, Douglas J. 2018. "The Group Theory of Parties: Identity Politics, Party Stereotypes, and Polarization in the 21st Century." *The Forum*. 16(1): 3–22.
- **Group B:** Egan, Patrick J. 2019. "Identity as a Dependent Variable: How Americans Shift Their Identities to Align with Their Politics." *American Journal of Political Science*, 64 (3): 699-716.

**\*DUE: Synthesis Essay #1**

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## WEEK 4 – WHO’S POLARIZED?

### T/ October 11 – Elite Polarization

- **Group A:** McCarty, Nolan. 2019. *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 2: “What is Polarization?”
- **Group B:** Russell, Annelise. 2018. “U.S. Senators on Twitter: Asymmetric Party Rhetoric in 140 Characters.” *American Politics Research*. 46(4): 695-723.

### R/ October 13 – Mass Polarization

- **Group A:** Mason, Lilliana and Julie Wronski. 2018. “One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship.” *Advances in Political Psychology*. 39(1): 257-277.
  - **Group B:** Abramowitz, Alan and Jennifer McCoy. 2019. “United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump’s America.” *Annals, AAPSS*, 681: 137-156.
  - **Optional Podcast:** [“The age of ‘mega-identity’ politics.”](#) *The Ezra Klein Show*.
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## WEEK 5 – WHY ARE WE POLARIZED?

### T/ October 18 – Political Realignment

- **Group A:** Schickler, Eric. 2013. “New Deal Liberalism and Racial Liberalism in the Mass Public, 1937-1968.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 11(1): 75-98.
- **Group B:** Hopkins, Daniel J., Eric Schickler, and David L. Azizi. 2022. “From Many Divides, One? The Polarization and Nationalization of American State Party Platforms, 1918-2017.” *Studies in American Political Development*, 36: 1-20.
- **Everyone:** Maxwell, Angie. Jul. 26, 2019. “What we get wrong about the Southern Strategy.” *Made by History, The Washington Post*.

### R/ October 20 – Structural, Psychological, and Cultural Explanations

- **Group A:** Hinchliffe, Kelsey L. and Frances Lee. 2016. “Party Competition and Conflict in State Legislatures.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*. 16(2): 172-197.
- **Group B:** Castle, Jeremiah J. and Kyla K. Stepp. 2021. “Partisanship, Religion, and Issue Polarization in the United States: A Reassessment.” *Political Behavior*, 43: 1311-1335.

\*DUE: Synthesis Essay #2

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## WEEK 6 – POLARIZATION AND THE MEDIA

### T/ October 25 – The Media and Public Opinion

- **Group A:** Lajevardi, Nazita. 2020. *Outsiders at Home: The Politics of American Islamophobia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 6: “Improving Mass Attitudes: The Media’s Role in Shaping Group Attitudes and Policy Preferences.”
- **Group B:** Druckman, James N., Matthew S. Levendusky, and Audrey McClain. “No Need to Watch: How the Effects of Partisan Media Can Spread via Interpersonal Discussions.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 62 (1): 99-112.
- **Everyone:** Levendusky, Matt. Feb. 3, 2014. “Are Fox and MSNBC polarizing America?” *The Monkey Cage, The Washington Post*.

## R/ October 27 – Social Media and Anti-Establishment Politics

- **Group A:** Uscinski, Joseph E., Adam M. Enders, Michelle I. Seelig, Casey A. Klofstad, John R. Funchion, Caleb Everett, Stefan Wuchty, Kamal Premaratne, and Manohar N. Murthi. 2021. “American Politics in Two Dimensions: Partisan and Ideological Identities vs. Anti-Establishment Orientations.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 1-19.
- **Group B:** Bail, Christopher, et al, 2018. “Exposure to Opposing Views on Social Media Can Increase Political Polarization.” *PNAS*, 115 (37): 9216-9221.
- **Group B:** Kelly, Annie. Sept. 10, 2020. “Mothers for QAnon.” *The New York Times*.

**\*DUE: [Topic Proposal](#)**

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## WEEK 7 – CONSEQUENCES OF POLARIZATION

### T/ November – Elite-Level Consequences

- **Group A:** Thomsen, Danielle. 2014. “Ideological Moderates Won’t Run: How Party Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress.” *The Journal of Politics*, 76 (3): 786-797.
- **Group B:** Elder, Laurel. 2020. “The Growing Partisan Gap among Women in Congress.” *Society*, 57: 520-526.
- **Optional Video:** [A Changing Supreme Court: Politics and Polarization](#), George Washington University

### R/ November 3 – Mass-Level Consequences

- **Group A:** Jardina, Ashley. 2021. “In-Group Love and Out-Group Hate: White Racial Attitudes in Contemporary U.S. Elections.” *Political Behavior*.
- **Group B:** Krupnikov, Yanna and John Barry Ryan. 2022. *The Other Divide: Polarization and Disengagement in American Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Ch. 8: The Voice of Which People?

**\*DUE: [Synthesis Essay #3](#)**

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## WEEK 8 – ELECTION WEEK

### T/ November 8 – Polarization and Elections (Election Day!)

- **Group A:** Grumbach, Jacob M. 2020. “Interest Group Activists and the Polarization of State Legislatures.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 45 (1): 5034.
- **Group B:** Bateman, David A. 2021. “Elections, Polarization, and Democratic Resilience.” In *Democratic Resilience: Can the United States Withstand Rising Polarization?* Eds. Lieberman, Mettler, and Roberts, Cambridge University Press.
- **Everyone:** Patterson, Lawrence. October 20, 2016. “[A Former Prisoner on Voting for the First Time in His Life](#).” *Life Inside, Vice*.

### R/ November 10 – Political Violence (Discuss Election Results)

- **Group A:** Kleinfeld, Rachel. 2021. “The Rise of Political Violence in the United States.” *Journal of Democracy*, 32 (4): 160-176.
- **Group B:** Herrick, Rebekah and Sue Thomas. 2021. “Violence among State House Candidates during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1-17.
- **Optional Podcast:** “[A Conversation with Joanne Freeman: Violence in Congress and the Road to Civil War](#).” *For the Ages: A History Podcast*.

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## WEEK 9 – A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY?

### T/ November 15 – Support for Democratic Norms

- **Group A:** Zingette, Jon, James N. Druckman, Samara Klar, Yanna Krupnikov, Matthew Levendusky, and John Barry Ryan. 2021. “How Affective Polarization Undermines Support for Democratic Norms.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 85 (2): 663-677.
- **Group B:** Broockman, David E., Joshua L. Kalla, and Sean J. Westwood. 2022. “Does Affective Polarization Undermine Democratic Norms or Accountability? Maybe Not.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 1-21.

### R/ November 17 – Democratic Backsliding and Minority Rule

- **Group A:** Grumbach, Jacob M. 2022. *Laboratories Against Democracy: How National Parties Transformed State Politics*. Princeton University Press, Ch. 9: Conclusion
- **Group B:** Ehrenberg, John. 2022. *White Nationalism and the Republican Party: Toward Minority Rule in America*. Routledge, Ch. 6: “Toward White Minority Rule”

**\*DUE: First Draft**

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## WEEK 10 – WORKSHOP

### T/ November 22 – Final Paper Discussions and Workshop

- No readings – come prepared to work on your peer review and discuss your final paper!

**\*DUE: Peer Review**

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### R/ November 24 – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

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## WEEK 11 – ADDRESSING POLARIZATION

### T/ November 29 – Building Coalitions

- **Group A:** Tormos, F. 2017. “Intersectional solidarity.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. 5(4): 707-720.
- **Group B:** Frymer, Paul and Jacob M. Grumbach. 2021. “Labor Unions and White Racial Politics.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 65 (1): 225-240.
- **Everyone:** Shapiro, Robert Y. Jan. 20, 2014. “Can Young Voters Break the Cycle of Polarization?” *The Monkey Cage, The Washington Post*.

### R/ December 1 – New Strategies

- **Group A:** Klein, Ezra. 2020. *Why We’re Polarized*. New York, NY: Avid Reader Press. Ch. 10: “Managing Polarization – and Ourselves.”
- **Group B:** Lopez, Ian Haney. 2019. *Merge Left: Fusing Race and Class, Winning Elections, and Saving America*. The New Press, Ch. 10: “Comparing the Left’s Possible Responses to Anti-Immigrant Dog Whistling”

**\*DUE SUNDAY 12/4: Final Paper**

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**FINALS WEEK (Dec. 6-10) – NO FINAL EXAM - Have a great winter break 😊**