

Senior Seminar: Identity Politics & Polarization

Western Washington University, Winter 2021

Professor: Dr. Catherine Wineinger

Course Number: PLSC 431 (5 credits)

Class Time: M/W/F 10:00 a.m.-11:20 a.m.

Room: Online – Synchronous

Office Location: Arntzen Hall 416

Office Hours: M 1-2 p.m., W 12-2 p.m., or by appt.

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Course Description

This seminar explores polarization in American politics through the lens of identity. How do our social identities – our gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, etc. – shape our politics? To what extent is party affiliation an aspect of our identity, and how has this changed over time? What is the relationship between party politics, ideology, and social identity? We will engage with recent political science research to delve deeper into the concept of “identity” and analyze the nature, causes, and consequences of polarization at both the mass and elite levels in American politics.

Course Learning Objectives

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

- Understand and engage with scholarly debates on the concept of “identity politics”
- 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 writing skills

Departmental Learning Objectives

- Possess substantive knowledge in their area of concentration (1)
- Exhibit analytical skills in interpreting data (2)
- Demonstrate writing proficiency (3)
- Engage in independent research (4)
- Demonstrate critical, independent thinking about politics and public life (5)
- Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national and global communities (7)
- Convey substantive knowledge using reading and written and oral communication (8)

Required Readings

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

A Typical Week

Mondays: Discussion & Lecture (*On Zoom*)

Fridays: Writing Workshop (*On Canvas, Off Zoom*)

Wednesdays: Discussion & Lecture (*On Zoom*)

Earning Your Grade

Discussion Facilitator.....	10%
Meaningful Participation.....	15%
Short Essay.....	15%
Peer Review.....	10%
Analytical Paper*.....	50%

*You must submit **all** of the following assignments to receive a passing grade on the analytical paper:

- Topic Proposal
- Annotated Bibliography
- First Draft
- Final Draft

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 EP/NP grading in Winter Quarter 2020 will receive an EP for grades of **D+ and above**. A grade of D or D- will be recorded as a NP, which will not earn credits or be reflected in the GPA. A grade of F will be recorded as NP on the transcript, will not receive degree credit, and will not be reflected in the GPA.

Important Dates:

M, Jan. 18 – **No Class – MLK Day**
F, Jan. 22 – Short Essay Due
F, Jan. 29 – Topic Proposal Due
F, Feb. 12 – Annotated Bibliography Due

M, Feb. 15 – **No Class – Presidents Day**
F, Feb. 19 – First Draft Due
F, Feb. 26 – Peer Review Due
F, Mar. 12 – Final Draft Due

Class Conduct and Expectations

This is a **synchronous** online class, which means we will be meeting via Zoom and/or Canvas during assigned class times. As this is a senior seminar, there will be an emphasis on in-class discussions and participation. To enhance engagement and create a sense of community, **please turn your camera on, if possible**. We will also be engaging in in-class activities, so you should ideally be working from a **laptop or desktop**. If these things are not possible, please let me know and we can figure out alternatives.

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.

Attendance/Absences

A reminder: participation is 15% of your grade, so it is worthwhile for you to come to class each day! If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

Office Hours/Contact Information

Office hours are for **you!** I want you to succeed (both in and beyond this class). If you have questions, would like to further discuss readings/assignments, or want to talk about politics, career goals, etc., please stop by during my (virtual) office hours on **Mondays from 1:00-2:00pm and Wednesdays from 12:00-2:00pm**. You can also email me at 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!

WWU Policies and Student Resources

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

A Note on COVID-19, Productivity, and Self-Care

You are taking this class under extraordinary circumstances, and I am teaching this class under extraordinary circumstances. I expect you to give your best effort, but I will also work to be flexible and accommodating (and I hope you will be patient with me as well!). **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.

Identity Politics & Polarization: Winter 2021 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.

WEEK 1 – Introduction

W, January 6 – Introduction and Class Overview

- Review Syllabus & Class Assignments

F, January 8 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
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WEEK 2 – What is “Identity Politics”?

M, January 11 – Identity and Social Movement Politics

- Bernstein, Mary. 2005. "Identity Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 31:47-74.
- *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. 1977. Combahee River Collective.

W, January 13 – Identity and Electoral Politics

- Walters, Suzanna Danuta. 2018. “In Defense of Identity Politics.” *Signs*. 43(2): 473-488.
- Smith, Barbara. Feb. 10, 2020. “I coined the term ‘identity politics.’ I’m endorsing Bernie Sanders.” *The Guardian*.
- **Podcast (optional):** “[Visibility is on the Ballot](#).” Oct. 26, 2020. *Brown Girls Guide to Politics*.

F, January 15 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
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WEEK 3 – Identity and Party Politics

M, January 18 – NO CLASS: MLK Day

W, January 20 – Social Group and Party Identification

- 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.
- Bacon, Perry, Jr. Sept. 11, 2018. “Americans Are Shifting The Rest of Their Identity to Match Their Politics.” *FiveThirtyEight*.

F, January 22 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
 - ****DUE by 11:59pm: Short Essay**
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Week 4 – Identity, Polarization, and American Democracy

M, January 25 – What is “Polarization”?

- McCarty, Nolan. 2019. *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 2: “What is Polarization?”
- Mettler, Suzanne and Robert C. Lieberman. Nov. 17, 2020. “Four deadly threats to American democracy are raging all at once.” *LA Times*.

W, January 27 – Threatening or Strengthening Democracy?

- Stacey Y. Abrams; John Sides; Michael Tesler; Lynn Vavreck; Jennifer A. Richeson; Francis Fukuyama. March-April 2019. “E Pluribus Unum: The Fight over Identity Politics.” *Foreign Affairs* 98(2): 160-170.
- **Podcast (optional):** “[Francis Fukuyama’s case against identity politics.](#)” 2019. *The Ezra Klein Show*.

F, January 29 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
****DUE by 11:59pm: Topic Proposal**

WEEK 5 – Who’s Polarized?

M, February 1 – Elite Polarization

- Russell, Annelise. 2018. “U.S. Senators on Twitter: Asymmetric Party Rhetoric in 140 Characters.” *American Politics Research*. 46(4): 695-723.
- Swers, Michele. Jan. 13, 2014. “Electing more women to Congress isn’t a solution for polarization.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*.

W, February 3 – Mass Polarization

- 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.
- Abramowitz, Alan I. Jan 20, 2014. “How race and religion have polarized American voters.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*.
- **Podcast (optional):** “[The age of ‘mega-identity’ politics.](#)” *The Ezra Klein Show*.

F, February 5 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*

WEEK 6 – Why Are We Polarized?

M, February 8 – Political Realignment

- Schickler, Eric. 2013. “New Deal Liberalism and Racial Liberalism in the Mass Public, 1937-1968.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 11(1): 75-98.
- Maxwell, Angie. Jul. 26, 2019. “What we get wrong about the Southern Strategy.” *Made by History*, *The Washington Post*.

W, February 10 – Structural, Psychological, and Cultural Explanations

- Hinchliffe, Kelsey L. and Frances Lee. 2016. “Party Competition and Conflict in State Legislatures.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*. 16(2): 172-197.
- Alwin, Duane F. and Paula A. Tufiş. Apr. 4, 2016. “How the culture wars are driving political polarization.” *LSE United States Politics & Policy Blog*.

F, February 12 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
****DUE by 11:59pm: Annotated Bibliography**
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WEEK 7 – Identity, Polarization, and the Media

M, February 15 – NO CLASS: Presidents Day

W, February 17 – The Role of the Media

- 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.”
- Levendusky, Matt. Feb. 3, 2014. “Are Fox and MSNBC polarizing America?” The Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*.
- **Podcast (optional):** [Interview with Nazita Lajevardi](#). *New Books in Political Science*.

F, February 19 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
****DUE by 11:59pm: First Draft**
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WEEK 8 – Consequences of Polarization

M, February 22 – Elite-Level Consequences

- Thomsen, Danielle. 2015. “Why So Few (Republican) Women? Explaining the Partisan Imbalance of Women in the U.S. Congress.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 30(2):295-323.
- Binder, Sarah. Nov. 7, 2018. “Here are 4 things to expect from a new, Trumpier, more polarized Congress.” The Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*.

W, February 24 – Mass-Level Consequences

- Jardina, Ashley. 2020. “In-Group Love and Out-Group Hate: White Racial Attitudes in Contemporary U.S. Elections.” *Political Behavior*.
- Kalmoe, Nathan P. and Lilliana Mason. May 7, 2020. “Most Americans Reject Partisan Violence, But There Is Still Cause for Concern.” *Democracy Fund Voter Study Group*.

F, February 26 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
****DUE by 11:59pm: Peer Review**
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WEEK 9 – What Do We Do Now?

M, March 1

- Tormos, F. 2017. “Intersectional solidarity.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. 5(4): 707-720.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. Jan. 20, 2014. “Can Young Voters Break the Cycle of Polarization?” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*.

W, March 3

- Klein, Ezra. 2020. *Why We’re Polarized*. New York, NY: Avid Reader Press. Ch. 10: “Managing Polarization – and Ourselves.”
- **Podcast (optional):** “[What Democrats Got Wrong About Hispanic Voters.](#)” *The Ezra Klein Show*.

F, March 5 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities on Canvas*
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WEEK 10 – Office Hours & Writing Week

M, March 8 – Office Hours

W, March 10 – Office Hours

F, March 12 – Office Hours

****DUE by 11:59pm: Final Draft**

FINALS WEEK

No Final – Enjoy your Spring Break!