

Honors 320A, Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Partisan Polarization in American Politics  
Fall 2017 Semester  
Monday and Wednesday, 1700-1815

Instructor: Dr. Ken Moffett  
Class Location: 2409 Peck Hall  
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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1320-1450; and by appointment.

**Course Description:** Party polarization is one of the most pervasive, defining characteristics of today's American politics. In fact, polarization has increased since the mid-1970s to its current levels. In the course, we will examine partisan polarization from a broad range of interdisciplinary perspectives, including statistics, mass communications, and sociology. To do so, we first investigate what constitutes party polarization, and what causes it. Then, we will explore the consequences and implications of party polarization and its effects on the political elites and the public at large. By the end of the course, you will be able to speak to this topic, and provide solutions that mitigate or resolve this issue.

**Assigned Texts:** The following books are available at Textbook Rental.

Fiorina, Morris; Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope 2011. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. New York, NY: Pearson Longman.

Levendusky, Matthew S. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

The following book is available for purchase at the University Bookstore in the Morris University Center.

McCarty, Nolan; Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal 2016. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Other course readings and podcasts listed in this document will be provided through the course website.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Explain what constitutes polarization, and how it has changed over time;
- 2) Analyze the different causes of polarization through the varying lenses that different disciplines provide;
- 3) Describe how polarization affects elite political actors;
- 4) Describe how polarization effects the American public; and
- 5) Communicate research findings orally and in writing to broader audiences

**Course Requirements:** I will determine your grade based on a paper, a midterm examination, a *comprehensive* final exam, and participation. Your grade breaks down as follows:

Midterm Exam	100 Points
Term Paper and Presentation	300 Points
In-Class Presentation	75 Points
Final Examination	100 Points
<u>Participation</u>	<u>100 Points</u>
Total	675 Points

**Grading Policy:** I will use the following cutoffs to determine letter grades for the course: 607 points and above, "A;" 606-540 Points, "B;" 539-472 points, "C;" 471 to 405 points, "D;" below 405 points, "F." All students who have completed thirteen weeks of the course and do not satisfy the requirements for the grades of "NS," "WR," "I," or "UW," will receive one of the aforementioned letter grades for their performance in the class.

“NS” or “no show” grades will only be assigned if a student: 1) was never in class during the semester; or 2) attended class on the first day, but at no point thereafter.

“WR” (or “withdrawal by registrar”) grades will only be assigned if all of the following criteria are satisfied: 1) a student ceases attendance and participation in the course at some point during the semester; 2) the student, his or her designee, or the Dean of Students (or his/her designee) notifies me *prior* to the end of the semester of mitigating circumstances that are beyond the student’s direct control; and 3) these circumstances exist such that a grade of “I” (or “Incomplete”) is not an appropriate option. I reserve the right to require appropriate documentation of mitigating circumstances prior to issuing a grade of “WR.” Students who do not produce this documentation, when requested, will receive a grade of “UW.” I reserve full discretion to determine whether the mitigating circumstances are sufficient to warrant the WR grade.

A grade of “I” (or “Incomplete”) will only be assigned if a student has completed, “...most of the work required for a class but is prevented by a medical or similar emergency from completing a small portion of the course requirements” (SIUE Grading Policy 2012, available at <http://www.siu.edu/registrar/class/grading.shtml>). Before the grade of incomplete is assigned, I require all of the following: 1) the student has completed at least 50% of the course requirements; 2) appropriate written documentation of the circumstances surrounding a request for a grade of “I;” 3) s/he meets with me to determine the timeframe in which the remaining requirements will be satisfied; and 4) s/he signs a written agreement agreeing to this timeframe. Copies of this agreement will be forwarded to the Registrar and to the Chair of the Department of Political Science. Students who do not meet all of these requirements will not be eligible for this grade.

A grade of “UW” (or “unauthorized withdrawal”) will be assigned if both conditions are satisfied: 1) the student has attended more than one day of the course, but stopped attending prior to the end of the thirteenth week of the semester; and 2) s/he did not withdraw from the course prior to the end of the thirteenth week of the semester.

Exams: All exams consist of a series of take-home essays. These essays will be due on the week after they are assigned.

In-Class Presentation: You will have a 30 minute, in-class presentation that can be done with one other classmate. These presentations will typically happen at the beginning of class, pursuant to a schedule that will be posted to the course website. I will give you more information about the presentation in a future handout. Any student who is scheduled to present is required to e-mail the class about the topic of their presentation no later than the class session prior to the one in which they are assigned to present.

Paper: You will have a 20 page paper on a topic to be announced. I will give you more information about your paper in a future handout. This paper will also be presented on November 29 during class time in the Mississippi-Illinois Room at the Morris University Center as part of an event open to the University community.

Participation: Students are required to participate actively throughout the course. Participation does not merely consist of attendance, though you must be in class to participate. In fact, a good grade is unattainable if you do not regularly attend class. Participation consists of attendance, doing the readings on time, getting involved in discussions, listening to and respecting your classmates, as well as their opinions. Through negative behaviors, it is possible to lose participation points.

I also expect that each student regularly reads a national newspaper like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal* to follow the national news and class discussions about current events as they relate to the course and developments in American politics.

Finally, I expect that you do all of the assigned readings before each class starts and be ready to actively contribute to classroom discussions. It is impossible to do your assigned readings immediately before any exam and expect to do well in the class. We will discuss some of the reading in class, but not everything. You will gain much more from the course if you do the readings before class starts, rather than after the fact.

Extra Credit: I reserve the right to assign small extra credit assignments throughout the course.

### **Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments**

August 21: Introduction  
No Reading

August 23: An Introduction to Partisan Polarization  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapter One  
Ornstein Reading on Polarization (available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/06/yes-polarization-is-asymmetric-and-conservatives-are-worse/373044/>)  
Pew Charitable Trusts on Polarization (available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/07/americas-political-divisions-in-5-charts/>)  
Podcast on Reading Academic Articles (\*)  
Poole and Rosenthal “The Polarization of American Politics” (\*)

August 28: Measuring Partisan Polarization  
Fiorina, Chapters One and Two  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapter Two  
Term Paper Podcast (\*)

**August 30: No Class. Work on Oral Presentation and Term Paper Topics.**

**September 4: No Class. Happy Labor Day!**

September 6: Measuring Partisan Polarization (Continued)  
Fiorina, Chapters One and Two  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapter Two  
**Oral Presentation Topic Due!**  
**Term Paper Topic Due!**

September 11: Redistricting, Gerrymandering and Polarization  
Carson, Crespin, Finocchiaro and Rohde “Redistricting and Party Polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives” (\*)  
Carson, Crespin and Williamson “Reevaluating the Effects of Redistricting on Electoral Competition” (\*)  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal “Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?” (\*)

September 13 & 18: Redistricting, Gerrymandering and Polarization (Continued)  
Carson, Crespin, Finocchiaro and Rohde “Redistricting and Party Polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives” (\*)  
Carson, Crespin and Williamson “Reevaluating the Effects of Redistricting on Electoral Competition” (\*)  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal “Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?” (\*)

September 20 & 25: Geographic Sorting and Polarization  
Bramlett, Gimpel and Lee “The Political Ecology of Opinion in Big-Donor Neighborhoods” (\*)  
Chen and Rodden “Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures” (\*)  
Fiorina, Chapter Three  
McDonald, “Migration and Sorting in the American Electorate” (\*)

September 27 & October 2: Party Activists, Campaign Contributors and Polarization  
Barber “Donation Motivations: Testing Theories of Access and Ideology” (\*)  
Gimpel, Lee and Pearson-Merkowitz “The Check is in the Mail: Interdistrict Funding Flows in Congressional Elections” (\*)  
La Raja and Wiltse “Don’t Blame Donors for Ideological Polarization of Political Parties” (\*)  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapter Five

October 4 & 9: Income Inequality and Polarization  
McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapters Three and Four

October 11, 16, & 18: Sorting in the Mass Electorate  
Levendusky, Chapters One through Six

October 23: Sorting in the Mass Electorate (Continued)  
Levendusky, Chapters One through Six  
**Midterm Examination Distributed**

October 25: Media Choice and Polarization

Banducci, Giebler and Kritzinger “Knowing More from Less: How the Information Environment Increases Knowledge of Party Positions” (\*)  
Iyengar and Hahn “Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use” (\*)  
Prior “News vs. Entertainment” How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge”  
Schroeder and Stone “Fox News and Political Knowledge” (\*)

October 30: Media Choice and Polarization (Continued)

Banducci, Giebler and Kritzinger “Knowing More from Less: How the Information Environment Increases Knowledge of Party Positions” (\*)  
Iyengar and Hahn “Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use” (\*)  
Prior “News vs. Entertainment” How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge”  
Schroeder and Stone “Fox News and Political Knowledge” (\*)

**Midterm Exam Due!**

November 1 & 6: Culture Wars, Values Divides, and Polarization

Abramowitz and Saunders “Exploring the Bases of Partisanship in the American Electorate: Social Identity vs. Ideology” (\*)  
Fiorina, Chapters Five through Seven  
Jacoby “Value Choices and American Public Opinion” (\*)  
Layman and Carmines “Cultural Conflict in American Politics” (\*)

November 8: Polarization and Public Policy

McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapter Six  
McWright and Dunlap “The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public’s Views of Global Warming” (\*)

**Term Paper Rough Draft Due!**

November 13: Polarization and Public Policy (Continued)

McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapter Six  
McWright and Dunlap “The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public’s Views of Global Warming” (\*)

November 15: Legislatures and Polarization

Bafumi and Herron “Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress” (\*)  
Hicks “Partisan Competition and the Efficiency of Lawmaking in American State Legislatures, 1991-2009” (\*)  
Hughes and Carlson “Divided Government and Delay in the Legislative Process: Evidence from Important Bills, 1949-2010” (\*)  
Jones “Party Polarization and Legislative Gridlock” (\*)

**November 20 & 22: No Class. Happy Thanksgiving!**

November 27: Legislatures and Polarization (Continued)

Bafumi and Herron “Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress” (\*)  
Hicks “Partisan Competition and the Efficiency of Lawmaking in American State Legislatures, 1991-2009” (\*)  
Hughes and Carlson “Divided Government and Delay in the Legislative Process: Evidence from Important Bills, 1949-2010” (\*)  
Jones “Party Polarization and Legislative Gridlock” (\*)

**November 29: Presentation in the Mississippi-Illinois Room in the Morris University Center**

**Term Paper Due!**

December 4: Candidates for Office and Polarization

Aldrich and Thomsen “Party, Policy, and the Ambition to Run for Higher Office” (\*)  
Broockman and Ryan “Preaching to the Choir: Americans Prefer Communicating to Copartisan Elected Officials” (\*)  
Hetherington “Why Polarized Trust Matters” (\*)

Thomsen “Ideological Moderates Won’t Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress” (\*)  
Thomsen “Why do Few (Republican) Women? Explaining the Partisan Imbalance of Women in the U.S. Congress” (\*)

### **Final Exam Distributed**

#### *Optional Reading:*

Hall, Andrew. *Who Wants to Run? How the Devaluing of Political Office Drives Polarization*. Book Manuscript. Stanford University. Available at [http://www.andrewbenjaminhall.com/AndrewHall\\_WhoWantsToRun.pdf](http://www.andrewbenjaminhall.com/AndrewHall_WhoWantsToRun.pdf).

#### December 6: Candidates for Office and Polarization

Aldrich and Thomsen “Party, Policy, and the Ambition to Run for Higher Office” (\*)  
Broockman and Ryan “Preaching to the Choir: Americans Prefer Communicating to Copartisan Elected Officials” (\*)  
Hetherington “Why Polarized Trust Matters” (\*)  
Thomsen “Ideological Moderates Won’t Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress” (\*)  
Thomsen “Why do Few (Republican) Women? Explaining the Partisan Imbalance of Women in the U.S. Congress” (\*)

#### *Optional Reading:*

Hall, Andrew. *Who Wants to Run? How the Devaluing of Political Office Drives Polarization*. Book Manuscript. Stanford University. Available at [http://www.andrewbenjaminhall.com/AndrewHall\\_WhoWantsToRun.pdf](http://www.andrewbenjaminhall.com/AndrewHall_WhoWantsToRun.pdf).

### **December 11 (Monday): Final Examination Due, 1630-1810**

#### **Classroom Policies and Procedures**

Academic Misconduct: Students are responsible for knowing when and learning how to cite material. Students must use one of the following academic styles: the *Style Manual for Political Science* (APSA Style), Chicago Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), or the American Psychological Association (APA) style for all written work. A student is expected to appropriately cite whenever s/he uses content or ideas that come from a source other than oneself. This expectation includes anything that comes from class notes, PowerPoint slides, or the course website, as these materials are the instructor’s intellectual property. For more information, please refer to the Plagiarism Frequently Asked Questions handout at the end of this document.

The styles listed in this section are the only accepted methods of citing material in this course. Failure to abide by course or university policies with respect to academic integrity may constitute cheating and/or plagiarism.

I have zero tolerance for cheating and plagiarism and will deal with every instance to the maximum extent allowed by university policies and procedures. Normally, this means that someone who cheats and/or plagiarizes will fail the course and be reported to the Provost for additional disciplinary action.

Cellular Phones, Pagers and Similar Electronic Devices: Please turn these off before the start of this course as they distract me and your classmates. If one has an emergency that necessitates using one or more of these devices during class time, please talk to me before class starts. Finally, students are asked to refrain from using electronic devices to send text messages during class time as such conduct disrespects me and your classmates.

Draft Copies of Student Work: I am willing to read a single, complete draft of each student’s assignment or redo prior to submission for a grade provided that it is submitted three days prior to the relevant due date. Multiple draft copies of the same assignment or redo from a student will not be read. Draft copies must be e-mailed to me.

E-Mail Expectations: Students are expected to regularly check their SIUE e-mail accounts, as important information about the course is disseminated in this fashion.

E-Mail Hours: I respond to student e-mails within 24 hours of the time and date that they were sent. If you do not receive a reply within this time frame, please follow-up with me.

E-Mail Limitations: I will not respond to any e-mails related to the contents of an exam on the same day as any test, nor do I provide an answer via e-mail to questions about expected grades in this course. Federal privacy laws and university policies do not allow me to e-mail any information about your grade in the class to you.

Leaving Early: If you must leave early for any reason, please notify me before class starts as doing so is much appreciated.

Senior Assignment: Students who are political science majors or plan to become a major are well advised to keep their term paper from this course as it is a vital component of their senior assignment.

Sexual Harassment: I do not tolerate any such conduct as it is prohibited by law in addition to university policies and procedures. For more information, please see Southern Illinois University's Policy on Sexual Harassment (at <http://www.siu.edu/policies/2c5.shtml>).

Student Conduct: Pursuant to university policies and procedures, I reserve the right to remove from class, reduce the course grade, and/or assign an "F" for the course to any student who defies directions from the instructor and/or commits behaviors that manifest a lack of respect for others or their learning objectives during class. Examples of such behaviors include, but are not limited to, disrespectful, hostile, racist, disruptive, or demeaning behavior during class. For a more complete discussion of what constitutes such behavior, please refer to the Cougar Creed (at <http://www.siu.edu/parents/cougar-creed.shtml>), Student Conduct Code (at <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c1.shtml>), and the Student Academic Code (at <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>).

Students with Disabilities: Students who need special academic accommodations and have documented disabilities should make an appointment with me to discuss these accommodations. At this appointment, you need to display an identification card from Disability Support Services (DSS) that lists the accommodations that you need. If you need accommodations that are not listed on the DSS Identification Card, please contact me and the DSS office as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

User-Edited Websites: Students are not allowed to use any user-edited, mirror, information aggregating, or social networking websites as a source on any assignment or examination. Examples of such sources include, but are not limited to, Answers.com, Congresspedia, Diffen.com, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Wikipedia. Students are responsible for knowing whether an internet-based resource is prohibited under this policy, and are strongly encouraged to ask me about any specific website that might fall under the auspices of this policy. Any student who uses such sources will receive a 20% grade penalty on that assignment and/or paper, if s/he cites the material in question.

### **Final Considerations**

The schedule laid out in this document is tentative. Accordingly, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus and will post any changes on the course website. You are responsible for all of the information presented in this document, and anything discussed during class, on the course website, as well as, any podcasts that are posted to the course website. If you have any questions or concerns about anything in this class, please see me as soon as possible. We can more easily resolve such matters sooner rather than later.