

Introduction:

“We have two massive colliding forces. One is rural, Christian, religiously conservative. [The other] is socially tolerant, pro-choice, secular, living in New England and the Pacific coast.”

-Bill McInturff, Republican pollster, 2001

Hyperbole – like that of McInturff - was rampant in the aftermath of the 2000 election. Pundits, politicians, and journalists alike claimed that the United States was in the midst of a culture war, a war that raged on for the “soul of America.”

A cursory look at the election results of November 2000 seemed to confirm these cries about a divided America with the now “classic” red/blue map of the continental United States serving as the iconic image of this division. From narratives about warring parties stealing votes to questions about the legitimacy of the Electoral College in relation to the popular vote, blabocrats and politicians all pronounced the end of centrism in America and a story about political polarization gripped the nation. Stories of a divided America- America as two nations and the US being nothing more than a collection of red states and blue states – have subsequently remained a fixture of the socio-political landscape.

Is America actually polarized and deeply divided? Is the American public polarized? What about political elites? Is there any connection between mass and elite polarization? What do we even mean when we say some group is “polarized”? What are the social and policy implications of polarization? Is policy making forever deadlocked or can real political progress be made? How does all of this play into the 2008 Presidential and Congressional elections? Are particular politicians polarizing figures? What are we to make of the frequent calls for change and for healing America’s divisions?

This seminar seeks to examine these questions and to look at polarization and the related policy questions in great detail. After reviewing some basics of political economy, we will examine polarization and centrism from a variety of vantage points and a number of different stories will emerge.

You will have the chance to empirically and qualitatively explore polarization and centrism in this seminar. We will cover a lot of ground, from looking at the public and the political elites to examining Congress and policy making communities and institutions. We will be talking about politically charged and often divisive issues including abortion, immigration, race-relations and homosexuality. As this is a Graduate Seminar, you are expected to come to our sessions with an open mind as this seminar will be an open non-partisan forum in which to debate solutions for public policy problems related to polarization. This course is being sponsored by the Alexander Hamilton Center for Political Economy at New York University and, as a result, the course will be driven by data, not dogma. We will use modern political economy approaches based in logic and evidence to find answers to contemporary public policy problems and questions of polarization and treat this material as social scientists – not ideologists.

Course Responsibilities and Requirements:

Grading Structure

- Active and Engaged Participation: 15%
- Presentation and Discussion Leader: 15%
- Short Memos: 35% (7 memos * 5% each)
- Research Proposal: 35%

1. Active and Engaged Participation: This is self-explanatory. Each week, please come to class having read the reading and contemplated your classmate's discussion questions. A seminar cannot work unless people have carefully read the assigned material.

2. Presentation and Discussion Leader: All students will be asked to lead a class discussion during the term. Discussion assignments will be made on the first day of class.

Leading a week's discussion entails providing the class with a short overview (30 minutes) of the main issues (strengths, weaknesses, and controversies) and leading a discussion of the readings.

You will be responsible for circulating 6-8 questions to structure the discussion during your week. Think carefully about your questions: you want to point out areas that will generate some debate and discourse rather than simple "yes/no" types of answers. I expect you to organize your presentation so that everyone in the class comes away with the key questions posed by the authors, how they answered those questions, what we've learned and what we still need to know. Your discussion questions will be circulated before class.

All students should arrive at class with questions, topics, and issues to be vetted and debated. Class participation involves both your performance as a session leader and your active, thoughtful participation throughout the term. Your job is to come to class prepared to answer: *What are the central research questions or problems raised by the authors? What core concepts, evidence, and research methods are utilized? As you do the readings, think about what the author did right as well as wrong. What are the interesting ideas in the paper? If you disagree with an argument, what would it require to persuade you? Can these differences be adjudicated through further empirical study?* A good seminar should have active dialog and debate. If someone proposes an idea that is contrary to your view, speak up. I will often be intentionally provocative, so be prepared to push back. Your task is to engage one another in an assessment of the readings.

Fifteen percent of the course grade is based on class participation.

3. Short Memos: All students are asked to prepare brief memos (2-3 pages) relating to the readings for seven of the weeks. It is your choice which weeks you do a short or long memo. Formats may vary but it is useful to include:

- ideas, concepts, arguments that you found stimulating, worth remembering and building on,
- questions, concerns, disagreements with ideas encountered,
- connections, linkages, contradictions between one idea or approach and another.

Note that this does not mean summarize. It would be useful to also keep in mind, given what you've read, what's the next question to be asked? How would you ask it? Are they key dependent/independent variables that the authors neglected to address? Are there theoretical mechanisms that have not been explored?

Memos are due by 9 PM on the day before class. Send them to me via email. Thirty-five percent of course grade will be based on the short memos.

4. Research Proposal:

The final project for this class will be an empirical research design paper. In it, you will lay out a tractable research question. You don't have to answer it, but it needs to be answerable. Your question will ask how some independent variable(s) affect a dependent variable relevant to the class. You will also need to specify a theory that connects them, and discuss the kinds of evidence you would collect to answer your question. The essay should be no more than 20-25 pages, We will discuss it extensively during class. The essay will be due at the assigned final exam time (selected by the registrar).

Communication

All students are required to have an email account that they check regularly. I frequently communicate with students via email, and not checking your email will not be an excuse for missing an assignment or reading.

Statement of Academic Integrity

Students are bound to uphold the NYU "University Policy on Student Conduct."

Expected Background for the Course

As MA students in Politics, you are expected to have familiarity with basic research methods and the various logics of social scientific inference. Some key references worth reviewing include, but are not limited to, the following:

Evera, Stephen van. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H.T. Reynolds. 2005. *Political Science Research Methods*. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Collier, David and Henry E. Brady, eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Readings:

A course packet has been made available at XXX; additional readings will be posted from time to time on Blackboard. Readings that can be found in the course reader are marked **CP** in the syllabus. Several books have been ordered at the campus bookstore; they can also be obtained through any standard bookseller.

- Baker, Wayne E. 2006. *Americas Crisis of Values: Reality and Perception*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Brewer, Mark D. and Jeffrey M. Stonecash 2006. *Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press
- Campbell, David E., eds. 2007. *A Matter of Faith: Religion and the 2004 Presidential Election*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Fiorna, Morris, Samuel Abrams and Jeremy Pope. 2006. *Culture War?* New York: Pearson and Longman.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nivola, Pietro and David W. Brady, eds. 2006. *Red and Blue Nation? Volume I: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*. Washington, D.C. and Stanford, CA: Brookings Institution Press and Hoover Institution.
- Nivola, Pietro and David W. Brady, eds. 2008. *Red and Blue Nation? Volume II: Consequences and Correction of America's Polarized Politics*. Washington, D.C. and Stanford, CA: Brookings Institution Press and Hoover Institution.
- Sabato, Larry J. 2000. *Feeding Frenzy: Attack Journalism and American Politics*. Baltimore: Lanahan Publishing Inc
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S Bonchek. 1996. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York: WW Norton and Company. (Parts I and IV)
- White, John Kenneth. 2003. *The Values Divide*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Wolfe, Alan and James Davison Hunter, eds. 2006. *Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press and the Pew Forum Dialogue Series on Religion and Public Life.

Course Outline:

This is an outline and changes to the reading list most likely will be made over the term as more topical information becomes available. Additionally, there will be a number of guest lectures throughout the term – so specific dates for sessions are not included. Of course, please stay on top of current events and be analytically critical!!

Part I: The Political Economy Lens

- **Session I: Thinking About Politics and Political Economy**

Required:

-Stewart, Charles A. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. New York: WW Norton and Company. (Chapters 1, 7 and 8)

-Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S Bonchek. 1996. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York: WW Norton and Company. (Parts I and IV)

-Fiorina, Morris P. and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. "Political Polarization in the American Public" *Annual Review of Political Science-Vol 11*. (Available Online)

Recommended:

-Brady, David W., and Craig Volden. 2006. *Revolving Gridlock: Politics and Policy from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006. ISBN: 0813343208.

-Downs, Anthony 1997. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.

-Fiorina, Morris P. 1996. *Divided Government, 2nd Edition*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

-Dionne, E.J. 1991. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

-Hilley, John L. 2007. *The Challenge of Legislation Bipartisanship in a Partisan World*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press

Part II: Elite Polarization

- **Session II: Are Elites Polarized? Did Congressional Procedure Cause Polarization?**

Required:

-McCarty, Nolan, Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Chapters 1 and 2)

-Brady, David W. and Hahrie C. Han. 2006. "Polarization Then and Now: A Historical Perspective" in *Red and Blue Nation* (Chapter 3)

-Roberts, Jason and Steven Smith. 2003. "Procedural Contexts, Party Strategy and Conditional Party Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1971-2000." *American Journal of Political Science* 47:305-317. (Available Online)

-Layman, Geoffrey C, Thomas M. Carsey, and Juliana Menasce Horowitz. 2006. "Party Polarization in American Politics: Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences" in *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 9: 83-110 (Available Online)

Recommended:

-Bartels, Larry M. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

-Sinclair, Barbara. 2006. *Party Wars*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. Chapters 3-4.

-Han, Hahrie and David Brady. 2007. "A Delayed Return to Historical Norms: Congressional Party Polarization after the Second World War." *British Journal of Political Science* 37: 505-531.

-Rohde, David. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Post-Reform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

-MacDonald, Stuart and George Rabinowitz. "The Logic of Party Polarization" UNC typescript

- **Session III: Did Electoral Institutions Cause Polarization?**

Required:

-Edsall, Thomas Byrne. 2007. *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power*. New York: Basic Books. (Chapters 2 and 3)

-McCarty, Nolan and Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal. 2007. "Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?" Manuscript: Princeton University. (CP)

- Brownstein, Ronald. 2007. *The Second Civil War*. New York: The Penguin Press. [Pages 107-119] (CP)
- Brady, David, Hahrie Han and Jeremy Pope. 2007. "Primary Elections and Candidate Ideology: Out of Step with the Primary Electorate?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32: 79-105. (Available Online)
- Exchange between Bishop and Klinkner on geographic polarization in *The Forum* (Available Online)

Recommended:

- Lee, Frances. 2008 "Dividers, not Uniters: Presidential Leadership and Senate Partisanship, 1981-2004" *Journal of Politics* (Available Online)
- Wand, Jonathan. "The Allocation of Campaign Contributions by Interest Groups and the Rise of Elite Polarization." Manuscript: Stanford University.

- **Session IV: Did Activists Cause Polarization?**

Required:

- Shafer, Byron E. and William J.M. Claggett. 1995. *The Two Majorities: The Issue Context of Modern American Politics*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. [Chapters 1 and 8] (CP)
- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Chapter 6] (CP)
- Carmines, Edward and James Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pages 106-114 (CP)
- King, David. 2003. "Congress, Polarization and Fidelity to the Median Voter." Manuscript: Harvard University. (CP)
- Layman, Geoffrey. 2000. *The Great Divide*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Pages 94-114] (CP)

Recommended:

- Sinclair, Barbara. 2006. *Party Wars*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. Chapter 2. (CP)
- Perlstein, Rick. 2001. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Smith, Mark. 2007. *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society into the Economic Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sabato, Larry J. ed. 2005. *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election*. New York: Longman.

- **Session V: Did the Mass Public Cause Polarization?**

Required:

-Brewer, Mark D. and Jeffrey M. Stonecash 2006. *Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press. (Entire Book)

-Jacobson, Gary. 2000. "Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection." In *Polarized Politics*, ed. Jon Bond and Richard Fleischer. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press. (CP)

-Rohde, David. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Post-Reform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 45-50, 54-58 (CP)

Part III: Polarization in the Electorate

- **Session VI: Polarization in the Mass Public**

Required:

-Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, 2006. *Culture War?* (Entire book, excluding final chapter)

-Abramowitz, Alan and Kyle Saunders. 2005. "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America." *The Forum* 3(2), Article 1. (Available Online)

-Wolfe and Hunter. 2006. *Is There a Culture War?* (Entire book)

-Hetherington, Marc. 2008. Forthcoming BJPS review article. (Available Online)

Recommended:

-Jacobson, Gary. 2007. *A Divider, Not a Uniter*. New York: Pearson and Longman.

-Fenno Jr, Richard F. 2007. *Congressional Travels: Places, Connections and Authenticity* New York: Longman. (Chapters 1 – 5)

-Black, Earl and Merle Black 2007. *Divided America: The Ferocious Power Struggle in American Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

-Greenberg, Stanley B. 2005. *The Two Americas: Our Current Political Deadlock and How to Break It. – Revised and Updated Edition*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

-Hunter, James Davidson. 1992. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books.

-Hunter, James Davidson. 1994. *Before the Shooting Begins*. New York: Free Press.

- **Session VII: Polarization vs. Sorting in the Mass Public**

Required:

-Fiorina, Morris P. and Matthew Levendusky. 2006. "Disconnected: The Political Class vs. the People." In *Red and Blue Nation* (Chapter 2)

-Abramowitz, Alan, and Kyle Saunders. 1998. "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate." *The Journal of Politics* 60: 634-652. (Available Online)

-Hetherington, Marc. 2001. "Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization." *American Political Science Review* 95: 619-631. (Available Online)

-2008 *Journal of Politics* Exchange: Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders *Is Polarization a Myth?* and Morris P Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C Pope's *Polarization in the American Public: Misconceptions and Misreadings*. (Available Online)

Recommended:

-Bishop, Bill. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

-Levendusky, Matthew. 2007. *Choosing Sides*. Manuscript: University of Pennsylvania.

-Layman, Geoffrey, and Thomas Carsey. 2002a. "Party Polarization and "Conflict Extension" in the American Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science* 46: 786-802.

-Adams, Greg. 1997. "Abortion: Evidence of Issue Evolution." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 718-737.

-Brewer, Mark. 2005. "The Rise of Partisanship and the Expansion of Partisan Conflict within the American Electorate." *Political Research Quarterly* 58: 219-229.

- **Session VIII: Moral vs. Economic Issues/The Values Debate**

Required:

-Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What's the Matter with Kansas?* New York: Metropolitan Books. [Pages 1-27, 237-51] (CP)

-Baker, Wayne E. 2006. *Americas Crisis of Values: Reality and Perception*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapters 3 and 4)

-White, John Kenneth. 2003. *The Values Divide*. Washington DC: CQ Press (Chapters 1, 5 and 7)

-McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, *Polarized America* (Chapter 3)

-Ansolabhere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden and James M. Snyder. 2006. "Purple America?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20: 97-118. (Available Online)

Recommended:

-Gelman, Andrew.

-Bartels, Larry. 2006. "What's the Matter with *What's the Matter with Kansas?*" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1: 201-226.

-Smith, Mark. 2007. *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society into the Economic Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- **Session IX: The Role of Religion**

Required:

-Campbell, David E., eds. 2007. *A Matter of Faith: Religion and the 2004 Presidential Election*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. (Parts 1, 2 and 4)

-Dionne, EJ. 2006. "Polarized by God? American Politics and the Religious Divide." Also read the associated commentary by Alan Wolfe and Andrew Kohut that follows this chapter. In *Red and Blue Nation? Volume 1*.

-Kirkpatrick, David. 2007. "The Evangelical Crackup." *The New York Times* Sunday Magazine Section, 28 October. (CP)

-Layman, Geoffrey. 2008. *Religion and Party Activists: A 'Perfect Storm' of Polarization or a Recipe for Pragmatism?* Working Paper. (CP)

-Layman, Geoffrey. 2000. *The Great Divide*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Chapter 5] (CP)

Recommended:

-Wolfe, Alan. 1999. *One Nation, After All*. New York: Penguin Books.

-Kohut, Andrew, John C. Green, Scott Keeter and Robert C. Toth. 2000. *Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

-Green, John C., Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. 2006. *The Values Campaign? The Christian Right And the 2004 Elections*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

-Green, John C., Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. 2003. *The Christian Right in American Politics: Marching to the Millennium*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

-Wilcox, Clyde and Carin Larson. 2006. *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Religious Right in American Politics, 3rd Ed.* Boulder: Westview Press.

- **Session X: Student Presentations**

Each student briefly present his or her research question and ideas and preliminary findings. The class will collectively

- **Session XI: The Press: From the Printing Press to the Blogosphere**

Required:

-Mutz, Diana. 2006. "How the Mass Media Divide Us." (Chapter 5) and associated "Comments: Two Alternative Perspectives " in *Red and Blue Nation-Volume 1*.

-Prior, Markus. 2007. *Post-Broadcast Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 7) (CP)

-Sabata, Larry J. 2000. *Feeding Frenzy: Attack Journalism and American Politics*. Baltimore: Lanahan Publishing Inc (Entire Book)

-Ververs, Vaughn. 2005 "A New Media" in Sabato, Larry ed. *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election*. New York: Longman (CP)

-Cornfield, Michael. 2005. "Going Broadband, Getting Netwise: The Cyber-Education of John Kerry and other Political Actors." in Sabato, Larry ed. *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election*. New York: Longman (CP)

Recommended:

-Mutz, Diana. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

-Leighley, Jan E. 2003. *Mass Media And Politics: A Social Science Perspective*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

-Bennett, W. Lance. 2006. *News: The Politics of Illusion (7th Edition)*. New York: Longman.

-Iyengar, Shanto and Jennifer A. McGrady. 2006. *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

- Graber, Doris A. 2005. *Mass Media And American Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Jones, Jeffrey P. 2004. *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Mutz, Diana. 2007. "Effects of 'In Your Face' Television Discourse on Perceptions of a Legitimate Opposition." *American Political Science Review* 101: 621-636.
- van Zoonen, Liesbet. 2004. *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Gonzales, Manuel G and Richard Delgado. 2006. *The Politics of Fear: How Republicans Use Money, Race, and the Media to Win*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers

Part IV: The Consequences of Polarization

- **Session XII: Consequences of Polarization**

Required:

-Sinclair, Barbara. 2006. *Party Wars*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press [Chapter 10] (CP)

The following readings are all in Nivola and Brady, eds. 2008. *Red and Blue Nation? Volume II:*

-Marc J. Hetherington. 2008. *Turned Off or Turned On? How Polarization Affects Political Engagement* [p. 1 -33]

-Deborah Jordan Brooks and John G. Geer. 2008. *Comments*. [p. 34-39]

-Martin P. Wattenberg . 2008. *Comments*. [p. 40-54]

-Barbara Sinclair. 2008. *Spoiling the Sausages? How a Polarized Congress Deliberates and Legislates* [p. 55 -87]

-Christopher H. Foreman Jr. 2008. *Comments*. [p. 88-92]

-Keith Krehbiel 2008. *Comments*. [p. 93 – 106]

-David W. Brady, John Ferejohn, and Laurel Harbridge 2008. *Polarization and Public Policy: A General Assessment* [p. 185 - 216]

-Andrea L. Campbell 2008. *Comments*. [p. 217-223]

-Eric M. Patashnik *Comments*. [p. 224-308]

Recommended:

-Hacker, Jacob S. and Paul Pierson. 2005. *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

-Eilperin, Juliet. 2006. *Fight Club Politics: How Partisanship is Poisoning the House of Representatives (Hoover Studies in Politics, Economics, and Society)* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

-Judis, John B. 2001. *The Paradox of American Democracy: Elites, Special Interests, and the Betrayal of the Public Trust*. New York: Routledge.

- **Session XIII: What (If Anything) Can Be Done About Polarization?**

Required:

-Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of Polarized America* (Concluding chapter)

-Brownstein, Ronald. 2007. *The Second Civil War*. New York: The Penguin Press. [p. 376-412] (CP)

The following readings are all in Nivola and Brady, eds. 2008. *Red and Blue Nation? Volume II:*

-Pietro S. Nivola and William A. Galston 2008. *Toward Depolarization* [p.235-284]

-Nelson W. Polsby 2008. *Comments*. [p. 285-287]

-Aberbach, Joel D. 2008. *Comments* [p. 288-294]