

POLS-5311 (2023-FALL) 060

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Political Polarization: Causes, Consequences, and Contemporary Analysis

POLS 5311
(ONLINE)

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CAS 125

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Office Hours: Tues and Thurs. 3:30PM-5PM

This syllabus is subject to change to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.

Course Information

This course dives deep into the roots and ramifications of political polarization, employing a wide range of academic resources to examine its many facets. Through a combination of readings, films, podcasts, and research assignments, students will develop a nuanced understanding of this critical issue and its impact on contemporary society. Throughout the course, the readings, viewings, and assignments aim to provide students with a holistic understanding of political polarization, its causes, manifestations, and potential solutions. The course will challenge students to critically assess existing literature, identify gaps in our understanding, and propose areas for future research.

Course Objectives

1. Equip students with a thorough grasp of the historical and contemporary trends of political polarization, emphasizing its various dimensions, such as affective, asymmetric, elite, mass, and media-driven polarization.
2. Develop students' ability to critically evaluate academic literature, media portrayals, and real-world manifestations of political polarization, recognizing underlying biases, methodologies, and implications.
3. Guide students in the creation of a conceptual research paper that identifies strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the existing literature on political polarization, while formulating actionable research questions for future exploration.

4. Enhance students' capacity to dissect and interpret the role of media—ranging from news outlets to documentaries—in shaping, mirroring, or intensifying political divides.
5. Foster students' skills in articulating complex ideas related to political polarization, both in written assignments and oral discussions, ensuring clarity, coherence, and critical insight.

Required Texts

Hetherington, Marc J., et al.

Prius or Pickup?: How the Answers to Four Simple Questions Explain America's Great Divide

ISBN: 978-0544986969

Mason, Lilliana.

Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity

ISBN: 978-0226524689

Berry, Jeffrey M. and Sarah Sobieraj.

The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility

ISBN: 978-0190498467

Sunstein, Cass.

Going to Extremes

ISBN: 978-0195378016

Abramowitz, Alan.

The Disappearing Center

ISBN: 978-0300172027

Arceneaux, Kevin & Johnson, Martin.

Changing Minds or Changing Channels?

ISBN: 978-0226047447

Hetherington, Marc & Weiler, Jonathan.

Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics

ISBN: 978-0521732009

Levendusky, Matthew.

How Partisan Media Polarize America

ISBN: 978-0226069144

Assignments

Topic Development for Final Paper: A brief 1-2 page outline on a chosen topic of interest related to course content.

Abstract Submission: A concise summary (250 words) of the intended final paper.

Perception Gap Analysis: Take the quiz, compare your results to national findings, and reflect on its significance.

Media Analysis: A content review of one week's coverage from a chosen national news source.

Annotated Bibliography: A list of all the sources used for the research paper, each accompanied by a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraph.

Final Paper: A 10-15 page conceptual essay related to a course topic.

Grading

Weekly Reflections: 20%

Watch and Discuss: 20%

Assignments: 20%

Final Paper: 40%

Accommodations

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office. To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker or extended time on exams), students must also register with the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) (<https://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices/>), located at UC 3150 (903-566-7079). It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements.

Important Covid-19 Information for Classroom

Students are expected to wear face masks covering their nose and mouth in public settings (including classrooms and laboratories). The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.uttyler.edu/center-for-ethics/) (<https://www.uttyler.edu/center-for-ethics/>) and a sign of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff.

Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, digestive issues (e.g. nausea, diarrhea), or a higher than normal temperature should stay at home and are encouraged to use the [UT Tyler COVID-19 Information and Procedures \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.uttyler.edu/coronavirus/) (<https://www.uttyler.edu/coronavirus/>) website to review protocols, check symptoms, and report possible exposure. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, or call (903) 566-7079 or email saroffice@uttyler.edu (<mailto:saroffice@uttyler.edu>).

Recording of Class Sessions

Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

Schedule

Refer to Canvas

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. Students Rights and Responsibilities To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>
(<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>)

(<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>) Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php> (<http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>)

(<http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>) UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free
(<http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free>)

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. (For Fall, the Census Date is Sept. 12.) Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date (Sept. 12th) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
 - Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
 - Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid State-Mandated Course

Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more

information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester. (Revised 05/17)

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as

class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;

- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructor has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
 - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
 - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
 - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
 - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

“Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.

“Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
 - UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

[Student Resources \(https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/pages/student-resources\)](https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/pages/student-resources)

[University Policies and Information \(https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/pages/university-policies-and-information\)](https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/pages/university-policies-and-information)

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Sun Aug 27, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Intro to Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/750929)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - That Open Secret About Political Polarization (2023) (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752368)	due by 11:59pm
	 Develop Research Topic/Question (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/747713)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 3, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Affective Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/750984)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Divided States of America (2017) **Start Early, This Is A Two-Parter** (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752370)	due by 11:59pm
	 Develop Abstract (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/747712)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 10, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Elite Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751040)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Lies, Politics, and Democracy (2022) (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752371)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 17, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Asymmetric Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/750986)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Admit It. Republicans Have Broken Politics (2018) (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752373)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 24, 2023	 Watch and Discuss - Start A New Life Free Of Liberals With	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
	"Conservative Move" (2018) (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752375)	
	 Reflection Paper - Mass Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751080)	due by 11:59pm
	 A Week's Review of a National News Source (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751192)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 1, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Media Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751111)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Where Does Mainstream Media Go Wrong? (2022) (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752376)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 8, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Education, Class, and Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751227)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Can Higher Education Help Bridge The Political Divide? (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752378)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 15, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Racial/Ethnic Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751502)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Targeting El Paso (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752427)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 22, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Religious Polarization (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751503)	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - The Evangelical Divide Over Religion	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
	in Politics https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752451	
	 Outline & Annotated Bibliography for Paper https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/747714	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 29, 2023	 The Perception Gap Analysis https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/751537	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Do Politics Make Us Irrational? https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752452	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Are More Women Really Registering To Vote Post-Dobbs? https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752453	due by 11:59pm
Sun Nov 5, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Sex/Gender Polarization https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752337	due by 11:59pm
	 Watch and Discuss - Revenge of the Tribes: How the American Empire Could Fall https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752454	due by 11:59pm
Sun Nov 12, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Group Polarization https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752343	due by 11:59pm
	 Reflection Paper - Polarization and Age https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752351	due by 11:59pm
Sun Nov 19, 2023	 Watch and Discuss - Gen X and Gen Z Take Different Political Paths https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752455	due by 11:59pm
Sun Nov 26, 2023	 Reflection Paper - Why We're Polarized https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752367	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Mon Dec 4, 2023	 Watch and Discuss - Why We're Polarized (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/752456)	due by 11:59pm
Mon Dec 4, 2023	 Research Paper (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/37380/assignments/747715)	due by 11:59pm