

PSC232/PSCI 32W: Disagreement in a Democratic Society

Ps1.3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is consensus overrated? In this seminar course we will study the role of disagreement in a democratic society. Topics will include the causes and consequences of political polarization, academic freedom and viewpoint diversity on college campuses, and practical tools for managing disagreements

READINGS

The required readings for this course are available on Canvas. Use the course website to find the readings. It is important to have an eye toward how data, evidence, and research are used in those articles in order to stay up-to-date with news in this area and access some required readings. Students should obtain free subscriptions to [Inside Higher Education](#), [The New York Times](#), and the

[Street Journal](#)

[Wall](#)

PROFESSOR PRIMO'S PERSPECTIVE ON SEMINAR COURSES

Seminar courses are spaces where ideas should be shared, debated, and challenged, as this is how we strengthen our understandings and beliefs about the world. To that end, Professor Primo will often encourage students to question their beliefs and further refine their arguments. In other situations, Professor Primo may articulate arguments for or against an idea in ways that do not necessarily reflect his own views. When appropriate, he may choose to articulate his own opinions, and students are encouraged to challenge him, as well.

To foster an open exchange of ideas and allow for discussion of controversial topics, class sessions will not be recorded. There may be times when class gets "uncomfortable." This is a positive, not a negative, so long as it is clear we are all working together toward a shared end of deeper understandings about the world. To use an analogy, you can go to the gym and sit on an exercise bike pedaling slowly and texting friends. You are likely to be quite comfortable doing so. Alternatively, you can get on the same bike with a heart rate monitor and push yourself hard, to the point that you are quite uncomfortable. Which is the better workout? Think of a seminar course in the same way – a workout for your mind and your ideas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- x Prepare for, attend, and be an active participant in class. A seminar of approximately 20 students requires the active involvement of all students. Students are expected to attend all classes (health permitting), complete the readings in advance of class, and share their ideas during class discussions.
- x Complete a take-home midterm essay. On April 1, you will be given a 1000-word essay that is based on the readings. The essay is due by 11:59 PM on April 1.
- x Complete the Perspectives Program. Students will be placed in a small group for 60 minutes after completing online lessons regarding the program. They will come to class prepared to discuss the program.

- x Read the news and share relevant articles. Students are expected to spend 50 minutes outside of class each week reading the

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Note:

February 12: Political Polarization II

- Iyengar, Shanto et al. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." Annual Review of Political Science 22:129-146.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chs. 2.
- Dias, Nicholas, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2021. "The Nature of Affective Polarization: Disentangling Policy Disagreement and Partisan Identity." *American Journal of Political Science* 66(3):775-790.
- Krupnikov, Yanna, and John Barry Ryan. 2022. *Other Divide: Polarization and Disengagement in American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chs. 1, 4.

February 19: Political

- x McGuire, Patricia. 2023. "When Presidents Speak Out, They Encourage Students to Do the Same." Chronicle of Higher Education, Oct. 26.

Survey Says...

- x College Pulse/FIRE. 2024. "2024 College Free Speech Rankings." (Skim the findings.)

March 18: Higher Education + DEI vs. (?) Free Speech

- Whittington, Keith. 2019. "Free Speech and the Diverse University." Fordham Law Review 88(6):2453-2477.
- Baer, Ulrich. 2019. What Snowflakes Get Right. New York: Oxford University Press. 8.3 (1):4-10. [https://www.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190091833/chapter-8.3](#)
- Foer, E. J. 2018. How We Got Here: The Rise and Fall of the New American Ideology. New York: Random House. 107-108.

- x Johansson, Frans. 2007. *The Medici Effect: Breakthrough Insights at the Intersection of Ideas, Concepts, and Cultures*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, ch. 6.
- x Elkins, Caroline et al. 2024. "Critics of D.E.I. Forget That It Works." *New York Times*, Jan. 21.

April 15: Practical Tools I

- x Complete the Constructive Dialogue Institute's *Respectives* program.

April 22 Practical Tools II

Perspectives on Disagreeing "Better"

- x Brooks, Arthur C. 2019. *Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America from Our Culture of Contempt*. New York: Broadside Books, ch. 8.
- x Levendusky, Matthew. 2023. *Our Common Bond*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, ch. 7.

Organizations Committed to Bridging Divides

- Braver Angels
- Bridging the Gap
- Listen First Project
- PEN America
- Lederman, Jillian. 2022. "Free Expression and the First Year College Orientation." *Bipartisan Policy Center*.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

Intellectual Property

No photography, video recording, or audio recording of any kind is allowed during class. In addition, production or