

Instructor Information

Mary Cheney, Visiting Lecturer

Office Hours by appointment

Course Title: United We Stand - Divided We Fall: The Rise of Polarization and Social Division - and What it Means for America's Future.

Course Description: In this course, we will examine political, social, and cultural trends over the last 50 years - how they have helped create our current political climate and how they could impact the future of the United States. Course topics will include in-depth study of specific events and individuals as well as more general study of trends over years and decades. Special attention will be paid to understanding how trends in one area can influence and drive changes in the others as well to discussion of the question of whether these trends can, or should, be altered.

Course Number: PUBPOL 3510/5510, GOVT 3512/6512, AMST 3510/6510

Credits: 4 Credits

Grading Option: Letter/Pass-Fail

Course Overview and Goals:

When did bipartisan become a bad word? Should we unfriend and unfollow people who have different opinions than our own? How did we become a country that grows more polarized and divided every year? Most importantly, can we change, or are we destined to continue down this path?

The goal of this course is to provide a foundation of understanding of the trends and movements that have driven our country over the last 50 years - creating a society where we find ourselves increasingly isolated, divided, and unable to understand or communicate with one another. Some of these changes have been driven by deliberate campaigns and movements, others have been the result of actions that seemed unimportant or inconsequential at the time.

Through this class, students will develop understanding of what those changes are, how they have influenced and impacted one another, and what they could mean for the future of the United States. Students will also be challenged and encouraged to apply their own critical thinking and analysis to various scenarios and potential solutions to the current U.S. political situation.

Students will gain knowledge through academic texts, news and opinion articles, and videos as well as through the instructor's over 40 years of first-hand experience with politics at the local, state, and federal level.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Identify long term trends impacting politics in the U.S.
- Identify key individuals and events that have contributed to those trends
- Analyze the impacts of those key individuals and events and discuss how those impacts are likely to affect future U.S. politics
- Formulate and discuss possible strategies to reinforce, or alter, current trends within the U.S.
- *(Graduate Students) Synthesize the scholarly understanding of aspects of polarization.*

Course Requirements:

Class Participation - 10% of Grade

To build a sophisticated understanding of the evolution of U.S. politics over the last 50 years and how that impacts our position today and what it means for tomorrow, you will need to engage in all components of the course. I expect that you will complete all required reading and videos in advance of the session for which they are listed, take notes on the material, and be prepared to summarize and critically evaluate it. You will help guide the discussion in our class meetings; your classmates are counting on you to bring your own perspective to our conversations. Classes will include both lecture and discussion components – but feel free to ask on-topic questions at any point. I encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints in class and your writing assignments; you should work within the framework presented but always think for yourself and feel comfortable articulating any questions/opinions you wish to share.

Assignments - 35% of Grade

Redistricting Project - 15% of Grade. Students will be presented with multiple options of redistricting maps. Proposed maps will be focused on different priority areas - minority representation, equal division of population, rural vs. urban representation, etc. Each student will write a 3–5-page paper discussing which map they chose, the criteria they used to make that choice, and providing support for that decision. *Graduate students*

must provide an additional 1-2 pages providing a synthesis of the scholarly analyses of redistricting.

Perspective Writing Assignment - 15% of Grade. Students will choose an event or issue from the last 50 years and write about that event from two different and opposing points of view. They will write a 5–7-page paper that provides a brief description of the event and then discusses how different people from different points of view would perceive that event, what the event would mean to those people and how it might impact those peoples' behavior moving forward. *Graduate students must provide an additional 1-2 pages providing a synthesis of the scholarly understanding of the people analyzed in the main paper (this might be demographic/economic/cultural for specific groups, or it might be for a specific person).*

Turning Point Writing Assignment - 10% of Grade. Students will each choose an event from the last fifty years that they believe has had an oversized impact on the current U.S. political situation. Students will write a 3–5-page paper that briefly describes the event, discusses how - or if - the event was noticed at the time, and discuss how they believe it has contributed to the current U.S. political situation. *Graduate students must provide an additional 1-2 pages providing a synthesis of the scholarly understanding of the history of the particular event used.*

Mid Term - 20% of Grade. This will be a take home essay exam. The exam will be posted on Canvas as 6:30pm on October 28th. Students will have 24 hours to complete it. The exam will consist of three essay questions. You are to choose two of the questions to answer. The exam is open note and open source. You may use materials from outside of class. The only restrictions are that you are not allowed to use AI or each other. All work must be your own.

Final Critical Analysis Assignment - 30% of Grade.

This serves as the final culminating assignment for the course and involves the application of the information and analysis we have gleaned from the entire course to provide an analysis of the current US political situation as well as possible steps forward. The final paper should be 8-10 pages in length and students are encouraged to be creative and original in their thinking and in the next steps they propose while providing supporting arguments for those steps based on course readings and class discussions. *Graduate students must provide an additional 1-2 pages providing a synthesis of the scholarly understanding of their chosen solution.*

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class Participation	10%
Written Assignments	40%
Midterm Exam	20%

Final Paper	30%
Total:	100%

Letter Grades Will Be Assigned as Follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Percent
A	4.00	94-100
A-	3.67	90-93
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.00	84-86
B-	2.67	80-83
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.00	74-76
C-	1.67	70-73
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.00	65-66
F	.00	Below 65

Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

If you have any doubts about what constitutes a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity, or any other issue related to academic integrity, please ask your instructor.

Students agree that by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Inclusivity Statement

Cornell University (as an institution) and I (as a human being and instructor of this course) am committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to persons with temporary and permanent disabilities, students with DACA or undocumented status, students facing mental health or other personal challenges, and students with other kinds of learning challenges. Please feel free to let me

know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class. Some resources that might be of use include:

Office of Student Disability Services: <https://sds.cornell.edu>

Cornell Health CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services).
<https://health.cornell.edu/services/counseling-psychiatry>

Undocumented/DACA Student support: See the list of campus resources at
<https://dos.cornell.edu/undocumented-daca-support/undergraduate-admissions-financial-aid>

This course aims to collectively create a welcoming, supportive and tolerant environment for all students and respects the various forms of diversity that they bring, including differences related to race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, geography, age, size, ability, etc. Towards this purpose, I ask that we be respectful of each other, actively listen, participate, ask relevant questions, and give balanced, specific, and constructive verbal and written feedback to each other.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with Disabilities: Your access in this course is important to me. Please request your accommodation letter early in the semester, or as soon as you become registered with SDS, so that we have adequate time to arrange your approved academic accommodations.

Note On Course Content

In this course, we will discuss sensitive issues, including, but not limited to: race, gender, religion, class, free speech, hate groups, abortion, family structure, technology, propaganda, and economic inequality. We will be reading material and watching videos from a wide range of sources, including sources and materials that individual students may find offensive. Please note, including this material in the course does not mean that I endorse those opinions. It means the I believe it is important to see and hear all sides and opinions, even those that may be considered offensive.

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

<u>Week/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Aug 26 Session 1	Introduction and Course Overview.	<i>Glubb, John. 1977. The Fate of Empires</i>	

	<p>Is America on the decline?</p> <p>Does the current US social and political climate threaten the future of the republic?</p>	<p><i>and Search for Survival</i></p> <p><i>Walter, Barbara. TED Talk. Is the US Headed Towards Another Civil War?</i></p>	
<p>Sept. 9</p> <p>Session 2</p>	<p>All Votes are Not Created Equal</p> <p>Why are the lines we draw on political maps so important?</p> <p>Is our democracy representative?</p> <p>Who really elects our leaders and how are they elected?</p> <p>Why do some votes matter more than others?</p>	<p>Litt, David. 2020. <i>Democracy in One Book or Less</i>. pp 121-188.</p> <p><i>Corasaniti, Nick; Epstein, Reid; Johnston, Taylor; Lieberman, Rebecca and Weingart, Eden. 2021. How Maps Reshape American Politics</i></p>	
<p>Sept 16</p> <p>Session 3</p>	<p>The Evolution of Political Campaigns</p> <p>How has the nature of political campaigns changed?</p> <p>What is the role of money in politics?</p>	<p>Riell, Bob. 2022. <i>Quest for the Presidency</i>. 217-327.</p> <p>Litt, David. 2020. <i>Democracy in One Book or Less</i>. pp 189-225.</p>	
<p>Sept 23</p> <p>Session 4</p>	<p>Barry Goldwater is to Ronald Reagan as Sarah Palin is to Donald Trump</p> <p>How are the roles played by Barry Goldwater and Sarah Palin similar? How are they different?</p>	<p><i>Goldwater, Barry. 1964 Convention Acceptance Speech</i></p> <p><i>Reagan, Ronald. 1964. A Time for Choosing</i></p> <p><i>Reagan, Ronald. 1981. First Inaugural Address</i></p>	

	<p>Is Donald Trump an aberration or the next stage in the evolution of the GOP?</p>	<p>Keller, Michael and Kirkpatrick, David. 2022. <i>Their America is Vanishing. Like Trump, They Insist They Were Cheated</i></p> <p>Palin, Sarah. 2008. RNC Acceptance Speech</p> <p>Lind, Michael. 2016. Donald Trump, the Perfect Populist</p>	
<p>Sept 30 Session 5</p>	<p>The Sledgehammer and the Fox: Newt Gingrich and Mitch McConnell</p> <p>How did these two men alter the political landscape?</p> <p>How will their actions impact our nation’s future?</p>	<p>Gingrich, Newt. 1978. <i>Speech to College Republicans</i></p> <p>Osborne, David. 1984. <i>The Swinging Days of Newt Gngrich</i></p> <p>Coppins, McKay. 2018. <i>The Man Who Broke Politics</i></p> <p>Mitch McConnell: Hero or Villain?</p> <p>Piccotti, Tyler and Ott, Tim. 2023. <i>Mitch McConnell</i></p>	
<p>Oct 7 Session 6</p>	<p>The Year 2000: Understanding the Long-Term Impacts of Our Actions</p> <p>How are the events and trends from the turn of the millenium still impacting us today?</p> <p>How did the 2000 election foreshadow problems that would arise in later elections?</p> <p>What weaknesses and problems did it reveal in our electoral system?</p>	<p>No assigned reading for this class</p>	<p>Redistricting Project Due</p>

	What are the potential long-term implications from our current political situation?		
Oct 21 Session 7	The Rise of the Religious Right Who/what is the religious right? What issues drove the rise in political involvement of the religious right? How does it continue to influence politics today?	Balmer, Randall. 2014. <i>The Real Origins of the Religious Right</i> Fitzgerald, Frances. 2007. <i>A Disciplined, Charging Army</i> Dias, Elizabeth and Graham, Ruth. 2022 <i>The Growing Religious Fervor in the American Right: "This is a Jesus Movement."</i> The Watchmen's Creed	
Oct. 28 Session 8	Mid Term Exam		
Nov 4 Session 9	The Evolution of the Democrats – How the Party of Woodrow Wilson Became the Party of Barack Obama	Kazin, Michael. 2022. <i>What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party.</i> Pp. 204-321. Declaration of Constitutional Principles -1956	Please note – while we will be discussing the evolution of the Democratic Party, given that this is the day before the election, we will likely spend a great deal of time talking about the current race.
Nov 11 Session 10	Feminazis and Dittoheads - the rise of talk radio and cable news	Rosenwald, Brian. 2019. <i>Talk Radio's America: How an Industry Took Over a Political Party that</i>	

	<p>How did the abolishment of the Fairness Doctrine impact political debate?</p> <p>How do we ensure that all points of view are presented?</p> <p>Should they be presented?</p>	<p><i>Took Over the United States</i>. Pp. 1-31, 101-201</p> <p>Graham, Jennifer. 2021. <i>America after 25 Years of Fox News</i></p> <p>Mark, Michelle. 2016. <i>A Brief History of Breitbart News</i></p>	
<p>Nov 18 Session 11</p>	<p>Narrative, Perspective, Bias and Propaganda</p> <p>What is propaganda?</p> <p>Are all facts created equal?</p>	<p>No Assigned Reading for this Class Session</p>	<p>Turning Point Assignment Due</p>
<p>Nov 25 Session 12</p>	<p>Social Media – Like, Follow, and Unfriend in an Age of Alternative Facts, Conspiracy Theories, and Political Indoctrination</p>	<p>Haidt, Jonathan. 2022. <i>Why the Past 10 Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid</i>.</p> <p>Madrigal, Alexis C. 2019. <i>The Reason Conspiracy Videos Work So Well on YouTube</i>.</p>	<p>Given that this is the Monday before Thanksgiving, this class will either be virtual or at least have a virtual option</p>
<p>Dec. 2 Session 13</p>	<p>The Alternate Reality of Life Inside the Beltway</p> <p>How is life inside the beltway different than what happens in the rest of the country?</p> <p>Is that a problem?</p> <p>If so, how do we fix it?</p>	<p>No assigned reading for this class</p>	<p>Perspective assignment due at beginning of class</p>
<p>Dec. 9</p>	<p>What Comes Next?</p>	<p>Applebaum, Anne. 2020. <i>Twilight of</i></p>	

Session 14	<p>What does the future hold for the USA?</p> <p>Are we on an inevitable downward slope or are America's best days still in the future?</p>	<p><i>Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism. Pp 1-22, 142-191.</i></p> <p>French, David. 2023. <i>Take Threats of "National Divorce" Seriously</i></p>	
Final	Final Project Due TBD		

Course Materials

Required Textbooks and Materials

Democracy in One Book or Less. David Litt. Harper Collins. 2020

Quest for the Presidency: The Storied and Surprising History of Presidential Campaigns in America. Bob Riel. Potomac Books. 2022.

Talk Radio's America: How an Industry Took Over a Political Party That Took Over the United States. Brian Rosenwald. Harvard University Press. 2019.

Twilight of Democracy. Anne Applebaum. Doubleday Books. 2020.

What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party. Michael Kazin. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. 2022.

Additional Textbooks and Materials

Various articles and other packets of materials will be provided by the instructor and posted on Canvas prior to the class sections for which they are assigned.

Instructor Bio/About Your Instructor

Mary Cheney has over 25 years of strategic communications, political affairs, management and community engagement experience. With a strong issue management and public affairs background, Mary has a proven and successful record of managing large complex projects and campaigns with multi-million dollar budgets. She has directed numerous campaigns at the local, state and national level, and has also served on advisory boards and boards of directors for several non-profit and for-profit organizations.

Ms. Cheney currently serves as Managing Partner for New Troy Strategies, a Washington, DC based strategic communications firm where she oversees all aspects of the firm's operation, including: business development, client management, finance and overall strategy. Under her leadership, New Troy Strategies has managed highly successful campaigns for clients in a wide range of industries, including: telecommunications, energy, financial services and consumer products. These campaigns have involved ballot initiatives and legislative debates as well as overall issue awareness and management. As Managing Partner, Mary is involved with all aspects of each campaign, including: overall strategy, research, messaging, design, and outreach.

Prior to joining New Troy Strategies, Mary was a partner at Navigators Global where she successfully led and grew the firm's strategic communications and grassroots practice and was instrumental in launching the firm's international expansion.

Mary began her career working for Coors Brewing Company. While at Coors, she held multiple communications and public relations positions and managed a wide range of issue areas including: alcohol issues, environmental concerns and diversity. She developed and implemented a campaign to effectively end a multi-year, national boycott of Coors products by the LGBT community and oversaw the company's groundbreaking and innovative efforts in marketing to that community. Mary also served in a leadership role at AOL where she was Chief of Staff to AOL's Vice Chairman. During this time, she directed various projects, including developing communications plans, creating marketing plans for various AOL portals, and working with AOL's privacy taskforce. Her work with the taskforce led her to become AOL's Vice President of Standards and Practices, where she directed the team responsible for managing issues such as internet privacy, child safety and the use of behavioral targeting in advertising.

Her professional political campaign experience began when she joined the Bush-Cheney presidential campaign as a special assistant to the Vice Presidential nominee. During the 2004 re-election, she served as the Director of Vice Presidential Operations, overseeing all messaging, event planning, budget, staffing and scheduling for the Vice President's campaign operation. In 2006, her book, *Now It's My Turn*, about her experiences on the campaign trail and growing up in politics was published.

Ms. Cheney received her Bachelor of Arts in History from Colorado College and a Master of Business Administration from the Daniels Business School at the University of Denver. In 2014, she was named one of the Politico 50 by Politico Magazine. She has served on numerous non-profit boards of directors and boards of advisors, including: Georgetown University's Institute of Politics and Public Policy, the Cardiovascular Institute at George Washington University Hospital, and Capital Partners for Education, an organization dedicated to providing low-income students with skills and resources to help them achieve their goals. She is also currently a member of the board of advisors for Interos, a company which is using artificial intelligence and machine learning to provide instant visibility into global supply chains.