

Political Science 3396F (550)
The Polarisation of American Politics

Seminar: Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: W17
Instructor: Dr. Zheger Hassan
Email: zhassan3@uwo.ca
Office: Lucas Annex
Office Hours: Tuesdays 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Course Description:

This course examines political polarisation in American politics and society. The course will begin by considering the rise of polarisation in American institutions such as the Congress, presidency, and the media. The weekly seminars will investigate questions such as: What explains the increased partisanship among American elected officials and voters? What are the causes of policy gridlock within and between the branches of government? How does the erosion of political and cultural norms contribute to polarisation in American government and society? The course will introduce students to the ideas and theories that will shed light on how polarisation impacts elections, the interactions between the three branches of government, the media, and American society. We will conclude by considering the political, economic, and social consequences of the polarisation of American politics in comparative perspective.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding of the meaning and impact of political polarisation on American government and society;
- Explain the rise and evolution of polarisation in the American political system and government;
- Understand and explain how political actors such as individuals and political parties shape and influence polarisation;
- Develop the ability to critically assess these ideas and information and to clearly communicate knowledge in written and oral form
- Develop the ability to critically evaluate academic and non-academic literature and to engage with the ideas in a constructive manner; and
- Develop the skills to present information to an audience and to engage with others in a meaningful discussion about ideas covered in the course.

Note on course content and delivery:

The course material will be delivered to students in-person during the scheduled day and time listed for our course. *If* the circumstances change because of COVID-19 and we are forced to move online, the course will be delivered by a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

The educational materials developed for this course, including, but not limited to, lecture notes and slides, handout materials, examinations and assignments, and any materials posted to OWL, are the intellectual property of the course instructor. These materials have been developed for student use only and they are not intended for wider dissemination and/or communication outside of a given

course. Posting or providing unauthorized audio, video, or textual material of lecture content to third-party websites violates an instructor's intellectual property rights, and the Canadian Copyright Act. Recording lectures in any way is prohibited in this course unless specific permission has been granted by the instructor. Failure to follow these instructions may be in contravention of the university's Student Non-Academic Code of Conduct and/or Code of Academic Conduct, and will result in appropriate penalties. Participation in this course constitutes an agreement by all parties to abide by the relevant University Policies, and to respect the intellectual property of others during and after their association with Huron University College.

Required Readings:

1. The required readings (articles and book chapters) will be made available on the course website through OWL.
2. Students should also consult the media on a regular basis to stay updated on matters concerning American government and politics. Some suggestions include reading/listening to the *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *National Public Radio*.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Assignment	Value	Date
Attendance and Participation	30	Ongoing
Seminar Presentation	20	TBD
Research Paper 1	25	October 26, 2021
Research Paper 2	25	December 7, 2021

Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to master the assigned readings prior to coming to class and to actively participate in and contribute to the weekly discussions. The participation grade will be based on attendance, evidence of preparation, quality of comments, capacity to analyze ideas, **reference to the readings**, and engagement with the views expressed by others. Students are expected to participate in a constructive and respectful manner. Please refer to Huron's 'Code of Student Conduct' (available on our OWL site) for additional guidance on classroom expectations.

Seminar Presentation:

All students will be required to give one oral presentation based on readings assigned for the class. The presentation should include a *brief* summary of the material (assume that everyone has done the reading), contain a critical analysis of the ideas and issues arising from the readings, and identify key weaknesses and omissions. The presentation is to be a critical assessment of the readings (not a summary) and it should be between 10-15 minutes in duration. You are also expected to raise issues and to pose questions for your classmates, and to facilitate (along with the professor) class discussion. The presentation should be accompanied by a **one-page handout** covering the main points of the presentation. (The handout may be in point form.) Students may also use PowerPoint to deliver the presentation.

Research Paper:

Students will write a research paper on a topic related to the course material. A list of topics will be made available to students – students can also suggest their own topic. (Topics must be related to the contents of the course and should demonstrate knowledge of the issue to be examined.) It is recommended that students draft a proposal, which should include a brief outline of the topic, a

clear statement of your primary research question(s), a tentative argument (i.e., thesis statement), and a provisional bibliography (including books and articles).

You will be required to write two papers, the second of which must be a revision of the first. They will be graded equally. You will make revisions and improve the first research paper on the basis of my feedback (i.e., suggestions and criticisms). You will also be credited for any improvements you make and so it is to your advantage to be self-critical.

Research Paper 1 must be between 2,500-3,000 words, typed and double-spaced, in length not counting appendices or the compulsory title page or bibliography. The paper must be formatted in Times New Roman or Calibri 12pt font with 2.54 cm margins all around. Papers that do not meet these basic criteria will be penalized. Students must conduct research with a MINIMUM of 12 references. Of these, reference at least **SIX** relevant academic sources (this minimum is only a recommendation – you can of course reference more academic sources). The other six sources must come from reputable media sources, think tanks, interest groups, and governmental publications. The assignment must include a bibliography and title page. References must follow a standard citation style (e.g., ASA, Chicago, or MLA), and must include specific page references for quoted passages. Students will be expected to submit their papers to turnitin.com. Detailed instructions and guidelines will be posted on OWL.

With Research Paper 2 you must submit (1) a 300-400 word statement (in point form) of the revisions you have made and how you have met my suggestions and criticisms; and (2) your revised paper. Every assertion in this outline must make reference to specific pages in Research Paper 2. (Grammatical revisions and other small changes can be noted in general terms.)

The Research Paper should be well-written and organized – marks will be deducted for poorly written or poorly organized papers. Style, grammar, punctuation, and spelling are all important and will affect the grade.

Academic Offenses and Plagiarism: Scholastic offenses are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the university policy reprinted on the last page of the course outline. All written assignments must be submitted both in hard copy and electronically to the plagiarism checking website turnitin.com (available through the course website and under license to the University). Please be advised that: All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com

POL3396F Weekly Reading List and Class Schedule:

Week 1 (September 14): Introduction to the course and organization of seminars

Readings:

- Noam Gidron, James Adams, and Will Horne, “Americans Hate the “Other Side” in Politics. But so do Europeans,” *Washington Post*. November 6, 2020. Available on OWL.

- James Campbell, *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), Chapter 1.

Week 2 (September 21): Overview of American Government

Readings:

- David Siemers, *The Myth of Coequal Branches: Restoring the Constitution's Separation of Functions* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2018): pp. 1-9.
- James Goldgeier and Elizabeth Saunders, "The Unconstrained Presidency: Checks and Balances Eroded Long Before Trump," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97 (2018).
- Pew Research Centre, "Republicans and Democrats Move Further Apart in Views of Voting Access," *Pew Research Centre*. April 22, 2021. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/04/22/republicans-and-democrats-move-further-apart-in-views-of-voting-access/>

Week 3 (September 28): Organizing and Writing a Research Paper

****The relevant resources will be made available on our OWL site****

Week 4 (October 5): The Causes of Polarisation

Readings:

- Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation and the Rise of Donald Trump* (Yale University Press, 2019). Ch. 1.
- Gary Jacobson, "Partisan Polarization in American Politics: A Background Paper." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 4 (2013): 688-708.
- Shanto Iyengar et al., "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States," *Annule Review of Political Science* Vol. 22 (2019): 129-146.
- Anne Wilson, Victoria Parker, and Matthew Feinberg, "Polarization in the Contemporary Political and Media Landscape," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 34 (2020): 223-228.

Suggested:

- David Blankenhorn, "The Top 14 Causes of Political Polarization," *The American Interest*. May 2018.

Week 5 (October 12): Polarisation in Congress and the Executive Branch

Readings:

- J. Bond, Fleisher, R., & Cohen, J. "Presidential-Congressional Relations in an Era of Polarized Parties and a 60-Vote Senate," in J. Thurber & A. Yoshinaka (Eds.), *American Gridlock: The Sources, Character, and Impact of Political Polarization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Sarah Binder, "The Dysfunctional Congress," *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 18 (2015): 85-101.

Suggested:

- David E. Price, "Intensified Partisanship in Congress," in Alan Gerber and Eric Schickler (eds.), *Governing in a Polarized Age: Elections, Parties, and Political Representation in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Week 6 (October 19): The Impact of Trump on Polarisation

Readings:

- Alan Abramowitz and Jennifer McCoy, "United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump's America," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 681, No. 1 (2019): 137-156.
- Ben Fermor and Jack Holland, "Security and polarization in Trump's America: securitization and the domestic politics of threatening others," *Global Affairs* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2020): 55-70.
- David Norman Smith and Eric Hanley, "The Anger Games: Who Voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Election, and Why?" *Critical Sociology* Vol. 44, No. 2 (2018): 195–212.

Suggested:

- George Michael, "The Rise of the Alt-Right and the Politics of Polarization in America," *Skeptic* Vol. 22, Iss. 2 (2017).

Week 7 (October 26): The Media and Polarisation

Readings:

- Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnson, "More a Symptom Than a Cause: Polarization and Partisan News Media in America," in J. Thurber & A. Yoshinaka (Eds.), *American Gridlock: The Sources, Character, and Impact of Political Polarization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Chapter 2.
- Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Chapter 3.

Suggested:

- Alison Dagnes, *Super Mad at Everything All the Time: Political Media and Our National Anger* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), Chapter 5.

Week 8 (November 2): Fall Reading Week (November 1-7)

Week 9 (November 9): The Impact of Campaigns and Elections on Polarisation

Readings:

- Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation and the Rise of Donald Trump* (Yale University Press, 2019). Ch. 5.
- Andrew B. Hall, *Who Wants to Run?: How the Devaluing of Political Office Drives Polarization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). Chapter 1.
- Andrew B. Hall, *Who Wants to Run?: How the Devaluing of Political Office Drives Polarization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). Chapter 2.

Suggested:

- James Campbell, *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), Chapter 8.

Week 10 (November 16): Race and Polarisation*Readings:*

- Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation and the Rise of Donald Trump* (Yale University Press, 2019). Ch. 6.
- Tehama Lopez Bunyasi, "The Role of Whiteness in the 2016 Presidential Primaries," *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 17, No. 3 (2019): 679–98.
- Alan Abramowitz and Jennifer McCoy, "United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump's America," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 681, No. 1 (2019): 137–56.

Suggested:

- Eli Finkel et al., "Political Sectarianism in America," *Policy Forum* Vol. 370, Iss. 6,516 (2020).
- Michael Hout and Christopher Maggio, "Immigration, Race, & Political Polarization," *Daedalus*, Vol. 150, No. 2 (2021): 40-55.

Week 11 (November 23): Polarisation in Comparative Perspective*Readings:*

- Laura Silver, "Ideological Divisions over Cultural issues are Far Wider in the U.S. than in the UK, France and Germany." *Pew Research Center*. May 5, 2021. Available on OWL.
- Jennifer McCoy, Tahmina Rahman, and Murat Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2018): 16–42.
- Milan Svobik, "Polarization versus Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 30, No. 3 (2019): 20-32.

Suggested:

- Thomas Carothers and Andrew O'Donohue, *Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), Chapter 10).

Week 12 (November 30): Is Polarisation Unhealthy and Can it be Fixed?*Readings:*

- Alison Dagnes, *Super Mad at Everything All the Time: Political Media and Our National Anger* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), Chapter 6.
- James Campbell, *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), Chapter 9.

Suggested:

- James Thurber and Antoine Yoshinaka, "The Sources and Impact of Political Polarization," in J. Thurber & A. Yoshinaka (Eds.), *American Gridlock: The Sources, Character, and Impact of Political Polarization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Week 13 (December 7): Course Review and Concluding Remarks



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022

Pandemic Contingency

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no further disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy,

specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf) . The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, tablets, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

- (a) **Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade:
Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the

medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

b) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [accommodation medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support Services at

huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/> Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>
Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1> Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>
Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>
Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Wellness and Health Supports at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the further supports that they may require. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services:

huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca Community

Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -

[Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)