

## *Politics and Policy of the Culture War*

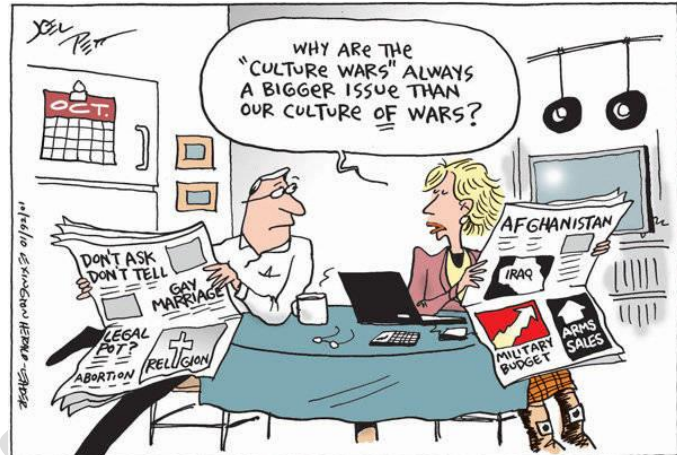
(200 or 300-level seminar course)

Instructor: Cory Maks-Solomon

### Course Overview

Americans seem more divided than ever, especially when it comes to cultural issues. In this course, we will discuss the origins of the culture war and the factors that exacerbate it. We'll be discussing hot button issues like abortion, immigration, and racism and the factors that shape the politics of these core identity issues. In the first part of class, we will lay the theoretical foundations of the culture war.

What is the culture war, and does it even exist? What are the key actors in the culture war? In the second part of the class, we will examine individual cultural issues and determine the origins of policy disagreement and circumstances that lead these disagreements to persist. In the final part of the class, we will examine the factors that cause people to change their minds on these contentious issues. The comic picture above makes the point that the culture war is a distraction. As you will (probably) come to realize by the end of this course, the culture war isn't merely a distraction from more important things; it is often the main show. There are very real cultural divides that affect marginalized communities and shape conflict in American politics.



Class sessions will be divided between lecture and discussion. During the first half of each class period, I will give a brief lecture on the topic of the day. During the second half of the class period, we will discuss the assigned readings, and students will have a role in leading discussion. Students are expected to keep up with the assigned readings—and indeed, discussion participation is mandatory.

A primary goal of this course is to improve students' writing ability. Twice during the semester, students will be expected to write a response paper to one set of assigned readings. However, the largest portion of students' grades will come from a final research paper. We will spend time in class reviewing how to properly write a research paper, and I will work with you to select a topic. In the first part of the assignment, students will produce a research proposal. In the second part of the assignment, students will provide each other with feedback on a rough draft of the research paper. The third part of the assignment is the full research paper, due on the last day of class.

## Expectations and Class Ground Rules

During class, we will cover sensitive subjects. While this class is a safe space, we will also be confronting difficult truths. Every person in class deserves to be treated with respect. It must be kept in mind that the readings that we will discuss in class are the result of social science investigations—they try to make claims about how things *are*, not how things *should be*. Your background and life experiences will inform how you see the world and the opinions that you have on these issues. But we will avoid straying into debates over the issues themselves. Using the example of immigration: The purpose of this class is not to debate whether immigration should be expanded or contracted; instead, the purpose of this class is to determine what leads people to hold different beliefs about immigration and the consequences of those preferences for public policy outcomes.

## Required Texts

There are NO course texts that students are required to purchase for this course. Listed in the Course Calendar section of this syllabus, all readings will be posted to Blackboard.

## Assignments and Grading

Final grades will be assessed based upon students' performance in three categories of assignments. **The total number of points that you can earn in the course is 100.** Do not plan on me “curving” assignments or your final course grade. The three types of assignments are as follows:

1. **Discussion Participation (15 points / 15%):** This is a discussion-based course. Each student is expected to keep up with the assigned readings and participate in thoughtful discussion during class; and discussion participation should prove that you have read the required readings. Students should participate *at least* once or twice per class period in order to receive full credit. Attendance will be based upon the honor system: if you *need* to miss class, you can be absent up to two class periods without providing a documented reason to be excused.
2. **Discussion Leadership and Response Paper (40 points / 40%):** Twice during the semester, students will be expected to write a response paper and contribute discussion questions. For your assigned class periods, you are the class “expert” on the given topic. Submit your discussion questions and response paper to the Blackboard discussion forum on midnight the day before class.
  - **15 points each:** Response papers are just that: students should respond to the readings by summarizing and critically evaluating them. A sample response paper and rubric are available on Blackboard. Response papers should be 3-4 double-spaced pages. Students should skim each other's response papers before class.
  - **5 points each:** Students should also post 3-5 discussion questions to the Blackboard discussion forum.

3. **Research Essay (45 points / 45%):** For their final assignment, students will submit a research essay on a topic of their choice. Students are expected to include perspectives from multiple sources, evaluate those sources, and synthesize a thesis (make an argument). The topic can be from one of the topics discussed during class or something else. I will work with students to help choose an acceptable research essay topic. One suggestion: combine a topic in Part I with a topic in Part II (e.g., political parties and immigration, business and LGBT rights, or federalism and immigration). Rubric and more details are available on Blackboard.
- **10 points:** The first part of the assignment is a research proposal and annotated bibliography. Due before Session 13.
  - **5 points:** The second part of the assignment is peer feedback. Exchange rough drafts with another student before Session 20. Provide peer feedback before Session 23.
  - **30 points:** The third part of the assignment is the full research paper, due on the last day of class. Papers should be double-spaced and 13-15 pages in length.

**Late policy:** one point will be deducted for each day that an assignment is late.

## Course Calendar

All readings are required. Please read each assigned text *before* class. Readings are intended to be read in the order in which they appear below.

### MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS

#### Session 1 – Introduction

*Key question(s):* What is the culture war and what differentiates cultural/moral issues from other issues?

- Mutz, Diana C., and Jahnavi S. Rao. 2018. “The Real Reason Liberals Drink Lattes.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51 (4): 762–67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096518000574>.
- Smith, Kevin B. 2002. “Typologies, Taxonomies, and the Benefits of Policy Classification.” *Policy Studies Journal* 30 (3): 379–95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2002.tb02153.x>.

#### Session 2 – Policy Preferences

*Key question(s):* How divided are Americans on cultural/moral issues?

- Baldassarri, Delia, and Andrew Gelman. 2008. “Partisans without Constraint: Political Polarization and Trends in American Public Opinion.” *American Journal of Sociology* 114 (2): 408–46. <https://doi.org/10.1086/590649>.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder. 2006. “Purple America.” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20 (2): 97–118.
- Watch this Vox YouTube video on demographic change and public opinion <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbjciJvacXY>

**Session 3 – Political Parties Part I**

*Key question(s):* How are identities influenced by partisanship and ideology?

- Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (3): 405–31. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038>.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 1 & 5)

**Session 4 – Political Parties Part II**

*Key question(s):* What are the contours of partisan division on cultural issues?

- Miller, Gary, and Norman Schofield. 2008. “The Transformation of the Republican and Democratic Party Coalitions in the U.S.” *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (3): 433–50. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592708081218>.
- Olson, Joel. 2008. “Whiteness and the Polarization of American Politics.” *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (4): 704–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908322408>.

**Session 5 – Political Parties Part III**

*Key question(s):* How do politicians respond to activist pressure on cultural issues?

- Karol, David. 2009. “The Politics of Race.” In *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management*, 102–33. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hutchings, Vincent L. 1998. “Issue Salience and Support for Civil Rights Legislation among Southern Democrats.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23 (4): 521–44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/440238>.

**\*\*Email me your final essay topic before Session 6.\*\***

**Session 6 – How to Write a Research Paper**

*Key question(s):* How do you write a research paper?

- Navigate through the entire “Research Papers” section of this guide: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/common\\_writing\\_assignments/research\\_papers/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/research_papers/index.html)
- Also read this guide: <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/planresearchpaper/>
- TBD example research essay

**Session 7 – Income and Class**

*Key question(s):* How does income and class shape preferences in the culture war?

- Gelman, Andrew. 2009. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*. Expanded. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 6)
- Maks-Solomon, Cory, and Elizabeth Rigby. 2019. “Are Democrats Really the Party of the Poor? Partisanship, Class, and Representation in the U.S. Senate.” *Political Research Quarterly*, July. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912919862623>.

**Session 8 – Federalism Part I**

*Key question(s):* What role do states play in fueling the culture war and making moral policy?

- Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. 2019. *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States -- and the Nation*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. (Introduction, Chapters 1 & 6)

**Session 9 – Federalism Part II**

*Key question(s):* What role do states play in fueling the culture war and making moral policy?

- Lax, Jeffrey R., and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. “The Democratic Deficit in the States.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (1): 148–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00537.x>.
- Wills, Jeremiah B., and Margaret M. Commins. 2018. “Consequences of the American States’ Legislative Action on Immigration.” *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, June, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0588-7>.

**Session 10 – Businesses**

*Key question(s):* What role has business historically played in spurring the culture war? Is the role of business changing?

- Kruse, Kevin. 2015. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. Basic Books. (Chapter 1)
- Zappulla, Antonio. 2017. “The Simple Reason Why so Many Businesses Support LGBT Rights.” World Economic Forum. January 14, 2017. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/why-so-many-businesses-support-lgbt-rights/>.
- Chatterji, Aaron K., and Michael W. Toffel. 2018. “The New CEO Activists.” *Harvard Business Review*. January 1, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-new-ceo-activists>.
- Global Strategy Group. 2019. “Doing Business in an Activist World.” [http://www.globalstrategygroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/GSG-2019\\_Doing-Business-in-an-Activist-World\\_Business-and-Politics.pdf](http://www.globalstrategygroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/GSG-2019_Doing-Business-in-an-Activist-World_Business-and-Politics.pdf).

**MODULE 2: CASE STUDIES****Session 11 – Life & Death Part I: The Death Penalty**

*Key question(s):* What factors shape death penalty policymaking historically and in present day?

- Banner, Stuart. 2009. *The Death Penalty: An American History*. Harvard University Press. (Chapters 4 and 5)
- Flavin, Patrick. 2012. “Income Inequality and Policy Representation in the American States.” *American Politics Research* 40 (1): 29–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X11416920>.
- Listen to episode 167 of the No Jargon Podcast (“A Case of Life and Death”): <https://scholars.org/podcast/case-life-and-death>

**Session 12 – Life & Death Part II: Abortion**

*Key question(s):* How have attitudes about abortion changed in recent decades?

- Layman, Geoffrey C., and Thomas M. Carsey. 1998. “Why Do Party Activists Convert? An Analysis of Individual-Level Change on the Abortion Issue.” *Political Research Quarterly* 51 (3): 723–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3088046>.
- Evans, John H. 2002. “Polarization in Abortion Attitudes in U.S. Religious Traditions, 1972–1998.” *Sociological Forum* 17 (3): 397–422. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1019627006778>.

**\*\*Research proposal due at the beginning of class on Session 13.\*\***

**Session 13 – Gender**

*Key question(s):* What explains the partisan divide on gender, where women are more likely to be Democrats? Why are some women *not* Democrats?

- Kaufmann, Karen M., and John R. Petrocik. 1999. “The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap.” *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (3): 864–87. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2991838>.
- Setzler, Mark, and Alixandra B. Yanus. 2018. “Why Did Women Vote for Donald Trump?” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51 (3): 523–27. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096518000355>.

**Session 14 – Immigration Part I**

*Key question(s):* What predicts immigration attitudes? Does the national origin of immigrants matter? How does national, state, and local context affect immigration attitudes?

- Ostfeld, Mara. 2017. “The Backyard Politics of Attitudes Toward Immigration: Backyard Politics of Attitudes Toward Immigration.” *Political Psychology* 38 (1): 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12314>.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. 2010. “Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition.” *The American Political Science Review* 104 (1): 40–60.
- Watch this Vox YouTube video on sanctuary cities: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaR5kR8h4es>

**Session 15 – Immigration Part II**

*Key question(s):* How did immigration attitudes predict support for Trump and Brexit?

- Hooghe, Marc, and Ruth Dassonneville. 2018. “Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51 (3): 528–34. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096518000367>.
- Goodwin, Matthew, and Caitlin Milazzo. 2017. “Taking Back Control? Investigating the Role of Immigration in the 2016 Vote for Brexit.” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 19 (3): 450–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148117710799>.
- Listen to Episode 185 of the No Jargon Podcast (“America’s Long Immigration Debate”): <https://scholars.org/podcast/americas-long-immigration-debate>

**Session 16 – LGBT Rights**

*Key question(s):* What are the determinates of policy change on LGBT issues?

- Lax, Jeffrey R., and Justin H. Phillips. 2009. “Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness.” *The American Political Science Review* 103 (3): 367–86.
- Negro, Giacomo, Fabrizio Perretti, and Glenn R. Carroll. 2013. “Challenger Groups, Commercial Organizations, and Policy Enactment: Local Lesbian/Gay Rights Ordinances in the United States from 1972 to 2008.” *American Journal of Sociology* 119 (3): 790–832. <https://doi.org/10.1086/673970>.

**Session 17 – Civil Rights and School Segregation**

*Key question(s):* Why do people engage in political participation on cultural issues?

- Parker, Christopher S. 2009. “When Politics Becomes Protest: Black Veterans and Political Activism in the Postwar South.” *The Journal of Politics* 71 (1): 113–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381608090087>.
- Green, Donald Philip, and Jonathan A. Cowden. 1992. “Who Protests: Self-Interest and White Opposition to Busing.” *The Journal of Politics* 54 (2): 471–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2132035>.
- Listen to episode 165 of the No Jargon Podcast (“Civil Rights in Our Schools”): <https://scholars.org/podcast/civil-rights-our-schools>

**Session 18 – Racial Attitudes in the South**

*Key question(s):* What are the historical origins of white racial attitudes in the South?

- Acharya, Avidit, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. 2016. “The Political Legacy of American Slavery.” *Journal of Politics* 78 (3): 621–41. <https://doi.org/10.1086/686631>.
- Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd G. Shields. 2001. “Racial and Moral Issues in the Evolution of the ‘Southern Strategy.’” In *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, edited by Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg, 393–98. CQ Press.
- Kuklinski, James H., Michael D. Cobb, and Martin Gilens. 1997. “Racial Attitudes and the ‘New South.’” *The Journal of Politics* 59 (2): 323–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2998167>.

**Session 19 – The White Working Class**

*Key question(s):* Is there a white working class identity? How does that identity shape preferences in the culture war?

- Gest, Justin. 2016. *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. Paperback. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Chapters 2, 6, & 8)

**\*\*Exchange rough drafts with another student before Session 20.\*\***

### **Session 20 – Mass Incarceration**

*Key question(s):* What are the historical origins of mass incarceration and the lasting consequences of being an ex-offender?

- Hinton, Elizabeth Kai. 2016. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. (Introduction & Chapter 1)
- Pager, Devah. 2003. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (5): 937–75. <https://doi.org/10.1086/374403>.

### **Session 21 – Gun Control Part I**

*Key question(s):* What are the historical origins of the NRA and the gun control debate?

- Spitzer, Robert J. 2017. *The Politics of Gun Control*. Routledge. (Chapters 4 & 5)
- Listen to episodes 160 and 161 of the No Jargon Podcast (“Guns in America”): <https://scholars.org/podcast/guns-america-part-1> <https://scholars.org/podcast/guns-america-part-2>

### **Session 22 – Gun Control Part II**

*Key question(s):* Why is passing gun control legislation (seemingly) impossible?

- Medoff, Marshall H., Christopher Dennis, and Benjamin G. Bishin. 1995. “The Impact of Legislator and Constituency Ideology on Voting on the Assault Weapons Ban.” *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 24 (4): 585–91. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-5357\(95\)90004-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-5357(95)90004-7).
- Gimpel, James G. 1998. “Packing Heat at the Polls: Gun Ownership, Interest Group Endorsements, and Voting Behavior in Gubernatorial Elections.” *Social Science Quarterly* 79 (3): 634–48.
- Karol, David. 2013. “Why Do Gun Rights Advocates Have More Political Firepower? Intensity or Efficacy and Social Networks?” *Monkey Cage* (blog). April 21, 2013. <https://themonkeycage.org/2013/04/why-do-gun-rights-advocates-have-more-political-firepower-intensity-or-efficacy-and-social-networks/>.

**\*\*Provide peer feedback before Session 23.\*\***

### **Session 23 – Social Welfare Policy**

*Key question(s):* Is welfare a part of the culture war?

- Banting, Keith G. 2005. “The Multicultural Welfare State: International Experience and North American Narratives.” *Social Policy & Administration* 39 (2): 98–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2005.00428.x>.
- Tesler, Michael. 2012. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (3): 690–704.



**MODULE 3: WILL THE CULTURE WAR EVER END?****Session 24 – Changing Policy Preferences Part I**

*Key question(s):* Can talking to people with opposing beliefs change political attitudes?

- Mutz, Diana C. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. (Intro & Chapter 3)
- Klar, Samara. 2014. “Partisanship in a Social Setting.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (3): 687–704.

**Session 25 – Changing Policy Preferences Part II**

*Key questions:* How does information and education affect policy preferences on cultural issues?

- Nelson, Thomas E., and Donald R. Kinder. 1996. “Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion.” *The Journal of Politics* 58 (4): 1055–78. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2960149>.
- Althaus, Scott L. 1998. “Information Effects in Collective Preferences.” *The American Political Science Review* 92 (3): 545–58. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2585480>.

**\*\*Final essay due at beginning of class on Session 26.\*\***

**Session 26 – Catch Up and Conclusion**