

Explanations for Polarization: Resources by Topic

Theme 1: Electoral Explanations

Electoral Rules and Primaries

Memo Writer: Gabriel Trujillo-Lederer

Readings:

- Abramovitz, Alan. “Why Section 5 is Still Needed.” Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball blog.
- Abramovitz, Alan. “Explaining the Republican ‘Lock’ on the House.” Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball blog. 4/23/2015
- Sides, John. “Reforming Primary Elections Won’t Make Government Better,” Monkey Cage blog, 10/18/2013
- Hill, Seth J. “Want to Change Congress? Change Who Votes in ‘Safe’ Republican or Democratic Primaries.” The Monkey Cage Blog. 5/4/2017
- The Science of Politics podcast, “Congressional Primaries: How the Parties Fight Insurgents” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/episode-9-congressional-primaries-parties-fight-insurgents/>
- Hans Hassell, “The Party’s Primary: Control of Congressional Nominations” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131181>

Academic Scholars: See the articles cited in Sides piece; Abramowitz 2008 (in *The Forum*), Michael Peress

Gerrymandering

Memo Writer: Tyler Swartzell

Readings:

- Iyer, Sundeep and Keesha Gaskins. “Redistricting and Congressional Control: A First Look.” Brennan Center for Justice. 2012.
- McCarty, Nolan. “Hate our polarized politics? Why you can’t blame gerrymandering.” *Washington Post*, 10/26/2012
- Ornstein, Norm. “One of the Few Tools Left to Stop Gerrymandering is in Peril,” *The Atlantic*, 12/5/2014
- More Perfect Podcast, Season 2, “Who’s Gerry and Why is He So Bad at Drawing Maps,” found at <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/whos-gerry-and-why-he-so-bad-drawing-maps>
- David A. Hopkins, “Red Fighting Blue: How Geography and Electoral Rules Polarize American Politics” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131187>
- Ryan D. Enos, “The Space Between Us: Social Geography and Politics” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131215>

Academic Scholars: See the exchange between Michael P. McDonald and Abramowitz, Alexander and Gunning in *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1); McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2009; Jowei Chen and David Cottrell; Jonathan Rodden

Campaign Finance and Interest Groups

Memo Writer: Cassidy Milne

Readings:

- Masket, Seth and Michael Miller. “Is public funding really electing extremists?” Monkey Cage blog 1/22/15
- Lessig, Lawrence. “Big Campaign Spending: Government by the 1%” *The Atlantic*, 7/10/2012
- Graham, David A. “How Big Money Created the Most Polarized Congress in a Century,” *The Atlantic*, 7/9/2013
- More Perfect Podcast, Season 2, “Citizens United,” found at <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/citizens-united>
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 9, “How Campaign Money Has Changed Elections After Citizens United” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-campaign-money-has-changed-elections-after-citizens-united/>
- Raymond La Raja and Brian Schaffner, “Campaign Finance and Political Polarization: When Purists Prevail” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131377>

Academic Scholars: Jacobson 1990, Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003, Bonica 2013; *Negotiating Deals in Congress*, Chapter 3; Stasavage 2007; Stan Oklobdzija, Adam Bonica

Theme 2: Congress

Institutional Rules (within Congress)

Memo Writer: Jane Geiger

Readings:

- Seitz-Wald. “How Newt Gingrich Crippled Congress.” *The Nation*. 1/30/2012
- Masket, Seth. “Our Political Parties are Networked, not Fragmented.” Monkey Cage blog, 2/14/2014
- Ornstein, Norm. “Yes, Polarization is Asymmetric—and Conservatives are Worse,” *The Atlantic*, 6/19/2014
- Rauch, Jonathan. “The Case for Corruption.” *The Atlantic*. 3/2014
- Pildes, Richard. “How to fix our polarized politics? Strengthen political parties,” Monkey Cage blog, 2/6/2014
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 7, “Rules Around the Senate Filibuster” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/episode-7-rules-around-senate-filibuster/>

Academic Scholars: *Negotiating Agreement in Politics*, Chapter 3; Aldrich and Rohde (1997, 2000, 2005), Cox and McCubbins 2005; Sarah Binder, Frances Lee

Parties, Party Factions, and Realignment

Memo Writer: Graham Pfeiffer

Readings:

- Skim the GOP's "Growth and Opportunity Project" report, a.k.a. the "Autopsy Report."
- Mann and Ornstein. "Republicans Created Dysfunction. Now They're Paying for It." Brookings/Washington Post. 3/8/2016
- Drutman, Lee. "Donald Trump's Candidacy is Going to Realign the Political Parties," Vox. 3/1/2016
- Victor, Jennifer. "The clockwork rise of Donald Trump and reorganization of American parties," The Mischiefs of Faction blog, 3/14/2016
- Azari, Julia. "When Political Parties Splinter," fivethirtyeight.com, 3/8/2016
- Clarke, Andrew. "Trump is Tweeting Threats at the Freedom Caucus. Good Luck with That." The Monkey Cage Blog. 4/5/2017
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 4, "How the House Freedom Caucus Gains Power in Congress" available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/episode-4-house-freedom-caucus-gains-power-congress/>
- Frances Lee, "Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign" on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131293>

Academic Scholars: Hans Noel, Carmines and Lyman 1997, Weisberg 2002, Jacobson 2000, Rohde 1991, Sundquist 1983

Congressional Norms and Practices

Memo Writer: Mary Olivia Rentner

Readings:

- Montgomery, Jacob M., and Brendan Nyhan. 2017. "The Effects of Congressional Staff Networks in the US House of Representatives." *The Journal of Politics* 79(3): 000-000.
- Alduncin, Alex, David CW Parker, and Sean M. Theriault. 2017. "Leaving on a Jet Plane: Polarization, Foreign Travel, and Comity in Congress." In *Congress & the Presidency*, Routledge Press.

Academic Scholars: Eric Uslaner, Bruce Desmarais, Brian Schaffner, Seth Masket, Jennifer Nicoll Victor, Justin Kirkland, Nils Ringe. Also see *It's Even Worse Than it Was*, by Mann and Ornstein

Theme 3: Other Institutional Explanations

For a really broad overview (and for additional suggestions about academic scholarship), see Negotiating Agreement in Politics, Chapter 2

Sunshine Laws

Memo Writer: Jack Helms

Readings:

- Grumet, Jason. “When sunshine doesn’t always disinfect the government.” *The Washington Post*. 10/2/2014
- Frum, David. “The Transparency Trap.” *The Atlantic*, 9/2014.
- Bass, Gary D, Danielle Brian and Norman Eisen. “Why Critics of Transparency are Wrong.” Center for Effective Public Management at the Brookings Institution. 11/2014.

Academic Scholars: Jacobson 1990, Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003, Bonica 2013; *Negotiating Deals in Congress*, Chapter 3; Stasavage 2007

Executive and Judicial Branches

Memo Writer: Karan Gupta

Readings:

- Epps, Garrett. “The Supreme Court’s Key Role in Polarizing American Politics,” *The Atlantic*, 9/27/2013
- Ringhard, Lori and Paul Collings. “Why Not Limit Neil Gorsuch—and all Supreme Court Justices—to 18-year Terms?” *The Monkey Cage Blog*. 3/23/2017
- Lieber, Robert. “Politics Stops at the Water’s Edge? Not Recently,” *Monkey Cage blog*, 2/10/2014
- Kuhn, David Paul. “The Incredible Polarization and Politicization of the Supreme Court” *The Atlantic*, 6/29/2012
- Fournier, Ron. “Dan Pfeiffer’s Exit Interview: On Surrendering to Polarization and How Barack Obama Gave Up,” *The Atlantic*, 3/9/2015
- Bartels, Brandon. “It took conservatives 50 years to get a reliable majority on the Supreme Court. Here are 3 reasons why.” *Monkey Cage bog*, 6/29/2018

Academic Scholars: Adam Bonica; Brandon Bartels; Tom S. Clark’s 2009 article in *Political Research Quarterly*

Federalism and State-Level Polarization

Memo Writer: Daniel Xu

Readings:

- Masket, Seth. “Polarization without Parties,” *Monkey Cage Blog*, 1/15/15.
- McCartney, Robert. “Partisan Deadlock: Now Showing in a State Capital Near You,” *Monkey Cage blog*, 3/17/16
- Brownstein, Ronald. “Why Racial Polarization is Still Central to South Carolina Politics,” *The Atlantic*, 1/21/2012
- Schaller, Thomas F. “The End of Amendments? Why State Legislative Polarization Makes Constitutional Amendments Increasingly Unlikely.” *Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball blog*, 3/27/2014.

- Nolette, Paul. "State Attorneys General Have Taken Off As a Partisan Force in National Politics." *The Monkey Cage Blog*, 10/23/2017.
- Gelernter, David. "Back to Federalism: The Proper Remedy for Polarization." *The Weekly Standard*. April 10, 2006.

Academic Scholars: Kousser 2010, Boris Shor, Nolan McCarty, Seth Masket

Theme 4: Social Psychology

Authoritarianism and Personality

Memo Writer: David DeMarco

Readings:

- Q & A with the Author: *Prius or Pickup? How the Answers to Four Simple Questions Explain America's Great Divide* available at <https://verdict.justia.com/2018/10/22/q-a-with-the-author-prius-or-pickup-how-the-answers-to-four-simple-questions-explain-americas-great-divide>
- Weber, Chris, Chris Federico, and Stanley Feldman. "How authoritarianism is shaping American politics (and it's not just about Trump)" *Monkey Cage blog*, 5/10/2017
- Taub, Amanda. "The Rise of American Authoritarianism." *Vox*. Available at <http://www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism>
- Rahn, Wendy and Eric Oliver. "Trump's Voters Aren't Authoritarians, New Research Says. So What Are They?" *Monkey Cage*. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/09/trumps-voters-arent-authoritarians-new-research-says-so-what-are-they/?utm_term=.abfc93c6def6

Academic Scholars: Marc Hetherington, Jonathan Weiler, John Jost, Stanley Feldman

Social Identity Theory and Social Cognition

Memo Writer: Lea Booth

Readings:

- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 12, "Are Americans Becoming Tribal, with Identity Politics Trumping All?" available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/episode-12-americans-becoming-tribal-identity-politics-trumping/>
- Lilliana Mason, "Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity" on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131148>
- Sides, John. "Democrats are Gay, Republicans are Rich: Our Stereotypes of Political Parties are Amazingly Wrong." *The Monkey Cage Blog*. 5/23/2016
- Gelman, Andrew. "An Important Part of Political Polarization is Just in Your Head." *The Monkey Cage Blog*. 4/5/2016.

- Hochschild, Jennifer and Katherine Levine Einstein. “No, We’re Not Arguing from the Same Facts. How Can Democracies Make Good Decisions if Citizens are Misinformed?” The Monkey Cage Blog. 7/21/15
- Mason and Davis. “Donald Trump attracts poor voters with multiple Republican social identities.” Mischiefs of Faction blog, 3/9/2016
- Schaffner, Brian and Samantha Luks. “This is What Trump Voters Said When Asked to Compare His Inauguration Crowd with Obama’s.” The Monkey Cage Blog. 1/25/2017
- J. Eric Oliver and Thomas J. Wood, “Enchanted America: How Intuition and Reason Divide Our Politics” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/219976774>
- Theodoridis, Alex and James Martherus. “Trump is not the only one who calls opponents ‘animals.’ Democrats and Republicans do it to each other.” Monkey Cage blog 5/21/2018
- Abramowitz, Alan and Steven Webster. “The Only Thing We Have to Fear is the Other Party,” Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball blog.
- Theriault, Sean. “Polarization we can live with. Partisan warfare is the problem.” The Monkey Cage Blog. 1/10/2014

Academic Scholars: Lilliana Mason, Alex Theodoridis, Doug Ahler, Leonie Huddy, Henri Tajfel

Social Sorting and Geographic Clustering

Memo Writer: Kelsey Vita

Readings:

- Thomson and Sussell. “Is geographic clustering driving political polarization?” Monkey Cage blog, 3/2/2015
- Rauch, Jonathan. “Bipolar Disorder: A Funny Thing Happened...” *The Atlantic*, 1/2005
- Tuschman, Avi. “Why Americans are so Polarized: Education and Evolution,” *The Atlantic*, 2/28/2014
- Abramowitz, Alan. “How race and religion have polarized American voters.” The Monkey Cage blog. 1/20/2014
- Tullett, Alexa and Matthew Feinberg. “Are You a Liberal or a Conservative? That May Depend on Where You Live.” The Monkey Cage Blog. 3/16/2017
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 13, “Are Red and Blue States Making Red and Blue Policies?” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/episode-13-red-blue-states-making-red-blue-policies/>

Academic Scholars: Geoffrey Layman (most especially the notion of “conflict extension”), Bill Bishop and Robert Cushing’s book *The Big Sort*, Lilliana Mason, David Hopkins

Theme 5: Economic and Social Divides

Racial Divisions and Attitudes

Memo Writer: Jack Buchholz

Readings:

- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 32, “How Public Policy Intentionally Segregated American Homeowners ” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-public-policy-intentionally-segregated-american-homeowners/>
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 14, “How Racial Stereotypes Impacted Voting for Obama and Trump ” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-racial-stereotypes-impacted-voting-for-obama-and-trump/>
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2017. “Epilogue: The First White President.” In *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*. New York, NY: One World Books
- Abramowitz, Alan. “How race and religion have polarized American voters.” The Monkey Cage blog. 1/20/2014
- Ashley Jardina, "White Identity Politics" on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/224063265>

Academic Scholars: Ashley Jardina, Drew Engelhardt, Michael Tesler, Efren Perez

Culture War and Religion

Memo Writer: Stefan Pruessmann

Readings:

- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 29, “How Americans’ Politics Drives Their Religious Views ” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-americans-politics-drives-their-religious-views/>
- Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215131174>
- Abramowitz, Alan. “How race and religion have polarized American voters.” The Monkey Cage blog. 1/20/2014
- Paul Djupe and Ryan L. Claassen, eds., “The Evangelical Crackup?: The Future of the Evangelical-Republican Coalition” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/220560390>
- Michele Margolis, “From Politics to the Pews: How Partisanship and the Political Environment Shape Religious Identity” on the New Books in Political Science podcast. Available at <https://player.fm/series/2421446/215776823>
- PRRI Report. “Beyond Economics: Fears of Cultural Displacement Pushed the White Working Class to Trump.”

Academic Scholars: Michele Margolis, Paul Djupe, Ryan Claassen

Economic Inequality

Memo Writer: Taylor Jones

Readings:

- White, Gillian. "Partisan Politics and the Inequality Gap," *The Atlantic*, 3/23/2015
- Zuckerman, Michael. "The Polarized Partisan Geography of Inequality," *The Atlantic*, 4/7/2014
- Orszag, Peter. "Blame Supercommittee's Failure on the Income Gap." Bloomberg View. 11/22/2011
- Abramowitz, Alan. "The Minimal Class Divide in American Politics." Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball blog. 5/1/2014
- Favreau, Jon. "The Wilderness, Chapter 8: The 1%." Podcast. Los Angeles, CA: Crooked Media. Available at <https://crooked.com/podcast/chapter-8-the-1/>
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 28, "How TV and Service Projects Impact What Americans Believe about Inequality" available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-tv-and-service-projects-impact-what-americans-believe-about-inequality/>
- Hidden Brain Podcast. "Strangers in Their Own Land: The 'Deep Story' of Trump Supporters." Interview with Arlie Hochschild. Available at <https://www.npr.org/2017/01/24/510567860/strangers-in-their-own-land-the-deep-story-of-trump-supporters>
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 26, "How Marriage and Inequality Reinforce Political Polarization" available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-marriage-and-inequality-reinforce-political-polarization/>

Academic Scholars: Andrew Gelman; McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal; Voorheis, John, Nolan McCarty, and Boris Shor. "Unequal Incomes, Ideology And Gridlock: How Rising Inequality Increases Political Polarization."

Theme 6: Media and Interpersonal Interactions

Media

Memo Writer: Sam BurrIDGE

Readings:

- Starr, Paul. "Governing in the Age of Fox News," *The Atlantic*, 1/2010
- Taylor, Stuart Jr. "How the High Court and the Media Aggravate Polarization," *The Atlantic*, 11/1/2004
- Powers, William. "The Massless Media." *The Atlantic*, 1/2005
- Desilver, Drew. "Five Key Takeaways on Politics, Media, and Polarization," Pew Research Center, 10/21/2014
- Arceneaux, Kevin. "Why You Shouldn't Blame Polarization on Partisan News." The Washington Post, Monkey Cage Blog, 2/4/2014
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 1, "Episode 1: How Fox News Channel Spreads Its Message And Persuades Viewers" available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/episode-1-fox-news-channel-spreads-message-persuades-viewers/>

Academic Scholars: Jacobson 2004, Natalie Stroud, R. Kelly Garrett, Douglas Ahler, Matthew Levendusky, Kevin Arceneaux

Social Media

Memo Writer: Claudia Chen

Readings:

- Bode, Leticia. “Political ‘Unfriending’ Online Isn’t Common. A Trump Presidency Could Change That.” The Monkey Cage Blog. 12/5/2016
- Duggan, Maeve and Aaron Smith. 2016. “The Political Environment on Social Media.” Pew Research Center Report, released October 25, 2016.
- Gervais, Bryan T. 2015. “Incivility Online: Affective and Behavioral Reactions to Uncivil Political Posts in a Web-Based Experiment.” *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 12(2): 167–85
- The Science of Politics podcast, Episode 20, “Did Facebook Really Polarize and Misinform the 2016 Electorate?” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/did-facebook-really-polarize-and-misinform-the-2016-electorate/>
- The Science of Politics podcast, “How Online Media Polarizes and Encourages Voters” available at <https://niskanencenter.org/#/content/how-online-media-polarizes-and-encourages-voters>
- Pew Research Center “The Political Environment on Social Media.” 10/25/2016

Academic Scholars: Pablo Barbera, Jaime Settle, Matthew Gentzkow, JungHwan Yang, Nicolas Anspach, Solomon Messing