

Polarized.

Causes and Consequences of Affective Polarization



Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Department of Social Sciences
Chair of Comparative Political Behavior

Summer 2022

Infos

Di 10:00 – 12:00
Universitätsstr. 3b, Room 001
Moodle: moodle.hu-berlin.de
Course Number: 530200
Password: [REDACTED]

Tim Wappenhans
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Zoom: hu-berlin.zoom.us
Password: [REDACTED]

Goal

Affective polarization has grown dramatically in the US. Partisans increasingly avoid, distrust and hate one another to the point where they even condone violence against the other side. Affective polarization is widely seen as a destabilizing force that erodes democracy but what explains this phenomenon?

In this course we will grapple with different definitions of polarization, alternative approaches to explaining its causes, political and non-political consequences of affective polarization, as well as mitigating factors. We will also take on a comparative perspective and contrast different countries in their extent of affective polarization.

After completing the course students will be equipped with the theoretical knowledge to follow their own research ideas for analyzing causes and consequences of affective polarization.

Covid Protocol

It's great to be back in person. In order to meet onsite safely we have to abide by some basic rules:

- please keep your distance of **1,5 meters** wherever possible
- please wear an **FFP2 mask**
- we will ventilate the room frequently

In case one of us tests positive for Covid:

- contact me directly
- I will circulate the news **anonymized**
- all participants will have to stay away from HU events for 24hrs and monitor their symptoms
- if you are asymptomatic by the next week, you can come back to our onsite session (please get tested)

Requirements

The pandemic has been tough for all of us. If you're struggling to meet requirements please contact me.

You will earn 5 Credit Points in this course. That is the equivalent of 125 hours of work load that is distributed across these requirements:

1. **Active Participation**

This is the backbone of our course. Without your engagement the whole thing will be dreadfully boring and uninspiring. This puts the spotlight on you. I expect you to come prepared to class. That means you should read the literature and get an idea about what you understand and what you don't. The next two points should help you in this regard.

(1CP)

2. **Reading**

Engage with the literature before our sessions. Be critical and question the logic of the argument brought forward as well as the data and analysis provided. You can find PDFs or links to the material on moodle.

(1CP)

3. **Comments and Questions**

Each week you are will have to comment on the material that we cover. Make clear what you didn't understand and where you disagree with the authors (about 100-150 words).

You have two weeks in which you won't have to submit any comments.

Deadline is Mondays, 12:00 noon.

(1CP)

4. **Kick-off Presentation**

For one session, you will start the seminar by giving a brief(!) presentation. You will find a pad on moodle to organize. This presentation should give a brief(!) summary of the literature and a discussion of where the course stands, based on the comments

and questions.
Don't exceed 10 minutes.
(2CP)

* **Extra Credit: Meme** 🐱¹

You can skip a third round of comments and questions if you create a meme that deals with the ideas we came across during the course. I will present them in our final session. This only applies once but if you enjoy it, keep 'em coming!

¹Thanks to @janna_e_haider for the idea.

INTRO

Welcome 26.04.2022

► **Literature**

Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., and Westwood, S. J. (2019). The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1):129–146

POLARIZATION?

Elite Level Polarization 03.05.2022

► **Literature**

McCarty, N. (2019). *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, Chapter 3

Druckman, J. N., Peterson, E., and Slothuus, R. (2013). How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1):57–79

Mass Level Polarization or: Is Polarization a Myth? 10.05.2022

► **Literature**

Fiorina, M. P., Abrams, S. J., and Pope, J. C. (2010). *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. Pearson Education, Boston, MA, Chapter 2

Abramowitz, A. I. and Saunders, K. L. (2008). Is Polarization a Myth? *The Journal of Politics*, 70(2):542–555

Affective Polarization 17.05.2022

► **Literature**

Iyengar, S. and Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3):690–707

Druckman, J. N. and Levendusky, M. S. (2019). What Do We Measure When We Measure Affective Polarization? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 83(1):114–122

EXPLANATIONS

Social Sorting 24.05.2022

► **Literature**

Mason, L. (2015). "I Disrespectfully Agree": The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1):128–145

Mason, L. (2016). A Cross-Cutting Calm: How Social Sorting Drives Affective Polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1):351–377

Ideology 31.05.2022

► **Literature**

Rogowski, J. C. and Sutherland, J. L. (2016). How Ideology Fuels Affective Polarization. *Political Behavior*, 38(2):485–508

Orr, L. V. and Huber, G. A. (2020). The Policy Basis of Measured Partisan Animosity in the United States. *American Journal of Political Science*, 64(3):569–586

The Media 07.06.2022

► **Literature**

Lelkes, Y., Sood, G., and Iyengar, S. (2017). The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1):5–20

Druckman, J. N., Levendusky, M. S., and McLain, A. (2018). No Need to Watch: How the Effects of Partisan Media Can Spread via Interpersonal Discussions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(1):99–112

Mitigating Factors 21.06.2022

► **Literature**

Ahler, D. J. and Sood, G. (2018). The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3):964–981

Huddy, L. and Yair, O. (2021). Reducing Affective Polarization: Warm Group Relations or Policy Compromise? *Political Psychology*, 42(2):291–309

COMPARATIVE ANGLE

Affective Polarization Across Countries 28.06.2022

► **Literature**

Reiljan, A. (2020). ‘Fear and loathing across party lines’ (also) in Europe: Affective polarisation in European party systems. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(2):376–396

Gidron, N., Adams, J., and Horne, W. (2020). American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective. *Elements in American Politics*, Chapter 3

Explanations in Multiparty Contexts 05.07.2022

► **Literature**

Westwood, S. J., Iyengar, S., Walgrave, S., Leonisio, R., Miller, L., and Strijbis, O. (2018). The tie that divides: Cross-national evidence of the primacy of partyism. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2):333–354

Harteveld, E. (2021). Ticking all the boxes? A comparative study of social sorting and affective polarization. *Electoral Studies*, 72:102337

WRAPPING UP

Is Affective Polarization a Myth? 12.07.2022

► **Literature**

Krupnikov, Y. and Ryan, J. B. (2022). *The Other Divide*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Westwood, S. J., Grimmer, J., Tyler, M., and Nall, C. (2022). Current research overstates American support for political violence. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(12):e2116870119

Final Discussion 19.07.2022

References

- Abramowitz, A. I. and Saunders, K. L. (2008). Is Polarization a Myth? *The Journal of Politics*, 70(2):542–555.
- Ahler, D. J. and Sood, G. (2018). The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3):964–981.
- Druckman, J. N. and Levendusky, M. S. (2019). What Do We Measure When We Measure Affective Polarization? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 83(1):114–122.
- Druckman, J. N., Levendusky, M. S., and McLain, A. (2018). No Need to Watch: How the Effects of Partisan Media Can Spread via Interpersonal Discussions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(1):99–112.
- Druckman, J. N., Peterson, E., and Slothuus, R. (2013). How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1):57–79.
- Fiorina, M. P., Abrams, S. J., and Pope, J. C. (2010). *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. Pearson Education, Boston, MA.
- Gidron, N., Adams, J., and Horne, W. (2020). American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective. *Elements in American Politics*.
- Harteveld, E. (2021). Ticking all the boxes? A comparative study of social sorting and affective polarization. *Electoral Studies*, 72:102337.
- Huddy, L. and Yair, O. (2021). Reducing Affective Polarization: Warm Group Relations or Policy Compromise? *Political Psychology*, 42(2):291–309.
- Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., and Westwood, S. J. (2019). The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1):129–146.
- Iyengar, S. and Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3):690–707.
- Krupnikov, Y. and Ryan, J. B. (2022). *The Other Divide*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lelkes, Y., Sood, G., and Iyengar, S. (2017). The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1):5–20.
- Mason, L. (2015). "I Disrespectfully Agree": The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1):128–145.
- Mason, L. (2016). A Cross-Cutting Calm: How Social Sorting Drives Affective Polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1):351–377.
- McCarty, N. (2019). *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Orr, L. V. and Huber, G. A. (2020). The Policy Basis of Measured Partisan Animosity in the United States. *American Journal of Political Science*, 64(3):569–586.

- Reiljan, A. (2020). ‘Fear and loathing across party lines’ (also) in Europe: Affective polarisation in European party systems. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(2):376–396.
- Rogowski, J. C. and Sutherland, J. L. (2016). How Ideology Fuels Affective Polarization. *Political Behavior*, 38(2):485–508.
- Westwood, S. J., Grimmer, J., Tyler, M., and Nall, C. (2022). Current research overstates American support for political violence. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(12):e2116870119.
- Westwood, S. J., Iyengar, S., Walgrave, S., Leonisio, R., Miller, L., and Strijbis, O. (2018). The tie that divides: Cross-national evidence of the primacy of partyism. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2):333–354.