American Political Divides and Great Debates
[84-309] – Fall 2024

Updated: August 30, 2024

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Time: Tuesday 2:00p–3:20p Eastern
Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30p–4:30p, Wednesday 2–3p, and by appointment (arrange via email)
CMU Academic Calendar

THIS COURSE SYLLABUS IS A WORK IN PROGRESS. THE INSTRUCTOR WILL TAKE NOTE OF STUDENT FEEDBACK AND COURSE SCHEDULE WILL EVOLVE BASED ON STUDENT PREFERENCES

The most up-to-date version of this **syllabus can be found here**

Course Description

"American Political Divides and Great Debates" dives into the heart of U.S. political polarization, examining its causes, effects, and the systemic inequalities it perpetuates. Engaging with topics like voting rights, healthcare, and racial and economic disparities through critical discussions and debates, this course hones critical thinking, public speaking, and empathy. Ideal for those interested in political science, law, or social justice, it offers deep insights into America's political landscape and strategies for fostering justice and equity at all societal levels.

The course targets systematic and structural inequalities related to political polarization, focusing on past and present issues such as voting rights, access to healthcare, racial discrimination, environmental inequalities, and economic disparity. It examines how these inequalities influence public policy and political discourse, aiming to uncover their roots and impacts on society. Through this analysis, the course encourages a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding justice and injustice in the American political landscape.

This course is ideal for students with interests in political science, history, law, social justice, and those looking to gain a deeper understanding of the complex political landscape of the United States and its implications for justice and injustice in society.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have a deepened understanding of the complex forces driving political polarization. They will be equipped to critically analyze media narratives, engage in constructive political discussions, and explore avenues for fostering greater unity within diverse societies.

1. Analyze the historical and contemporary factors contributing to American political polarization.

2. Evaluate the impact of divisive political issues on different communities and societal structures.

3. Develop and articulate informed arguments on contentious political issues from multiple perspectives.

4. Enhance critical thinking, public speaking, and debate skills through active participation in discussions and simulations.

5. Foster empathy and understanding of opposing viewpoints to encourage respectful and constructive political discourse.

6. Propose informed solutions to reduce polarization and address issues of justice and inequality in the United States.

Course Relevance   DC: Perspectives on Justice and Injustice

Learning Resources   All resources will be provided via Canvas

Prerequisite Knowledge   NONE

Grading

Your grade will mostly reflect your participation in this course. This course is designed to be interactive. That is, you involvement in discussions, participation in debates, and of course having read the material are critical to your success.

Class attendance and participation are important parts of the learning in this course. To account for this, a portion of the final grade is based on your regular attendance and active participation (see grading section). That said, I also recognize that students may need to miss class for a variety of reasons (religious observance, job interview, university-sanctioned event, or illness). For that reason, all students are permitted two class absences without any impact on the final grade. When you must miss class, please notify me (at least 24 hours in advance except for illness/emergency), so that we can discuss alternative arrangements for catching up on class and associated work. If you encounter extenuating circumstances and must miss more than two classes, please come and discuss the issue with me; I would like to find a way to support you.

Students are expected and encouraged to meet all deadlines for assignments. If you are unable to complete the assignment work by the due date, reach out in advance to make alternative arrangements. I typically will not penalize you for turning in your assignment late, so long as it does not hinder completion of other's work (ie, group projects).

Assessment

Reflective Statements: Students critically reflect on course readings and discussions, articulating their understanding of the issues and their personal perspectives on justice and injustice. These should include elements of self-evaluation. Due on Sundays. Graded as complete/not-complete. (10 total, one to two paragraphs)

AI-Powered Debate Simulation: Utilize Microsoft Co-Pilot to simulate debate scenarios where students can practice their debating skills. The AI will present arguments on various sides of an issue related to the course content. Students will respond in real-time, allowing them to refine their argumentation, critical thinking, and public speaking skills. This assessment will be graded on the complexity of their arguments, the ability to

counter AI propositions, and the use of evidence-based reasoning to support their stance. (Five times this semester)

Critical Reading Responses: Write a 3–5 single-spaced page analysis of two books you will read this semester. A reading list is provided in this syllabus. Your analysis should demonstrate a deep comprehension of the material and engage critically with the complex ideas presented. In your response, focus on evaluating the author's arguments, identifying underlying assumptions, and discussing the broader implications of the ideas. Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your analysis. (First book due October 13, 11:59p; Second book due December 1, 11:59p)

- **Books for Critical Review**
    - Putnam, Robert D., and Shaylyn Romney Garrett. 2021. The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again. Simon & schuster.

    - O'Brian, Neil A. 2024. The Roots of Polarization: From the Racial Realignment to the Culture Wars. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

    - Fiorina, Morris P., Abrams, Samuel J., Pope, Jeremy. Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America. United Kingdom: Longman, 2011.

    - McCarty, Nolan. 2019. Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know. Oxford University Press.

    - Grossmann, Matt, and David A. Hopkins. 2016. Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats. 1st edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

    - Spinner-Halev, Jeff, and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2024. Respect and Loathing in American Democracy: Polarization, Moralization, and the Undermining of Equality. First Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

    - Grossmann, Matt, and David A. Hopkins. 2024. Polarized by Degrees: How the Diploma Divide and the Culture War Transformed American Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

    - Thurber, James A., and Antoine Yoshinaka, eds. 2016. American Gridlock: The Sources, Character, and Impact of Political Polarization. Cambridge University Press.

    - Kalmoe, Nathan P., and Lilliana Mason. 2022. Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

    - Levendusky, Matthew. "How Partisan Media Polarize America." University of Chicago Press, 2013.

    - Levendusky, Matthew. 2023. Our Common Bonds: Using What Americans Share to Help Bridge the Partisan Divide. University of Chicago Press.

    - Sunstein, Cass R. "#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media." Princeton University Press, 2017.

    - Mason, Lilliana. 2018. Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

    - Haidt, Jonathan. "The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion." Pantheon, 2012.

    - Berry J, Sobieraj S 2014. The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press

- Hetherington M, Rudolph T 2015. Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, and the Governing Crisis Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press

- Samuel Merrill III, Bernard Grofman, and Thomas L. Brunell. 2023. How Polarization Begets Polarization: Ideological Extremism in the US Congress. Oxford University Press.

- Suri, J. 2022. Civil War by Other Means: America's Long and Unfinished Fight for Democracy. PublicAffairs.

Op-ed w/ peer-review: Drawing on a topic related to this course, or something political from your own life or experience, write an op-ed that could be published in a newspaper or blog. (First Draft due Sept 22, 11:59p, final draft due Sept 29, 11:59p, peer review due by Sept 25, 11:59p)

Group Project: You will work in groups to research and present on a specific topic related to American political divides. Your project should focus on identifying and analyzing key issues that contribute to political polarization in the United States. As a group, you will prepare a presentation that demonstrates your collective research findings, understanding of the topic, and ability to present diverse perspectives. You will also submit an individual reflection related to your work as a team. (Twice during the semester.)

Debate Participation: This component assesses students' involvement in live debates and discussions conducted during class.

You will be assigned one of the following roles:

- Affirmative Initial Debater: Present the main arguments in favor of the proposal.

- Affirmative Rebuttal: Respond to the opposing side's arguments, defending your position and challenging their points.

- Against Initial Debater: Present the main arguments against the proposal.

- Against Rebuttal: Respond to the affirmative side's arguments, defending your position and challenging their points.

You will be graded on a completion basis (complete/incomplete), and to be completed you will need to demonstrate that you prepared in advanced.

Participation and Engagement: This component evaluates the degree to which students actively contribute to the course through various forms of engagement. This includes, but is not limited to:

- *Attendance*: Regular attendance is expected. Students may miss up to two classes and receive full marks for attendance.

- *Class Participation*: Active involvement in class discussions is crucial. Students should demonstrate thoughtful contributions, engage with their peers' ideas, and ask insightful questions related to course material.

- *Preparation*: Students are expected to come prepared for each class, having completed the required readings and assignments. This preparation will be assessed through in-class discussions and the quality of participation.

- *Engagement in Course Activities*: Participation in additional course-related activities, such as workshops, guest lectures, or online discussions, will also be considered.

- *Professionalism and Respect*: Demonstrating respect for classmates' viewpoints and maintaining a professional demeanor in all interactions is important. This includes adhering to classroom etiquette and providing constructive feedback to peers.

The course grade will be a weighted average of the following components:

Category	Percent of Final Grade
Participation and Engagement	10%
Reflective Statements	10%
Critical Reading Responses	20%
Op-ed w/ Peer Review	
Peer Review	10%
Final Paper	10%
AI-Powered Debate Simulation	10%
Debate Participation	10%
Group Project	20%

You might find this resource useful: https://polarization.wiki

Course Schedule (Subject to Change as Semester Progresses):

August 27

- Introduction to the Course; topic selection, draft privacy statement
  - *No Reading*

August 29

- Declining in Civic Virtue
  - *Reading:* "America's Crisis of Civic Virtue." Journal of Democracy. **Available Online**.

September 3

- What is Political Polarization?
  - *Reading:* Fiorina, Morris P., and Samuel J. Abrams. "Political polarization in the American public." Annual Review of Political Science 11 (2008). **Available Online**.
  - *Reading:* Layman, Geoffrey C., Thomas M. Carsey, and Juliana Menasce Horowitz. 2006. "Party Polarization in American Politics: Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences." Annual Review of Political Science 9(Volume 9, 2006): 83–110. **Available Online**
    * *Optional:* Hare, Christopher, and Keith T. Poole. "The polarization of contemporary American politics." Polity 46.3 (2014): 411-429.

* *Optional:* Wagner, Markus. 2021. "Affective polarization in multiparty systems." Electoral Studies 69: 102199.

* *Optional:* Hahm, Hyeonho, David Hilpert, and Thomas König. 2024. "Divided We Unite: The Nature of Partyism and the Role of Coalition Partnership in Europe." American Political Science Review 118(1): 69–87.

* *Optional:* Lee, Frances E. 2015. "How Party Polarization Affects Governance." Annual Review of Political Science 18(1): 261–282. **Available Online**

* *Optional:* Seimel, Armin. 2024. "Elite polarization — The boon and bane of democracy: Evidence from thirty democracies." Electoral Studies 90: 102801.

September 5

- *Reading:* Klein, Ezra. 2020. Why We're Polarized. Avid Reader Press / Simon & Schuster. [**Available Online**]
  - *Introduction: What Didn't Happen;
  - Chapter 1: How Democrats Became Liberals and Republicans Became Conservatives*
  - Chapter 2: The Dixiecrat Dilemma
  - Chapter 3: Your Brain on Groups

September 10

- *Reading:* Klein, Ezra. 2020. Why We're Polarized.
  - Chapter 4: The Press Secretary in Your Mind
  - Chapter 5: Demographic Threat
  - Chapter 6: The Media Divide beyond Left–Right

September 12

- *Reading:* Klein, Ezra. 2020. Why We're Polarized.
  - Chapter 7: Post-Persuasion Elections
  - Chapter 8: When Bipartisanship Becomes Irrational
  - Chapter 9: The Difference between Democrats and Republicans
  - Chapter 10: Managing Polarization—and Ourselves

September 17

- Affective Polarization
  - *Reading:* Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, et al. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." Annual Review of Political Science 22(1): 129–146. **Available Online**.

September 19

- Ideological Polarization
  - *Reading:* Carmines, Edward G., and Nicholas J. D'Amico. 2015. "The New Look in Political Ideology Research." Annual Review of Political Science 18(1): 205–216. **Available Online**.

September 24

- Negative Partisanship
  - *Reading:* Abramowitz, Alan I., and Steven Webster. 2016. "The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of U.S. elections in the 21st century." Electoral Studies 41: 12–22. **Available Online**.

September 26

- Media's Role in Political Polarization
  - *Reading:* Prior, Markus. 2013. "Media and Political Polarization." Annual Review of Political Science 16(1): 101–127. **Available Online**.
  - *Reading:* Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Jocelyn Kiley, and Katerina Eva Matsa."Political Polarization & Media Habits." Pew Research Center. October 21, 2014. https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/
    - ∗ *Optional:* Wlezien, Christopher, and Stuart Soroka. 2023. "Media Reflect! Policy, the Public, and the News." American Political Science Review: 1–7. **Available Online**.

October 1

- Social Media and Echo Chambers
  - *Reading:* Barberá, Pablo. "Social Media, Echo Chambers, and Political Polarization" in Persily, Nathaniel, and Joshua A. Tucker, eds. 2020. Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press. **Available Online**. p. 34-55.
  - *Reading:* Phillips, Samantha C., Kathleen M. Carley, and Kenneth Joseph. 2024. "Why do people think liberals drink lattes? How social media afforded self-presentation can shape subjective social sorting." **Available Online**.
    - ∗ *Optional:* Guess, Andrew M. et al. 2023. "How do social media feed algorithms affect attitudes and behavior in an election campaign?" Science 381(6656): 398–404. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abp9364.
    - ∗ *Optional:* González-Bailón, Sandra et al. 2023. "Asymmetric ideological segregation in exposure to political news on Facebook." Science 381(6656): 392–398. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.ade7138.
    - ∗ *Optional:* Guess, Andrew M. et al. 2023. "Reshares on social media amplify political news but do not detectably affect beliefs or opinions." Science 381(6656): 404–408. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.add8424.
    - ∗ *Optional:* Nyhan, Brendan et al. 2023. "Like-minded sources on Facebook are prevalent but not polarizing." Nature 620(7972): 137–144. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10396953/.

* *Optional:* Allcott, Hunt et al. "The effects of Facebook and Instagram on the 2020 election: A deactivation experiment." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 121(21): e2321584121. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11126999/.

* *Optional:* Törnberg, Petter. 2022. "How digital media drive affective polarization through partisan sorting." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 119(42): e2207159119. https://pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2207159119

* *Optional:* Waller, Isaac, and Ashton Anderson. 2021. "Quantifying social organization and political polarization in online platforms." Nature 600(7888): 264–268. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-04167-x

* *Optional:* Dominic Spohr. 2017. "Fake news and ideological polarization." Business Information Review 34(3): 150–160. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/0266382117722446

* *Optional:* Jost, John T., Delia S. Baldassarri, and James N. Druckman. 2022. "Cognitive–motivational mechanisms of political polarization in social-communicative contexts." Nature Reviews Psychology 1(10): 560–576. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9342595/

October 3

- Judicial Polarization
    - *Reading:* Hasen, Richard L. 2019. "Polarization and the Judiciary." Annual Review of Political Science 22(1): 261–276. **Available Online**.

October 8

- Eberly Center mid–semester focus group
- Nationalization
    - *Reading:* Amlani, Sharif, and Carlos Algara. 2021. "Partisanship & nationalization in American elections: Evidence from presidential, senatorial, & gubernatorial elections in the U.S. counties, 1872–2020." Electoral Studies 73: 102387. **Available Online**.

October 10

FALL BREAK October 14 through October 18

October 22

October 24

October 29

October 31

November 5 - DEMOCRACY DAY, no class (Register to Vote: https://www.cmu.edu/student-affairs/slice/civic-engagement/advocacy/voter/index.html)

Democracy Day - November 5, 2024

Join us for CMU's second Democracy Day, an opportunity to focus on our institutional commitment to civic service and democracy on Election Day. There will be programming and resources available throughout the day for our entire community to engage on the key ideals of democracy.

There are no classes on Democracy Day prior to 5 p.m. and the entire CMU community —faculty, staff and students — is encouraged to participate as their schedules allow.

November 7

November 12

November 14

November 19

November 21

November 26

November 28 - THANKSGIVING DAY, no class

December 3

December 5 - Final Class

Student Privacy in Class Discussions

This course will challenge you to think deeply about difficult and potentially provocative questions. You should be prepared to encounter material that may be unsettling or even offensive. If you're not comfortable with the possibility of being offended, you might want to reconsider enrolling. However, if you choose to participate and find yourself disagreeing with something said by a classmate, or me, or with content from the readings, I encourage you to engage in thoughtful debate and present your own perspective. Simply disliking a viewpoint doesn't invalidate it. My hope is that, regardless of how strongly we disagree or how passionately we advocate for our beliefs, we will always maintain respect and treat each other with dignity as we share and defend our ideas.

In this course, we value the open exchange of ideas and respect the privacy of all students. To create a safe and supportive learning environment, the following guidelines regarding student privacy in class discussions will be strictly observed:

1. **Confidentiality**: Any personal information, opinions, or experiences shared by students during class discussions, whether in-person or online, are to be treated as confidential. Students are prohibited from sharing or discussing this information outside of class without explicit permission from the individuals involved.

2. **Respectful Communication**: Students are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas freely while remaining respectful of others' privacy. Avoid sharing details about other students' contributions, identities, or personal circumstances outside the classroom setting.

3. **Recording and Sharing**: Recording of class discussions, whether audio, video, or text-based, is strictly prohibited. Anyone caught making an unauthorized recording will automatically fail the course—regardless of any accommodations they may have been granted.

4. **Online Discussions**: For online forums and discussions, similar privacy standards apply. Students should be mindful of the public or semi-public nature of online platforms and refrain from sharing sensitive or personally identifiable information.

5. **Consequences for Breach of Privacy**: Violations of this privacy policy may result in disciplinary action, which could include removal from the course, a formal reprimand, or other consequences as determined by the university's code of conduct.

6. **Principle of Charity**: When engaging in discussions, apply the principle of charity. This means interpreting others' arguments in the most reasonable and positive way before criticizing them. Assume that others are making sincere attempts to contribute meaningfully, and engage with their strongest points, not just the easiest to refute.

7. **Space for Additional Context**: Acknowledge that opinions shared in discussions may be based on limited information or experiences. If a classmate's perspective seems unclear or incomplete, allow them the opportunity to provide additional context. Encourage questions that seek to understand rather than dismiss others' views.

By participating in this course, you agree to uphold these privacy standards and contribute to a respectful, inclusive, and secure learning environment for all.

DEI&B – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, & Belonging

Throughout this course, we will engage with several key themes that intersect and build upon one another to deepen our understanding of the complex social and political landscape in the United States.

1. Analyzing Diverse Perspectives and Political Divides

One of the primary themes we will explore is the diverse perspectives and experiences of various marginalized groups within the U.S. We will critically analyze how these perspectives have contributed to a growing political divide, focusing on the ways in which the lived experiences of marginalized communities differ from those of majority groups. This exploration is essential for understanding the roots of political polarization and for developing strategies to bridge these divides.

2. The Significance of Diverse Viewpoints in Justice and Injustice

We will delve into the importance of recognizing and valuing the diverse viewpoints of marginalized communities. These perspectives often bring to light issues of justice and injustice that are otherwise overlooked or misunderstood by majority groups. By examining these differences, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of how justice is perceived and enacted in society, and how equitable solutions can be pursued in addressing political and social challenges.

3. The Role of Systems and Institutions in Perpetuating Inequality

Another critical theme is the examination of how systems and institutions in the U.S. have historically perpetuated privilege and maintained power dynamics that contribute to ongoing inequality. We will explore how these structures shape the experiences of different groups, influence political issues, and reinforce disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and rights. Understanding these systemic forces is key to addressing the root causes of injustice.

4. Ethical Obligations to Address Inequality

Throughout the semester, we will reflect on the individual and collective ethical obligations to address inequalities. This includes considering how we can support marginalized voices, advocate for justice, and work towards dismantling oppressive systems. These reflections will challenge us to think critically about our roles in society and the impact of our actions on the broader pursuit of equity and justice.

These overarching themes will be woven into our discussions, readings, and assignments, guiding us as we critically engage with the material and strive to understand the complexities of American society. By the end of the semester, students will have developed a nuanced perspective on the intersection of identity, power, and politics, and will be equipped to contribute to meaningful change in their communities.

Diversity Statement

I am committed to a diversity of representation in readings for this course. If you feel like there is a voice that I have missed, please make a suggestion so I can improve the syllabus and this course for both this semester and future iterations.

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work, inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values.

Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: **csdi@andrew.cmu.edu**, (412) 268-2150

Ethics Reporting Hotline. Students, faculty, and staff can anonymously file a report by calling 844-587-0793 or visiting cmu.ethicspoint.com. All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at **access@andrew.cmu.edu**.

Student well-being

The last few years have been challenging. We are all under a lot of stress and uncertainty at this time. I encourage you to find ways to move regularly, eat well, and reach out to your support system or me **cervas@cmu.edu** if you need to. We can all benefit from support in times of stress, and this semester is no exception.

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. CMU services are available, and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/. Support is always available (24/7) from Counseling and Psychological Services: 412-268-2922.

Some potential topics include:

- Abortion Rights: Debates over the legality and accessibility of abortion.

- Gun Control: Balancing Second Amendment rights with public safety concerns.

- Immigration Policy: Disputes over border security, pathways to citizenship, and immigration enforcement.

- Healthcare Reform: Access to healthcare, insurance coverage, and the role of government in healthcare.

- LGBTQ+ Rights: Issues related to same-sex marriage, transgender rights, and anti-discrimination protections.

- Climate Change: Debates over environmental regulations, renewable energy, and the role of government in addressing climate issues.

- Police Reform: Discussions about systemic racism, police brutality, and reforming law enforcement practices.

- Voting Rights: Controversies over voter ID laws, gerrymandering, and access to voting.

- Racial Inequality: Disparities in education, employment, housing, and criminal justice.

- Income Inequality: Debates over minimum wage, taxation, and economic opportunity.

- Religious Freedom: Balancing religious rights with anti-discrimination laws and other civil liberties.

- Free Speech: The limits of free speech, especially in relation to hate speech, misinformation, and social media.

- Education Policy: Issues such as school choice, curriculum content, and student debt.

- Drug Policy: Legalization of marijuana, opioid epidemic, and criminal justice reform.

- Military Spending: Debates over the size and scope of the U.S. military budget.

- Big Tech Regulation: Concerns about privacy, data security, monopolies, and the influence of social media companies.

- Affordable Housing: Availability and affordability of housing in urban and rural areas.

- Health and Safety Regulations: Vaccine mandates, public health measures, and workplace safety rules.

- Trade Policy: Tariffs, trade agreements, and their impact on the U.S. economy.