

PSC 232: Disagreement in a Democratic Society

This Version: February 17, 2020

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is consensus overrated? In this seminar course we will study the role of disagreement in a democratic society. Topics will include the causes and consequences of political polarization, academic freedom and viewpoint diversity on college campuses, and conflict as a tool for innovation.

READINGS

Most required readings for this course are available by clicking the links in the online syllabus. In addition, there are two required books for this course, listed below. In addition to the required readings, students should regularly read the news to identify current events relating to the themes of the course. We will set aside time each week to discuss relevant articles, with the goal of showing how current events connect with the course readings.

- Brooks, Arthur. 2019. *Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America from the Culture of Contempt*. New York: Broadside Books.
- McCarty, Nolan. 2019. *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Prepare for, attend, and be an active participant in class.** A small seminar of 15 students requires the active involvement of all students. Students are expected to attend all classes, complete the readings in advance of class, and share their ideas during class discussions.
- **Set the stage for class discussion.** For classes in weeks 1 through 12, you must submit one question to Professor Primo that you would like discussed during class (think of it as a “conversation starter”) along with a brief explanation (1 or 2 paragraphs) of why you selected that question. These “conversation starters” should be turned in to Professor Primo by via email 10 AM on the day of class; late “conversation starters” will not be accepted.
- **Complete a project (proposals due on March 2; projects due on April 27).**
 - Non-W students are required to complete a project of their choosing and may work in teams of up to three students. Examples of a team project include putting together a campus event (and an associated write-up) or preparing a podcast on a topic related to the course. Students who choose to work independently could pursue a traditional research paper for their project or a non-traditional approach such as a writing a set of op-eds related to the themes of the course.
 - W students are required to submit 3,500 words of writing connected to their project. For instance, a student working independently could choose to write three op-ed pieces of about 1,200 words each, or the student could choose to prepare a traditional research paper of 3,500 words. Students working on a team-based project with non-W students must turn in 3,500 words of writing that is independently done; Professor Primo will work with students to minimize the amount of additional work needed for W students working in teams to meet the W requirement.
 - Project topics, structure, and “deliverables” must be approved by Professor Primo. Proposals are due no later than March 2. Professor Primo will tailor his guidance and project requirements to the specifics of the proposals.
 - Projects are due at the beginning of class on April 27 (though, in some cases, portions of the project may be completed earlier [i.e., a podcast]). Depending on the number of projects, we may devote part or all of the final class to discussing the projects.
 - The bottom line: this project should be one that you or your team are invested in and are excited about. Professor Primo will be there to help along the way.

GRADING

- *Class attendance* counts toward 25% of your grade. Non-attendance imposes costs on other students. That said, Professor Primo understands that “life happens,” so you may miss one class session without penalty—no explanation necessary.
- *Conversation starters* count toward 15% of your course grade. Conversation starters will be graded on a credit/no-credit basis. Questions that are submitted without an explanation or with an explanation that fails to demonstrate a connection to the readings will receive no credit. You can receive credit for a conversation starter even if you do not attend class, so long as it is submitted on time. Following the “life happens” rule, you may skip two “conversation starters” without penalty.
- *Class participation* counts toward 25% of your course grade. Students are expected to do the reading in advance of class and come prepared for discussion. Students should “take ownership” of the seminar by sharing their ideas, asking questions, challenging each other’s ideas (and those of Professor Primo), and keeping up with the news to participate in the “current events” portion of class discussion.
- *The project* counts toward 35% of your course grade for all non-W students and W students working independently. For W students working in teams, the team project counts toward 20% of your course grade, with the independent writing associated with the project counting toward 15% of the course grade.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professor Primo strives to create a professional atmosphere in class where all are treated with respect. To help achieve that goal, please

- make every effort to attend and be on time for each class meeting
- silence mobile phones and other electronic devices
- keep texting and other non-course-related activities to a minimum
- come to class prepared to engage with others and be open to perspectives that may differ from your own.

PROFESSOR PRIMO’S ROLE IN AND VIEWS ON A SEMINAR COURSE

Seminar courses are spaces where ideas should be shared, debated, and even challenged, as this is how we strengthen our understandings and beliefs about the world. To that end, Professor Primo will often encourage students to explain their thoughts, question their own ways of thinking, and further refine their arguments. In other situations, Professor Primo may articulate arguments for or against an idea in ways that do not necessarily reflect his own views. When appropriate, he may choose to articulate his own opinions, and students are encouraged to challenge him, as well.

There may be times when class gets “uncomfortable.” This is a *positive*, not a negative, so long as it is clear we are all working together toward a shared end of deeper understandings about the world. To use an analogy, you can go to the gym and sit on an exercise bike pedaling slowly and texting friends. You are likely to be quite comfortable doing so. Alternatively, you can get on the same bike with a heart rate monitor and push yourself hard, to the point that you are quite uncomfortable. Which is the better workout? Think of a seminar course in the same way—as a workout for your mind and your ideas.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

No photography, video recording, or audio recording of any kind is allowed during class. In addition, no reproduction or dissemination of course materials, slides, or lectures—electronically or through other means—is allowed.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester’s Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at www.rochester.edu/college/honesty.

STATEMENT ON CREDIT HOURS

This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets once per week for a total of 150 minutes per week of faculty-led instructional time. The course also includes independent out-of-class activities for 50 minutes per week; specifically, students will work on team-based projects, attend events related to the themes of the course, and/or read the news to identify current events related to the themes of the course.

Date	Topic	Read Prior to Class
1. Jan. 27	Introduction and Course Preliminaries	- No Reading
2. Feb. 3	Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, ch. 2 - Stanley, <i>How Fascism Works</i>, excerpt - Gutmann and Thompson, <i>Why Deliberative Democracy?</i>, excerpt - Drummond, "Politics in the Classroom: How Much Is Too Much?" - Nernst, "What is Erisology?" - Singal, "The New Science of How to Argue—Constructively" - Stephens, "The Dying Art of Disagreement"
3. Feb. 10	Disagreement in Government	- McCarty, <i>Polarization</i> , chs. 1-3, 5- 7
4. Feb. 17	Disagreement in the Citizenry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WSJ Graphic - McCarty, <i>Polarization</i>, ch. 4, 8 - Iyengar et al., "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States" - Klein, <i>Why We're Polarized</i>, excerpt - Fiorina, "Has the American Public Polarized?" - Public Agenda, "Divisiveness and Collaboration in American Public Life" - Bowles, "How to Get Trump Voters and Liberals to Talk: Don't Make Anyone Sit in a Circle" - Lepore, "The Last Time Democracy Almost Died"
5. Feb. 24	Disagreement in the University I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chemerinsky and Gillman, <i>Free Speech on Campus</i>, excerpt - Gonzales, "Berkeley's Fight for Free Speech Fired Up Student Protest Movement" - The Chicago Principles - Ben-Porath, "Against Endorsing the Chicago Principles" - Bloom, <i>The Closing of the American Mind</i>, excerpt - Lukianoff and Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind" - Kronman, "The Downside of Diversity" - Bauer-Wolf, "Free Speech Laws Mushroom in Wake of Campus Protests" - Anderson, "Accusations of Viewpoint Discrimination" - Anderson, "Hand-Delivered Hate or Free Speech Exercise?"
6. Mar. 2	Disagreement in the University II ***Project Topics and Structure Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fish, <i>The First</i>, excerpt - Moskowitz, <i>The Case Against Free Speech</i>, excerpt - Baer, <i>What Snowflakes Get Right</i>, excerpt - College Pulse, "Free Expression on College Campuses" - Sachs, "There Is No Campus Free Speech Crisis: A Close Look at the Evidence" (with links to essays Sachs is responding to) - Hatch, "My Semester with the Snowflakes" - Pappano, "Forget the Shouting and Demonizing: College Students Organize Civil Discussion" - Manne, "Why I Use Trigger Warnings" - Palus, "The Latest Study on Trigger Warnings Finally Convinced Me They're Not Worth It"
7. Mar. 16	Disagreement in the University III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shields, "The Disappearing Conservative Professor" - Phillips, "Why Are There So Few Conservatives and Libertarians in Legal Academia?" - Duarte et al., "Political Diversity Will Improve Social Psychological Science" (read Duarte et al. + replies from Baumeister, Eagly, Gelman and Gross, and Hibbing et al.) - Ceci and Williams, "Socio-Political Values Infiltrate the Assessment of Scientific Research" - Musgrave and Rom, "Fair and Balanced? Experimental Evidence on Partisan Bias in Grading" - Primo and Milyo, <i>Campaign Finance and American Democracy</i>, excerpt to be distributed in class on March 16.

8. Mar. 23	The Culture of Contempt Guest: Arthur Brooks Class will meet in Douglass 401	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brooks, <i>Love Your Enemies</i> (all) - Chamlee-Wright, "Tolerance and Civility, Not Love, Will Heal Our Society"
***Please hold the evening of March 23 for a public event with Arthur Brooks. Details here: www.rochester.edu/arthurbrooks .		
9. Mar. 30	Disagreement in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Roundtable, "Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation" - Weber Shandwick, "Employee Activism in the Age of Purpose" - SHRM, "Politics in the Workplace" - James Damore's Google Memo (Document and Analysis) - Employee Dissent at Facebook - The Trump Impeachment and the Workplace
10. Apr. 6	Disagreement, Diversity, and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mill, <i>Principles of Political Economy</i>, pp. 389-90 - Page, <i>The Diversity Bonus</i>, excerpt - Sawyer, <i>Group Genius</i>, ch. 4 - Gostick and Elton, <i>The Best Team Wins</i>, ch. 4 - Chua, "The Costs of Ambient Cultural Disharmony" - Optional: Edmondson, <i>Teaming</i>, ch. 2
11. Apr. 13*	Disagreement in the Internet Age	- Readings TBD
12. Apr. 20*	Disagreement Around the World	- Readings TBD
13. Apr. 27*	Course Wrap-Up ***Project Due	

Notes: Readings are subject to change. Topics for starred weeks are subject to change. Links to excerpts from books will be added throughout the semester.