

PSCI 232/PSCI 232W: Disagreement in a Democratic Society

This Version: May 1, 2024

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 practical tools for managing disagreements.

READINGS

The required readings for this course are available on Blackboard. In addition to the required readings, students should regularly read the news to identify current events related to the course. We will set aside time each week to discuss relevant articles, with an eye toward how data, evidence, and research are used in those articles. In order to stay up-to-date with news in this area and access some required readings, students should obtain free subscriptions to [Inside Higher Ed](#), the [New York Times](#), and the [Wall Street Journal](#).

PROFESSOR PRIMO'S PERSPECTIVE ON SEMINAR COURSES

Seminar courses are spaces where ideas should be shared, debated, and challenged, as this is how we strengthen our understandings and beliefs about the world. To that end, Professor Primo will often encourage students to question their beliefs 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.

To foster an open exchange of ideas and allow for frank discussion of controversial topics, class sessions will not be recorded. 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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Prepare for, attend, and be an active participant in class.** A seminar of approximately 20 students requires the active involvement of all students. Students are expected to attend all classes (health permitting), complete the readings in advance of class, and share their ideas during class discussions.
- **Set the stage for class discussions.** For weeks 2-10, you will be asked to submit one question to Professor Primo that you would like discussed during class (think of it as a “conversation starter”) along with a 250-word explanation of why you selected that question, with support from at least two of that week’s readings. Answers should be submitted on Blackboard by 8 AM on the day of class; late conversation starters will not be accepted except in unusual circumstances.
- **Complete a take-home midterm essay.** On April 1, you will be provided with a prompt and be asked to write a 1,250-word essay that is based on the readings. The essay is due by 7 PM on April 9.
- **Complete the Perspectives Program.** Students will be placed in groups of 3-4 students and will meet once outside of class for 60 minutes after completing online lessons regarding the science of constructive disagreements. Students must come to class prepared to discuss the program and their group meetings. More details will be provided in class.
- **Complete a take-home end-of-semester reflection.** Students will be asked to write a 750-word reflection based on a prompt to be provided by Professor Primo on April 29. This essay is due by 7 PM on May 6.

- **Read the news and share relevant articles:** Students are expected to spend 50 minutes outside of class each week reading the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, or *Inside Higher Ed* in order to deepen their understanding of how the themes of the course relate to current affairs. Twice in the semester (once during weeks 3-5 and once during weeks 6-9), students will submit a news article and brief explanation for how it relates to the course material on political polarization (weeks 3-5) or free speech in higher education (weeks 6-9).
- **W students:** W students meet the writing requirement by completing at least six conversation starters and both essays with careful attention to the quality of their writing.

GRADING

- You may earn a total of 100 points in the course.
- *Conversation starters* collectively count toward 18% of your course grade. Each assignment is worth 3 points. You can receive credit for a conversation starter even if you do not attend class. Your grade is based on your highest 6 of 9 conversation starters.
- *Class participation* counts toward 15% of your course grade and is worth 15 points. 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. Students will also be evaluated based on how well-prepared they are for the discussion of the Perspectives program. *Class attendance factors into class participation. However, please do not come to class if you are not feeling well or it would present a hardship to do so; just give Professor Primo advance notice when possible.*
- *Completion of the Perspectives Program* counts toward 12% of your grade and is worth 12 points. This grade is based on (a) completion of all 6 online lessons in the program and associated quizzes and (b) active participation in the group dialogue.
- *The midterm essay* counts toward 35% of your grade and is worth 35 points.
- *The end-of-semester reflection* counts toward 15% of your grade and is worth 15 points.
- *In the News assignments* collectively count toward 5% of your course grade and are worth 2.5 points each.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professor Primo strives to create a professional atmosphere in class where all are treated with respect. To help achieve this 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, and come to class prepared to engage with others and be open to perspectives that may differ from your own.

GENERATIVE AI USAGE

Students may use generative AI such as ChatGPT to improve their writing or to explore ideas. All submitted work must be written by the student (e.g., students may not cut-and-paste ChatGPT content into their essays). Incorrect quotations, fake citations, inappropriate references or citations, and all other errors due to the use of AI are the responsibility of the student and will result in point deductions.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Note: Topics are subject to change as the course evolves. Readings will go on Blackboard approximately one week in advance of each class. CS=Conversation Starter.

Date	Topic	Assignment	
1. January 22	Introduction		
2. January 29	Foundations	CS (8 AM)	
3. February 5	Political Polarization I	CS (8 AM)	“In the News” (due 2/19 by 8 AM)
4. February 12	Political Polarization II	CS (8 AM)	
5. February 19	Political Polarization III	CS (8 AM)	
6. February 26	The University of Rochester and Campus Speech	CS (8 AM)	“In the News” (due 3/25 by 8 AM)
7. March 4	Higher Education I: The Campus Speech Climate	CS (8 AM)	
8. March 18	Higher Education II: DEI vs. (?) Free Speech	CS (8 AM)	
9. March 25	Higher Education III: Scientific Advancement	CS (8 AM)	
March 27	Optional: Politics and Markets Project Event at 7:30 PM in Wegmans 1400		
10. April 1	Disagreement, Diversity, and Innovation	CS (8 AM); Midterm Essay prompt distributed	
April 8	No Class due to eclipse (cancelled by University of Rochester)	Midterm Essay due 4/9 by 7 PM	
11. April 15	Practical Tools I		
12. April 22	Practical Tools II		
13. April 29	Course Wrap-up	End-of-Semester Reflection prompt distributed	
May 6	End-of-Semester Reflection due by 7 PM		

READINGS (available on Blackboard)

January 29: Foundations

- Mill, John Stuart. 1859. *On Liberty*, ch. 2
- Milton, John. 1644. *Areopagitica*, excerpts.
 - WSJ article regarding the importance of this publication.
- Lounsbury, Glenn C. 1994. "Self-Censorship in Public Discourse." *Rationality and Society* 6(4):428-461.
- Strossen, Nadine. 2019. *HATE: Why We Should Resist It with Free Speech, Not Censorship*. New York: Oxford, ch. 1.
- Rauch, Jonathan. 2021. *The Constitution of Knowledge*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, ch. 1.

February 5: Political Polarization I

- Barber, Michael, and Nolan McCarty. 2015. "Causes and Consequences of Polarization." In *Political Negotiation: A Handbook*, ed. Jane Mansbridge and Cathie Jo Martin. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 2016. "Has the American Public Polarized?" Hoover Institution.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 2016. "The Political Parties Have Sorted." Hoover Institution.
- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Morris P. Fiorina. 2013. "Polarized or Sorted? Just What's Wrong With Our Politics, Anyway?" *The American Interest*.
- Druckman, James N., Erik Peterson, and Rune Slothuus. 2013. "How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation." *American Political Science Review* 107(1):57-79.

February 12: Political Polarization II

- Iyengar, Shanto, et al. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22:129-146.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chs. 2-3.
- Dias, Nicholas, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2021. "The Nature of Affective Polarization: Disentangling Policy Disagreement from Partisan Identity." *American Journal of Political Science* 66(3):775–790.
- Krupnikov, Yanna, and John Barry Ryan. 2022. *The Other Divide: Polarization and Disengagement in American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chs. 1, 4.

February 19: Political Polarization III

What Can We Do to "Fix" Elite Polarization?

- A Laundry List (author unknown).
- Edsall, Thomas B. 2024. "A 'National and Global Maelstrom' Is Pulling Us Under." *New York Times*, Jan. 10.
- Foley, Edward B. 2024. "Don't Despair—Mobilize for Institutional Change." *Common Ground Democracy* (Substack), Jan. 15.
- Wines, Michael. 2024. "Some on the Right Flirt with a Voting Method the Left Loves." *New York Times*, Feb. 8.

Affective Polarization and Democratic Norms/Accountability

- Broockman, David E., Joshua L. Kalla, and Sean J. Westwood. 2023. "Does Affective Polarization Undermine Democratic Norms or Accountability? Maybe Not." *American Journal of Political Science* 67(3):808-828.
- Druckman, James N., et al. Forthcoming. *Partisan Hostility and American Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chs. 1 and 8.

February 26: The University of Rochester and Campus Speech

University Policies

- Guidelines for Free Speech and Peaceful Protests (all)
- Recent policy updates (skim)
- Faculty Handbook, pp. 4-5; 15-16; 38 (pages refer to the document pages, not the PDF)
- 2023-24 Standards of Student Conduct, pp. 4-5; 34
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Discriminatory Employment/Service Practices, sections I and II

2024 College Free Speech Rankings: Results for University of Rochester

- Link to be made available on Blackboard

March 4: Higher Education I—The Campus Speech Climate

Placing Current Debates into Historical Context

- Chemerinsky, Erwin, and Howard Gillman. 2017. *Free Speech on Campus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, excerpt.
- Lukianoff, Greg, and Jonathan Haidt. 2015. "The Coddling of the American Mind." *The Atlantic* 316(2):42-52.
- Lukianoff, Greg. 2022. "The Second Great Age of Political Correctness." *Reason*, January.
- Gutkin, Len. 2023. "A Decade of Ideological Transformation Comes Undone." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec. 22.

The Chicago Principles

- Background on the Chicago Principles (skim web page).
- The Chicago Principles.
- Ben-Porath, Sigal. 2018. "Against Endorsing the Chicago Principles." *Inside Higher Ed*, Dec. 11.
- Ghachem, Malick. 2023. "A Better Way to Protect Free Speech on Campus." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan. 24.

Institutional Neutrality

- The Kalven Report
- Thorpe, Holden. 2022. "The Charade of Political Neutrality." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 16.
- Tomasi, John. 2023. "Congresswoman, Have You No Shame?" *Inside Higher Ed*, Dec. 20.

- McGuire, Patricia. 2023. "When Presidents Speak Out, They Encourage Students to Do the Same." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 26.

Survey Says...

- College Pulse/FIRE. 2024. "2024 College Free Speech Rankings." (Skim the findings.)

March 18: Higher Education II—DEI vs. (?) Free Speech

- Whittington, Keith. 2019. "Free Speech and the Diverse University." *Fordham Law Review* 87(6):2453-2477.
- Baer, Ulrich. 2019. *What Snowflakes Get Right*. New York: Oxford University Press, excerpt.
- Haidt, Jonathan. 2022. "When Truth and Social Justice Collide, Choose Truth." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 23.
- Diversity Statements
 - Mitchell, Carmen. 2018. "Why Colleges Should Require Faculty Diversity Statements." *Inside Higher Ed*, Nov. 14.
 - The University of California system
 - Jerry Coyne's discovery that diversity statements were used to screen out job candidates out in the UC system
 - A news release from FIRE regarding an open record request from the UC System
 - A follow-up blog post from Jerry Coyne regarding the FIRE news release
 - Sailer, John. 2023. "Inside Ohio State's DEI Factory." *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 20.
 - Powell, Michael. 2023. "D.E.I. Statements Stir Debate on College Campuses." *New York Times*, Sept. 8.
- Campus Controversies
 - Anderson, Greta. 2020. "Hand-Delivered Hate or Free Speech Exercise?" *Inside Higher Ed*, Feb. 7.
 - Bartlett, Tom. 2022. "Georgetown Reinstated Him After a Controversial Tweet. He Quit Anyway." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 7.
 - Finkelstein, Claire O. 2023. "To Fight Antisemitism, We Must Restrict Speech." *Washington Post*, Dec. 10.

March 25: Higher Education III—Scientific Advancement

Ideological Diversity in the Academy

- Abrams, Sam. 2016. "Professors Moved Left Since 1990s, Rest of Country Did Not." Blog, Heterodox Academy, Jan. 9.
- Shields, Jon A. 2018. "The Disappearing Conservative Professor." *National Affairs* 37:138-150.
- Hamid, Rahem, and Elias J. Schisgall. 2023. "More Than Three-Quarters of Surveyed Harvard Faculty Identify as Liberal." *Harvard Crimson*, May 22.

The Effects of Ideological Diversity on Scientific Inquiry

- Duarte, Jose L., et al. 2015. "Political Diversity Will Improve Social Psychological Science." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 38:e130. Note: Read the main article by Duarte et al. and then the replies from Baumeister, Eagly, Gelman and Gross, and Hibbing et al.
- Clark, Cory J., et al. 2023. "Prosocial Motives Underlie Scientific Censorship by Scientists: A Perspective and Research Agenda." *PNAS* 120(48).
- Two articles by Patrick Brown on publishing in the area of climate science
 - Brown, Patrick T. 2023. "I Left Out the Full Truth to Get My Climate Change Paper Published." *The Free Press*, Sept. 5.
 - Brown, Patrick T. 2024. "Does High-Profile Climate Science Tell the Full Story?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 27.

April 1: Disagreement, Diversity, and Innovation

- Edmondson, Amy C. 2012. *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, ch. 2.
- Sawyer, Keith. 2017. *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration*. New York: Basic Books, ch. 4
- Kudesia, Ravi. 2021. "Diversity Is Not Enough: Why Collective Intelligence Requires Both Diversity and Disagreement." Blog, Heterodox Academy, July 21.

- Johansson, Frans. 2004. *The Medici Effect: Breakthrough Insights at the Intersection of Ideas, Concepts, and Cultures*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, ch. 6.
- Elkins, Caroline et al. 2024. "Critics of D.E.I. Forget That It Works." *New York Times*, Jan. 21.

April 15: Practical Tools I

- Complete the Constructive Dialogue Institute's Perspectives program.

April 22: Practical Tools II

Perspectives on Disagreeing "Better"

- Brooks, Arthur C. 2019. *Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America from Our Culture of Contempt*. New York: Broadside Books, ch. 8.
- Levendusky, Matthew. 2023. *Our Common Bonds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, ch. 7.

Organizations Committed to Bridging Divides

- Braver Angels
- Bridging the Gap
- Listen First Project
- PEN America
- Lederman, Jillian. 2022. "Free Expression and the First Year College Orientation." Bipartisan Policy Center.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

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 including, but not limited to, reading the news to connect course themes to current affairs for an average of 50 minutes per week.