

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

This Version: December 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 course 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.** Several times in the semester, 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 the Perspectives program.** Students will be placed in groups of 3-4 students in class on September 18 after completing online lessons regarding the science of constructive disagreements. More details will be provided in class.
- **Complete a take-home essay.** On November 6, you will be provided with a prompt and be asked to write a 1,500-word essay that is based on the readings and class discussions. The essay is due by 5 PM on November 22.
- **Complete an end-of-semester reflection.** Students will be asked to write a 500-word reflection based on a prompt to be provided by Professor Primo on December 4. This essay is due by 5 PM on December 11.

- **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. Students will be asked to share relevant articles with the class during in-class discussions.
- **W students:** W students meet the writing requirement by completing at least 6 conversation starters, the take-home essay, and the end-of-semester reflection 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 conversation starters.
- *Class Participation* counts toward 20% of your course grade and is worth 20 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 7% of your grade and is worth 7 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 Take-Home Essay* counts toward 50% of your grade and is worth 50 points.
- *The End-of-Semester Reflection* counts toward 5% of your grade and is worth 5 points.

## 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 should not rely on ChatGPT or other generative AI to complete writing assignments for this course. Students may use tools like ChatGPT to improve the quality of their writing, but all ideas should be their own. 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 a reduced grade on the assignment.

## 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 Due
1. August 28	Introduction	
2. September 4	Foundations	CS (8 AM)
3. September 11	The University of Rochester and Campus Speech	CS (8 AM)
4. September 18	Practical Tools	Complete Perspectives program
5. September 25	Screening: "UNDIVIDE US"	
6. October 2	Political Polarization I	CS (8 AM)
7. October 9	Political Polarization II	CS (8 AM)
8. October 16	Political Polarization III	CS (8 AM)
9. October 23	Higher Education I: The Campus Speech Climate	CS (8 AM)
10. October 30	Part 1: Higher Education II: Scientific Advancement Part 2: Guest Speaker: John Blackshear, VP for Student Life, University of Rochester	CS (8 AM)
11. November 6	Higher Education III: DEI vs. (?) Free Speech *take-home essay prompt distributed	CS (8 AM)
12. November 13 @ 7:30 PM	Politics and Markets Project Event on Election 2024 (no class at 2 PM)	
13. November 20	Disagreement, Diversity, and Innovation	CS (8 AM)
November 22 (due date; not a class day)		Take-home essay (5 PM)
14. December 4	Course Wrap-up *end-of-semester reflection prompt distributed	
December 11 (due date; not a class day)		End-of-semester reflection (5 PM)

## 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](http://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.

## READINGS (available on Blackboard)

### September 4: Foundations

- Mill, John Stuart. 1859. *On Liberty*, ch. 2.
- Milton, John. 1644. *Areopagitica*, excerpts.
  - WSJ article regarding the importance of this publication.
- Loury, 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.

### September 11: The University of Rochester and Campus Speech

#### University Policies

- Guidance for Students
- Demonstrations, Vigils, and Peaceful Protests Policy
- Faculty Handbook, pp. 4-5; 15-16; 38 (pages refer to the document pages, not the pdf)
- 2024-25 Standards of Student Conduct, pp. 4-5; 34
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Discriminatory Employment/Service Practices, sections I and II

#### 2025 College Free Speech Rankings: Results for University of Rochester

- Read specific pages as noted on Blackboard

### October 2: 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.

### October 9: 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.

### October 16: Political Polarization III

#### Social Media and Political Polarization

- Allcott, Hunt, et al. 2020. "The Welfare Effects of Social Media." *American Economic Review* 110(3):639-676.
- Guess, Andrew M., et al. 2023. "How Do Social Media Feed Algorithms Affect Attitudes and Behavior in an Election Campaign?" *Science* 381:398-404.
  - Critique of Guess et al.
  - Response to this critique by Guess et al.
  - Science editorial addressing the paper and subsequent critiques
  - Optional: Supplementary material for the original article (i.e., variable definitions, etc.)

## **October 16: Political Polarization III (cont.)**

### 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. 2024. *Partisan Hostility and American Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chs. 1 and 8.

## **October 23: 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.

### The Chicago Principles

- The Chicago Principles.
- Ben-Porath, Sigal. 2018. "Against Endorsing the Chicago Principles." *Inside Higher Ed*, December 11.
- Ghachem, Malick. 2023. "A Better Way to Protect Free Speech on Campus." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 24.

### Institutional Neutrality

- The University of Chicago's Kalven Report
- McGuire, Patricia. 2023. "When Presidents Speak Out, They Encourage Students to Do the Same." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 26.
- Roth, Michael S. 2024. "Cease-Fire Now." *Inside Higher Ed*, March 25.
- Diermeier, Daniel. 2024. "4 Reasons Universities Should Practice Institutional Neutrality." *Forbes*, February 6.
- Quinn, Ryan. 2024. "What's Behind the Push for 'Institutional Neutrality'?" *Inside Higher Ed*, October 10.

## **October 30: Higher Education II—Scientific Advancement**

### Ideological Diversity in the Academy

- Abrams, Sam. 2016. "Professors Moved Left Since 1990s, Rest of Country Did Not." Blog, Heterodox Academy, January 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.
- Quinn, Ryan. 2024. "Faculty Overwhelmingly Back Harris in November. But They Won't Tell Students to Do the Same." *Inside Higher Ed*, October 21.

### 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, if you are interested, the replies from Baumeister; Eagly; Gelman and Gross; and Hibbing et al.
- Sunstein, Cass R. 2024. "The Nobel Laureate Who Liked to Collaborate with His Adversaries." *New York Times*, April 1.
- 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*, September 5.
  - Brown, Patrick T. 2024. "Does High-Profile Climate Science Tell the Full Story?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 27.
- Ghorayshi, Azeen. 2024. "U.S. Study on Puberty Blockers Goes Unpublished Because of Politics, Doctor Says." *New York Times*, October 23.

## November 6: Higher Education III—DEI vs. (?) Free Speech

- 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
  - Zaheneis, Megan. 2024. “The Uncertain Future of Diversity Statements.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 9.
  - Khalid, Amna, and Jeffery Aaron Snyder. 2023. “Yes, DEI Can Erode Academic Freedom. Let's Not Pretend Otherwise.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 6.
  - Hawkins, Stacy. 2023. “Sometimes Diversity Trumps Academic Freedom.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 28.
- Confessore, Nicholas. 2024. “The University of Michigan Doubled Down on D.E.I. What Went Wrong?” *New York Times*, October 16.

## November 20: 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.