“Republicans and Democrats don’t just have different priorities; they live in different intellectual and moral universes.”

*New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman

Most observers now agree that differences between Republicans and Democrats are bigger than at any time in recent memory. Books like *Fight Club Politics* and the *Second Civil War* describe a highly polarized political system in which bitter infighting and gridlock are the norm. Has it always been like this?

This course explores the causes and consequences of partisan polarization by investigating major developments in the American political system in the last century. It traces how the two-party system responded to major developments in American society such as the reconstruction of the South and the movement of black citizens to the cities of the north. It concludes by exploring how the ongoing demographic change in the United States sparked by new immigration may change our politics in the future.

This course is a capstone seminar for juniors and seniors in the Political Science department. It is reading and writing intensive and concludes with an original research project. Students are expected to actively participate in and at times lead class discussion, and will present their research to the class at the end of the quarter.

Professor Peter Hanson  
peter.hanson@du.edu  
(303) 871-2852

Office Hours: 3 – 5 pm, Tuesday and Friday, Sturm 471

Class Meetings: Monday and Wednesday 10 am – 11:50 am, Margery Reed 006
Assessments

Discussion Leader 5%
Once in the quarter you will be asked to lead the group in a discussion on one of the assigned readings.

Participation 20%
Participation includes attendance, playing an active role in class discussions, small group work or coming to office hours.

Response Papers 25%
You must complete 5 short (2 page double-spaced) papers responding to the course readings over the quarter. You may pick which readings you wish to respond to. Papers must be submitted the day on which the reading is due.

Research Paper 50%
You must complete a 15-20 page research paper drawing on original data that you gather. A first draft of the paper will be due to me for review near the mid-point of the quarter.

Multitasking (texting, Facebooking, etc.) in class is a distraction to you and to other students. It is not acceptable classroom behavior and is grounds for reducing your participation grade.

Grading Scale

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<th>DU Letter Grades (account: University of Denver)</th>
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** All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the class. Late work will be reduced 1/3 of a letter grade each day, with the first reduction occurring immediately after the time it is due. **

**Required Books:**
*The Two Reconstructions* by Richard Valelly

*The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* by Skocpol and Williamson

*How Congress Evolves* by Nelson Polsby

All books are available at the campus bookstore.

**Website**
Additional course materials, including readings, podcasts and videos, will be posted on the Canvas website, which can be found at:
https://canvas.du.edu/

Select videos for class are also available on DU's CourseMedia website, which can be found at:
https://coursemedia.du.edu/

**Academic Honesty**
You are required to submit your own work for the course, and to ensure that it is original and properly cited. Students who are found to have plagiarized coursework will receive a failing grade for the course. It is also a violation of the DU honor code to submit work for class that you have already submitted to another class. For additional information, please refer to DU's policies on student conduct at:
http://www.du.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode.html

**Students with Disabilities**
Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Please visit DU's website on its Disabilities Service Program for additional information.
http://www.du.edu/studentlife/disability/dsp/

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1. Overview**

March 23. Introduction

March 25. What is partisan polarization?
“America Divided” from the Second Civil War by Ron Brownstein

Polarized America by McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, Chapters 1-2

Week 2. Debates Over Polarization in the Population

March 30. Ideological Sorting?

“The Great Sorting Out,” from the Second Civil War by Ron Brownstein

Excerpts from Culture War by Morris Fiorina and Sam Abrams

Excerpts from The Disappearing Center by Alan Abramowitz

April 1. Geographic Sorting?

“Deep Red and Blue Congressional Districts: The Causes and Consequences of Declining Party Competitiveness,” by Bruce Oppenheimer

“The Big Sort,” by Bishop and Cushing

“‘The Big Sort’ That Wasn’t: A Skeptical Reexamination,” by Abrams and Fiorina

Week 3. Consequences of Polarization

April 6. Institutional Effects of Polarization

Too Weak to Govern by Peter Hanson

“Mitigating Extreme Partisanship in an Era of Networked Parties: An Examination of Various Reform Strategies,” by Seth Masket

Fight Club Politics by Juliet Elperin, chapters 1-4

April 8. No class

Week 4 – Reconstruction and the Solid South

April 13. Democrats and Republicans of Old

“The Age of Partisan Armies,” from the Second Civil War by Ron Brownstein

Selected speeches of William Jennings Bryan
William McKinley inaugural address

Selected speeches of Theodore Roosevelt

April 15. The Establishment of the Democratic South

*The Two Reconstructions* by Richard Valelly, chapters 1-6

**Week 5. The view from mid-century**

April 20. The Solid South

*Southern Politics in the State and Nation*, by V.O. Key, chapters 1, 11 and 13

“The Seniority and the South,” from *Master of the Senate* by Robert Caro

“The Age of Bargaining,” from the *Second Civil War* by Ron Brownstein

April 22. The Second Reconstruction

*The Two Reconstructions*, Valelly, chapters 6-10

In class viewing of “Mississippi: Is This America?” from *Eyes on the Prize*

**Week 6. Reform of the House**

April 27. The South Transformed

*How Congress Evolves*, by Nelson Polsby, chapters 1-3

April 29. The Polarized House

*How Congress Evolves*, by Nelson Polsby, chapters 4-5

**Week 7. The Gingrich Revolution**

May 4. Setting the Stage for Revolution

“The Age of Transition I and II,” from the *Second Civil War* by Ron Brownstein

May 6. Republicans Take Power

“A House Divided: The Struggle for Partisan Control, 1994 – 2000,” by Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer

**Week 8. The Rise of the Tea Party**

May 11. The Tea Party (part 1)

*The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, by Skocpol and Williamson, chapters 1-3

May 13. The Tea Party (part 2)

*The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, by Skocpol and Williamson, chapters 4-6

**Week 9. Demographic Change and America’s Future**

May 18. The Rise of Latino Voters

“The elusive progressive majority,” *The Economist*

“Earthquakes and Aftershocks: Race, Direct Democracy, and Partisan Change,” by Bowler, Nicholson and Segura

“California’s Republican Party: Big Changes in the Composition of its Voters Over the Past 20 Years,” The Field Poll

May 20. What does the future hold?

*The Future is Ours*, Chapters 1-5, by Bowler and Segura

**Week 10. Class presentations**

May 25. No class (Memorial Day)

May 27. Last day of class.