

The Art of Culture War in American Politics

Samuel Galloway, Ph.D.

Political Science

Tuesday and Friday: 4.30 – 6.10

Office Hours: 2.30 – 4.00

Social Science 1032

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1. Course Description:

Culture wars are ubiquitous to American Politics. Religion, sex, art, conspiracy, immigration, crime, poverty, healthcare are political issues with life and death consequences. Yet, too often these conflicts are treated as ancillary to “proper” politics, mere distractions concerning only small, niche constituencies that can be dispensed with to win broader consensus. By contrast, we will explore how reactionary culture war politics are a strategic approach to dividing the body politic in ways that forestall solidarity, cooperation, and the pursuit of a common good. In the tradition of Machiavelli, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz, this course offers an analysis of the art of culture war, its strategy, tactics, and purposes, so as to best understand – and thus be able to most effectively counter – the assaults on democracy waged by culture warriors.

2. Course Objectives:

Completion of this course will provide a survey of political science scholarship on culture wars in the United States. In so doing, it will equip you with a theoretical and conceptual basis for analyzing the strategies, tactics, and purposes of culture war politics. Completion will build political cultural literacy, as well as skills such as critical reading, analytical writing, and collaborative discussion.

3. Required Texts

All texts are available on Perusall, accessible via Moodle.

4. Grading (see below for details):

Attendance & Class Participation: 25%.
Perusall Annotation: 25%

In-Class Response Papers: 25%
Final Paper: 25%

5. Attendance and Class Participation:

This class will be a discussion-driven exploration of our topics of study. Your attendance and participation is essential to the success of this experiment in learning. Attendance means being present in class, having read the assigned course materials that you also have with you to reference. Participation means verbal contributions to class discussion that refers us to a passage in the text, a concept or idea that is under discussion, and/or a question regarding the aforementioned. You are expected to participate every class.

Absences

I know 18 - 22 year olds are not the most health conscious cohort - at least I wasn't at your age. However, now is the time to err on the side of caution. If you have a cough, runny nose, sore throat, just a tickle in your throat, "allergies," or just feel "off," then **STAY HOME and GET TESTED**. You will **NOT** be penalized for prioritizing the health and wellness of your peers.

6. Perusall Annotations:

Reading the assigned course materials is essential to a successful course. To this end, you are required to do the readings on Perusall, where you are expected to make at least four (4) *substantive annotations* per reading. **Perusall annotations a due on the night before class, by 8pm.** A substantive annotation can take many forms:

A) Asks a deep question, i.e., "When X says 'y,' do they they mean 'x' or 'z'. If 'x,' then I think that 'a,b,c' follows. If 'z,' then I think that 'd,e,f' follows."

Not: "What does this mean?"

B) Makes a deep connection to a previous text or author, i.e., "This reminds me of X, where they argue 'a,b,c,' only here the claim is 'x,y,z.' I think this formulation is better because '1,2,3.'"

Not: "This reminds me of 'x'."

C) Poses a hypothetical reply to a passage informed by previous readings or the text's on premises, i.e., "When X claims 'a,b,c,' they do so on the basis of positing '1,' but if we instead take '2' to be our beginning premise, then we see that 'd,e,f' follows, which better explains the phenomenon X theorizes."

Not: "But what about 'x'?"

D) Extends the argument, i.e., "When X argues 'a,b,c,' they do so by addressing phenomenon no. 1. If we apply this argument to phenomenon no. 2, then we can see how 'a,b,c' provides a way of understanding 'x,y,z' about it that otherwise we would not notice or appreciate."

Not: "This is old and dated and doesn't apply to our world anymore."

E) Puts a complex and possibly unclear portion of the argument in more accessible language, i.e., "When X says, 'a,b,c,' they are saying 'a1,b1,c1.'"

Not: "'a' means 'a'."

7. Writing Assignments:

At the start of each Tuesday class, you will be asked to write a response paper to the reading assigned for that day. Please bring paper and pen with which to write. These will be graded on a scale of 1 – 5, with anything less than a 4 being unsatisfactory. A satisfactory response engages the text in meaningful ways by drawing out its arguments, challenging or extending its premises. What does the reading get right or wrong, and why? How does the rightness or wrongness of the argument affect possible policy or political decisions? What might correcting the wrongness or extending/applying the rightness do for the argument, and for us as citizens?

8. Final Paper Critical Construction of an Original Argument

The objective of the final paper assignment is to provide you with the opportunity to construct an original argument using the materials from this course. The final written assignment will be approximately 5 – 7 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and **margins justified** pages. Papers either over or under this range will not receive full consideration. The goal of this essay is to critically construct an original argument informed by engagement with readings in the class. Specific paper prompts will be released in advance.

9. Academic Integrity:

Simply: *do not* plagiarize. If there are any questions whatsoever about the proper way to cite a source, please consult me or the resources provided by the Learning Center. Plagiarism will lead to automatic failure of the course and will be referred to the College administration for additional sanction.

Learning Center Resources:

Political Science Tutor: Sophia Dimopoulos.
You can sign-up for tutoring through the course Moodle page.

Additional resources are available on the Learning Center webpage:
<https://www.purchase.edu/offices/learning-center/handouts-and-links/>

10. Unwavering Expectations for Respectful Discourse and Conduct:

Under no circumstances will disrespectful discourse or conduct be welcome in our classroom. We will treat one another with respect, patience, and understanding. Learning inherently involves the risk of allowing knowledge to change your life, and this requires courage. We will all exercise an unwavering commitment to encouraging one another in this process.

Mask Policy
Not all masks are created equal.

		PHYSICIAN RECOMMENDED WEARING			
		NOTHING	CLOTH MASK	SURGICAL MASK	N95 MASK
PERSON EXPECTED TO WEAR MASK	NOTHING	15 minutes	20 minutes	30 minutes	2.5 hours
	CLOTH MASK	20 minutes	27 minutes	40 minutes	2.5 hours
SURGICAL MASK	SURGICAL MASK	30 minutes	40 minutes	1 hour	6 hours
	N95 MASK	2.5 hours	3.3 hours	6 hours	25 hours

The best line of defense we have against transmission of COVID-19 is proper masking. To this end, I will ask that the freely-provided N-95 masks be properly worn at all times, fully covering nose and mouth, all semester.

Please consult this video for how to properly wear an N-95 mask:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNkdHbYu6Mw>

There will be no food or drinks allowed in class. You may step out of the classroom if necessary.

11. Accessibility Statement:

The Office of Disability Resources collaborates directly with students who identify documented disabilities to create accommodation plans, including testing accommodations, in order for students to access course content and validly demonstrate learning. For those students who may require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible, 914-251-6035, ODR@purchase.edu (Student Services Building, #316A), www.purchase.edu/odr.

12. Schedule

Week One: Intro Lecture

Tuesday, August 30, 2022

- Introduction to the Dark Arts of Culture War.

Friday, September 2, 2022

Reading:

- Smith, Rogers M. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America." *The American Political Science Review*, Sep., 1993, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Sep., 1993), pp. 549-56.

Week Two: Race

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

Reading:

- Mendelberg, Tali. "Executing Hortons: Racial crime in the 1988 presidential campaign." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1997): 134-157.

Friday, September 9, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Three: No Class

Tuesday, September 13, 2022 Friday, September 16, 2022:

Week Four: Race

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Reading:

- Hancock, Ange-Marie. "Contemporary Welfare Reform and the Public Identity of the" Welfare Queen"." *Race, Gender & Class* (2003): 31-59.

Friday, September 23, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Five: Race:

Tuesday, September 27, 2022

Reading:

- Alexander H. Updegrave, Maisha N. Cooper, Erin A. Orrick & Alex R. Piquero. "Red States and Black Lives: Applying the Racial Threat Hypothesis to the Black Lives Matter Movement," *Justice Quarterly*, 37:1 (2020), 85-108, DOI: 10.1080/07418825.2018.1516797

Friday, September 30, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Six: Education

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

Reading:

- Benson, Keith E. "'Crying, 'Wolf!' The Campaign Against Critical Race Theory in American Public Schools as an Expression of Contemporary White Grievance in an Era of Fake News." *Journal of Education and Learning* 11, no. 4 (2022).

Friday, October 7, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Seven: Sex, Gender, Sexuality

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Reading:

- Castle, Jeremiah. "New fronts in the culture wars? Religion, partisanship, and polarization on religious liberty and transgender rights in the United States." *American Politics Research* 47, no. 3 (2019): 650-679.

Friday, October 14, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Eight: Sex, Gender, Sexuality

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Reading:

- Davis, Alyssa J. and Heather Hensman Kettrey. "Clear and Omnipresent Danger: Digital Age Culture Wars and Reactions to Drag Queen Story Hour across Diverse Subreddit Communities" *Social Currents* 2022, Vol. 9(1) 25-44

Friday, October 21, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Nine: Sex, Gender, Sexuality

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

Reading:

- Andrew Lewis. *The Rights Turn in Conservative Christian Politics: How Abortion Transformed the Culture Wars*, 2017, Chapter 2.

Friday, October 28, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Ten: Sex, Gender, Sexuality

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

Reading:

- Campi, Ashleigh. "Cultivating Authoritarian Submission: Race and Gender in Conservative Media." *Theory & Event* 24, no. 2 (2021): 456-482.

Friday, November 4, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Eleven: QAnon

Tuesday, November 8, 2022: **No Class, Election Day**

Reading:

- Reinhard, Carrie Lynn D., David Stanley, and Linda Howell. "Fans of Q: the stakes of QAnon's functioning as political fandom." *American Behavioral Scientist* 66, no. 8 (2022): 1152-1172.
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Friday, November 11, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading

Week Twelve: Christian Nationalism

Tuesday, November 15, 2022

Reading:

- Perry, Samuel L., Andrew L. Whitehead, and Joshua B. Grubbs. "'I Don't Want Everybody to Vote': Christian Nationalism and Restricting Voter Access in the United States." In *Sociological Forum*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 4-26. 2022.

Friday, November 18, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Thirteen: Christian Nationalism

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

Reading:

- Armaly, Miles T., David T. Buckley, and Adam M. Enders. "Christian nationalism and political violence: victimhood, racial identity, conspiracy, and support for the capitol attacks." *Political Behavior* 44, no. 2 (2022): 937-960.

Friday, November 25, 2022: No Class, Indigenous Peoples Day Break.

Week Fourteen: Immigration

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

Reading:

- Al-Kire, Rosemary, Michael Pasek, Jo-Ann Tsang, Joseph Leman, and Wade Rowatt. "Protecting America's borders: Christian nationalism, threat, and attitudes toward immigrants in the United States." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 25, no. 2 (2022): 354-378.

Friday, December 2, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Fifteen: Guns

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Reading:

- Giroux, Henry A. "War culture and the politics of intolerable violence." *symplokē* 25, no. 1-2 (2017): 191-218.

Friday, December 9, 2022: Class Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Final Exam Week

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Friday, December 16, 2022