

# *Common Ground: Civic Unity in a Polarized Time* Syllabus

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**Instructor**

*Fred Beuttler*

**Quarter:** Summer 2024

**Start – end date:** June 10 – July 29

**Session day/time:** Monday 6:00 – 8:30 pm CT

**Course Code and Section:** HUAS32005 24U2

**Email**

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**Course Overview**

America is more divided than it has been in over a century. Yet while we are polarized politically and culturally, there may still be a shared core of values upon which most Americans agree. This discussion course will explore some of those values and processes, through an examination of the American political system and its evolution, selected policy issues, along with some a number of proposals for reform. Through secondary scholarship and primary sources, we will look at topics such as electoral reform, structural changes in Congress, the Presidency and the Administrative state, as well as policy issues such as immigration and health care.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Modality**

Remote Learning

**Required texts**

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*, NY: Random House, 2012 ISBN 978-0-307-45577-2

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point* 2023 ISBN 978-0593443071

Heather Cox Richardson, *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*, Viking, 2023 ISBN 978-0593652961

Thomas Sowell, *Social Justice Fallacies*, Basic Books, 2023, ISBN 978-1541603929

Primary source readings, to be emailed to students each week.

Books can be purchased online through the [University of Chicago Bookstore](#).

## Course readings

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
Week 1	<p><b>A. Process: Our Constitutional and Political Framework</b></p> <p><b>B. Pluralism: The Real Meaning of the First Amendment</b></p>	<p>US. Constitution, Bill of Rights</p> <p>Washington, First Inaugural, Farewell Address</p> <p>Lincoln, Lyceum Address, Gettysburg Address, Second Inaugural</p> <p>King, Letter from Birmingham Jail, I have a Dream Speech</p> <p>Jefferson, <i>A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom</i>, 1785</p> <p>Madison, <i>A Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments</i></p> <p>Pierce v. Society of Sisters, SCOTUS, 268 US 510 (1925)</p> <p>W. VA Board of Ed v. Barnette, SCOTUS 319 US 624 (1943)</p>
Week 2	<b>Common Values and Cultural Division</b>	<p>Haidt, <i>Righteous Mind</i></p> <p>c1 “Where Does Morality Come From?”</p> <p>c2 “The Intuitive Dog and the Rational Tail”</p> <p>c5 “Beyond WEIRD Morality”</p> <p>c7 “The Moral Foundations of Politics”</p>
Week 3	<b>Liberalism and the Left</b>	<p>Schlesinger, A. Jr. <i>The Vital Center</i> 1948 cXI “Freedom: A Fighting Faith”</p> <p>Fukuyama, <i>Liberalism and Its Discontents</i></p> <p>Levitsky, <i>Tyranny of the Minority</i>, pt. 1</p>
Week 4	<b>Undermining Democracy</b>	<p>W. Wilson, “What is Progress?”</p> <p>F. Roosevelt, State of the Union, 1944: “Economic Bill of Rights”</p> <p>Richardson, <i>Democracy Awakening</i></p> <p>Part I “Undermining Democracy”</p> <p>Part 2 “Authoritarian Experiment”</p>
Week 5	<b>Conservatives and Populists</b>	<p>Haidt, <i>Righteous Mind</i> c8 “The Conservative Advantage”</p> <p>Sowell, <i>Social Justice Fallacies</i></p> <p>Other readings on the Administrative State, TBD</p>

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
Week 6	<b>Common Ground on Process? Electoral Process</b>	Levitsky and Ziblatt, <i>Tyranny of the Minority</i> , pt. 2 Topics: Congressional Term Limits, Ranked Choice Voting, Non-Partisan Primaries, Health Care Reform
Week 7	<b>Common Ground on Policy? Immigration</b>	Daniels, <i>Coming to America</i> , c17: “Immigration in an Age of Globalism” Additional readings on immigration policy
Week 8	<b>Comon Ground on Political System Reform?</b>	Topics: Term Limits, Earmark Ban, “For the People Act,” HR 1, 2021. Danielle Allen articles on Congressional Reform Additional Readings TBD

### **Accessing Remote Courses Through Canvas**

All course information is hosted through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit <https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts>. Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: <https://canvas.uchicago.edu>.

### **Accessibility information**

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu).

### **UChicago CARES Statement:**

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For more information, please see [this handout for students](#) as well as the [University’s Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#) and [Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#). You can also reach out

directly for services and support from the Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support by emailing [titleix@uchicago.edu](mailto:titleix@uchicago.edu).

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at [zmel@uchicago.edu](mailto:zmel@uchicago.edu).