

Understanding political culture's role in campaign messaging

Overview: This course focuses on the role that political culture plays in American politics, especially in framing political narrative and campaign messaging. Drawing on a wide range of insights—historical, sociological, psychological, geographical, philosophical, rhetorical, epistemological, and economic—the course reveals the forces that have created and maintained a “disunited states of America.” The instructor reveals the ways and means that campaign consultants leverage knowledge of political cultures to craft effective messaging. The final sessions of the course presents an entirely new perspective on how the psychological concept of self-esteem influences the prevailing political narratives of various political cultures.

Sessions #1 and #2: American political cultural segmentation schemes

Overview of Daniel Elazar (1934-1999)

Wikipedia: Elazar's theories on the political subcultures in the American states, articulated in *American Federalism, A View From the States* have been influential and remains relevant among scholars of American politics. Elazar argues that there are three dominant political subcultures in the American states: moralistic (government viewed as egalitarian institution charged with pursuing the common good), traditionalistic (government viewed a hierarchical institution charged with protecting an elite-centered status quo), and individualistic (government viewed as minimalist institution charged with protecting the functionality of the marketplace but is otherwise not active.)

Most of Elazar's works are regrettably out of print so will be presented in class. The related and more recent typological work of Richard J. Ellis will also be presented

Geographical and regional divisions

- “The Divides Within, and Between, Urban and Rural America,” by Richard Florida, Citylab, Sept 18-2018
- “Urban, suburban and rural residents’ views on key social and political issues,” Pew Research Center, May 22, 2018
- “Contemplating ‘The Five States of Texas,’” by Nate Silver, D Magazine, July 2009
- “Why is North Florida so different from South Florida,” by Dale Jensen, Quora, Jan 6, 2019

- Culture trip: Top 10 differences between NorCal and SoCal, by Sarah Ndjongo, 9 February 2017
- Is Northern California generally more liberal than Northern California” by Eugene Kuznetsov, Quora, Nov 5, 2017
- “These Disunited States” by Colin Woodard, Politico Magazine July 2, 2015
- Selections from “American Nations, A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America” by Colin Woodard (Penguin 2012)
- Selections from “Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America” by Jim Webb (Broadway Books, 2005)

Sessions: #3: Clustering of Americans: a sociological and economic perspective on cultures

“The clustering of America” Chapters 1, 7 and 8, by Michael J. Weiss (Harper and Row, 1989)

“The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart,” selected chapters by Bill Bishop (Mariner Books, 2009)

Sessions #4, #5 and #6: Thinking about the psychology of political cultures in framing political messages

- “How to strike a responsive chord,” chapter in The Responsive Chord by Tony Schwartz (Mango, 2nd edition, 2017)
- “Rational minds, Irrational campaigns,” (Chapter 2) in The Political Brain by Drew Westen (Public Affairs, 2007)
- “Anna Nicole on the Brain,” (Chapter 1) and “The political unconsciousness,” (Chapter 2) in The Political Mind by George Lakoff (Penguin Books, 2009)
- “Class, Race, and the worship of force” in No Place of Grace by T.J. Jackson Lears (Chicago, 1994)
- “Fighting for the American Family,” (Chapter 7) by Robert B. Westbrook in The Power of Culture, R.W. Fox and T.J.J. Lears, editors (Chicago, 1993)

- The Devils we Know: Us and them in America's Raucous Political Culture by James A Morone (University Press of Kansas, 2015)
- The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Political Culture By Jonathan Reynolds (Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Session #7 and #8: Political ethnography and other qualitative research tools

Introduction of the “funnel of causality” concept as an approach to researching culture and opinions

- “How to tell an axe murderer: An essay on ethnography, truth, and lies,” by Jessica Allina Pisano, in Political Ethnography, Edward Schatz, editor. (University of Chicago Press, 2009)

Various Reviews, commentaries per Hillbilly Elegy: A memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis by J D Vance

- 'Hillbilly Elegy' Recalls A Childhood Where Poverty Was 'The Family Tradition' NPR Fresh Air, August 17, 2016 (Listen in class)
- J.D. Vance, The False Prophet of Blue America, by Sarah Jones, The New Republic, Nov 17, 2016
- Does this memoir really explain Trumps victory? By Hari Kunzru in The Guardian, Dec 7, 2016
- “The lives of poor white people” by Joshua Rothman, The New Yorker, Sept 12, 2016
- Selected readings from Red State Christians: Understanding the Voters who Elected Donald Trump by Angela Denker (Fortress Press, 2019)

Sessions #9 and #10: The role of “Self Esteem” in political cultures

- Selected readings from Know-it-all Society: Truth and Arrogance in Political Culture by Michael P. Lynch (Liveright, 2019)
- “Emotions” (Chapter 5) in The psychology of self-esteem by Nathaniel Branden (Jossey Bass, 2001)
- “How people in urban, suburban and rural communities see each other – and say others see them,” Pew Research Center May 22, 2018