

How We Feel about Politics

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To expand our discussions of political rhetoric, we will step back from the campaign to examine research on political psychology and the history of politics, including the transitions from print journalism to TV, the internet and now social media. Our rhetorical analyses will range from campaign ads to reflections on the political choices we make every day, for in the era of the internet, we have come to realize that the choices we make on the 2nd Tuesday in November are connected with those that we make every other day of the year, including what we choose to eat and buy and how we define ourselves as men and women.

Each week, we will expand our frame of reference on the campaign by drawing on surveys of popular attitudes, historical studies of politics, and research on how liberals and conservatives think. We will use these frameworks to analyze the ethical, logical, and emotional appeals that are used in the current campaign, and in pivotal campaigns that have shaped what it means to be liberal and conservative, including populist and progressive movements that have challenged traditional interpretive frames in the ways we are witnessing. While this syllabus includes a large number of links, most of the readings are quite short. The course webpage will provide a link to a printable version of the readings.

The readings listed below will change as the campaign progresses. Please check our course website for weekly changes. http://tmiller.faculty.arizona.edu/humanities_seminar_american_political_rhetoric

I have merged all the articles for those who would like to print them off:

<http://tmiller.faculty.arizona.edu/sites/tmiller.faculty.arizona.edu/files/Seminar%20Readings%20edited%2009-18-16.pdf>

How a Socialist and a Populist Crashed the Parties (September 30)

We will begin by outlining how rhetoric provides a three-dimensional perspective on politics that attends to questions about character, argument, and emotional appeals to shared values (*ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*). We will then apply that perspective to three benchmark surveys from the Pew Research Center that document how we feel about the campaign:

- [Campaign Exposes Divisions Over Issues, Values and How Life Has Changed in the U.S.](#) (3/31/16).
- [Voters' Perceptions of the Candidates: Traits, Ideology and Impact on Issues](#), (7/14/16)
- [How do the political parties make you feel?](#), (6/22/16)

We will follow up to do a rhetorical analysis of how Trump's and Clinton's character, positions and emotional appeals were represented in the primaries, using their nomination speeches for closer analysis:

- [Donald J. Trump's Nomination Speech](#)
- [Clinton's Nomination Speech](#)

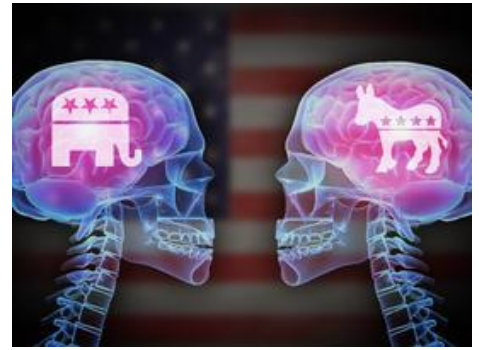
We will also note the limited attention to issues, including those in the platforms.

- [Democratic Party Platform](#)
- [Republican Party Platform](#)

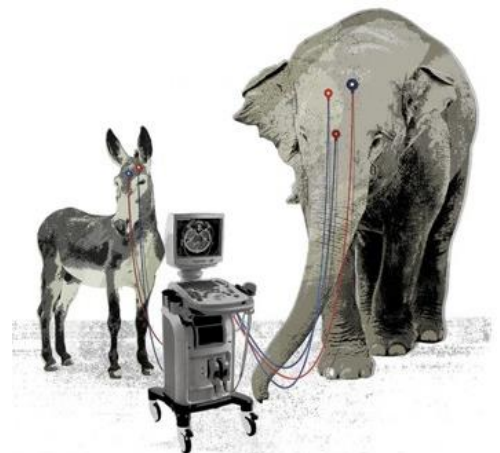
We will conclude by considering how research in political psychology reiterates the emphasis on emotion and character that has been a mainstay of rhetorical studies.

- ["Unconscious Reactions Separate Liberals and Conservatives"](#) by Emily Laber-Warren from *Scientific American* (2012)
- ["How Politics Breaks Our Brains"](#) by Brian Resnick from *Atlantic*

For further reading, you may wish to read this *New York Times* [analysis of the two nomination speeches](#). For background, you may wish to consider Judt's analysis of the liberal retreat from a robust public vision: ["III Fares the Land."](#)



Rhetorical Analysis? Rhetoric has long been concerned with how character (*ethos*), arguments (*logos*), and emotion (*pathos*) figure into political debates.



The Presidential debates are scheduled for 9/26, 10/9 and 10/19, with the Vice Presidential debate on 10/4. All are 9-10:30 EST.

Trumping Conservatism (October 7)

In this and the next class we will consider the questions about character that have dominated this campaign. We will follow up on our discussions of populism to examine the psychological dynamics of Trump's appeal. Using the following readings, we will use framing theory to consider how policy questions have been overshadowed by divisive emotional appeals, and we will continue our discussions of liberal and conservative perspectives. We will conclude the first segment of class by using the third reading to examine Trump's characteristic rhetorical strategies.

- [The Appeal of Donald Trump | Psychology Today](#)
- [The Fact That You're Going To Die Is Donald Trump's Biggest Asset, Psychologists Say](#) by Ned Resnikoff, (5/21/16)
- ["95,000 Words, Many of Them Ominous, From Donald Trump's Tongue"](#) By Patrick Healy and Maggie Haberman, *New York Times* (12/5/15)

In the second segment of class, we will consider the criticisms of Trump from one of the leading journals of conservative thought and reflect upon the competing versions of conservatism in American politics.

- [Donald Trump & Conservatives: Trumpism Is Incompatible with Conservatism](#), *National Review*
- [Donald Trump Is Not a Conservative & the GOP Doesn't Care](#), *National Review*

We will bring these lines of discussion together to consider the dynamics of presidential debates by reviewing some historic moments in prior debates, in part to set up later discussions of the evolving impact of media on politics.

- [Political Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas](#)
- [CNN Make or Break Moments in Presidential Debates](#)
- [1960 Kennedy and Nixon Debate](#) with commentary by Walter Cronkite
- [1980 Debate of Reagan and Carter](#)
- [1992 Bush and Clinton Debate](#)
- [2012 Obama and Romney Debate](#)

For further reading on Trump's distinctive rhetorical style and his strained relations with conservative thinking, you can read these two scathing critiques: Friedersdorf's ["Donald Trump is No Conservative"](#) (7/15) and McAdams' ["The Mind of Donald Trump"](#) (7/16). To get a feel for some of the alienated white voters who support Trump, and before him the Tea Party movement, you may wish to read Dreher's ["Hillbilly America: Do White Lives Matter?"](#)—an account of J.D. Vance's [Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and a Culture In Crisis](#).



How Much of It is Because She's a Woman? (October 14)

In this class, we will review the attacks on Clinton's character, and the questionable judgment that she has exercised in several well-documented cases. We will consider both her progressive and conservative critics.

- ["Hey Hillary, Here's Why People Don't Trust You"](#)
- ["Hillary Clinton's Trust Gap Is Killing Her with Millennials"](#)
- ["Donald Trump Says Hillary Clinton is Corrupt—Is He Right?"](#) by Chris Matthews *Fortune Magazine* (6/13/16)

We will then discuss surveys and assessments of how gender figures into voters' attitudes and voting patterns.

- ["Americans' views of women as political leaders differ by gender"](#) Pew Research Center (5/19/16)
- ["Five Ways Sexism Colors Public Perception of Hillary Clinton"](#) by Everett Maroon (2/9/16)
- ["Gender Stereotyping of Political Candidates"](#) by Toril Aalberg and Anders Todal Jenssen (2007)

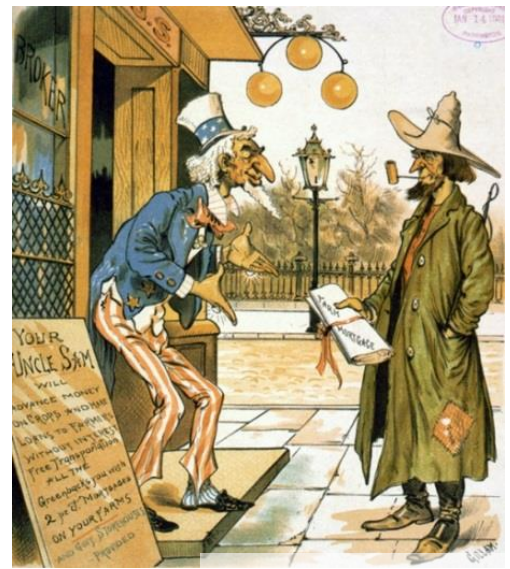
After discussing the attacks on Clinton and attitudes to women leaders, we will reflect upon our own unconscious biases about gender using the Implicit Association Tests discussed in the following articles. The tests will take only a few minutes to track the associational networks that shape your thinking about gender and leadership.

- ["Take This Test to See How Biased You are Against Having a Woman as President"](#) by Soraya Chemaly, *Huffington Post* (4/4/16)
- [Implicit Association Test](#) on attitudes to women and leadership
- ["How Gender Bias Plays a Role in Elections"](#) by Jacqueline Howard, *Huffington Post* (11/12/15)
- [Implicit Association Tests](#) on race, gender and science, religion, physical appearance

E Pluribus Unum? (October 21)

In this class we will begin by examining the nativist and anti-immigrant frames used by populists a century ago as a case in point for considering the anxieties about immigrants and others that have played into the campaign. We will examine these sentiments through research on liberals and conservatives think, with a particular attention to how we all tend to reject input that challenges our identifications with particular groups. These tendencies have intensified as white Christians have ceased to be the majority in the US in the last decade. This transition is reshaping the electorate in ways that are evident in the current campaign.

- [A Wider Ideological Gap Between More and Less Educated Adults](#)
- [Feelings about partisans and the parties](#) Pew Research Center
- [The roots of partisanship](#) Pew Research Center
- [A History of Immigration in America](#)
- [“The Impact of Immigration on American Society: Looking Backward to the Future,”](#) Charles Hirschman (7/28/06)
- [“What Makes People Vote Republican?”](#) by John Haidt (8/8/08)
- [“Why Won’t They Listen?”](#) A review of *The Righteous Mind* by Jonathan Haidt, *The New York Times* (3/23/12)



[Anti-Semitic populist attack](#) on the establishment (1891)

Have our Problems Become too Complicated for Voters to Understand? (October 28)

We will consider the debates we have not had—debates on complex issues such as income inequality and the national debt that require costly interventions that do not benefit people in immediate ways. Such complex challenges can be hard for popular deliberations. Governmental deliberations are distanced from popular audiences by the divided system of government established by our Constitution. As discussed in the essay by Andrew Sullivan, our Constitution was shaped by anxieties about mob rule that date back to ancient assumptions that democracy inevitably degenerates into demagoguery, and then oligarchy. Demagogues promise simple solutions to complex problems and blame the poor’s ills on public corruption.

- [“Democracies End When There is Too Much Democracy”](#) by Andrew Sullivan (5/1/16)
- [“The Complexity Crisis”](#) by Peggy Noonan (7/13/06)
- [“The Great Democracy Meltdown”](#) by Kurlantzick (5/8/11)
- [“It’s complicated”](#) by Samuel Arbesman



Predicting the Campaign Turnout (November 4)

In our last class before the election, we will analyze how campaign themes have resonated with more and less-educated voters. To provide a broader context for our analyses, we will look at commercials from campaigns since the 1950s. We will review the analyses from *The New York Times* Ad Campaign website and then look past the traditional reliance on TV commercials to consider the rising influence of new media, including tweets. We will draw on our prior rhetorical analyses to reflect on how our anxieties and aspirations have been mediated.

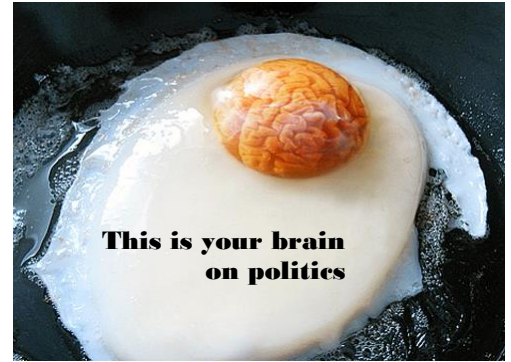
- [Differences in Conservative and Liberal Brains - 2012 Presidential Election - ProCon.org](#)
- [10 Iconic Presidential Campaign Ads that Changed Political Advertising.](#)
- [The Ad Campaign](#), *New York Times*
- [Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2012](#) from the Museum of the Moving Image
- [Political Communication Lab Campaign Ads](#), 1994-2016 Stanford University
- [Can Social Media Impact the 2016 Presidential Election as Much as Obama’s 2012 Campaign?](#)
- [2016 Presidential Election Circus: Is Social Media the Cause?](#)



What Did America Say? (November 18)

Like all the classes after the election, the readings and discussion points for this class will depend upon how the campaign actually turns out. Whatever the outcome, we will look past the analyses of the votes to consider how the evolving demographics of our country affected this election in ways that will deepen with future elections. We will also look at congressional and state results to consider what the elections suggest about how we will be governed. With an eye to that assessment, we will review the priorities set out in the campaigns and consider which ones will actually be translated into action in the new administration's first 100 days, which is traditionally the honeymoon period for a new president, though it is difficult to predict how much honey will be left from this election.

- [Demography Favors the Democrats](#)
- [America's electoral future: How changing demographics could impact presidential elections from 2016 to 2032.](#) American Enterprise Institute, Brookings Institution, and Center for American Progress (2/15/16)
- [How Demographics Will Shape the 2016 Election](#) is a tool for the true political junkie because it can be used to project how small changes in particular demographic groups would affect results on a state by state basis.



The Politics of Print, Radio, TV and the Internet (December 2)

In this class, we will follow up on the last class and previous discussions of the impact of the media to consider how our collective consciousness has evolved at an accelerating rate since the digital revolution. The political impact of mass media can be traced back to the era of the Lincoln and Douglass debates, which were published the following day in national newspapers. Radio and television shaped the character of FDR's and JFK's presidencies, and Obama's was shaped by the internet. In the current election, we have seen political discourse reduced to 140 character messages, and the private lives of public figures fill

the incessant flow of information that beeps away in our pockets. We will use the mediation of our collective consciousness as a frame to assess a remarkably stable genre, inaugural addresses.

- [Why the Media Love Presidents & Presidents Hate the Media](#)
- [The First Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln](#) (1861)
- [The First Inaugural Address of Theodore Roosevelt](#) (1905)
- [The First Inaugural Address of Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#) (1933)
- [The Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy](#) (1961)
- [The First Inaugural Address of Ronald Reagan](#) (1981)



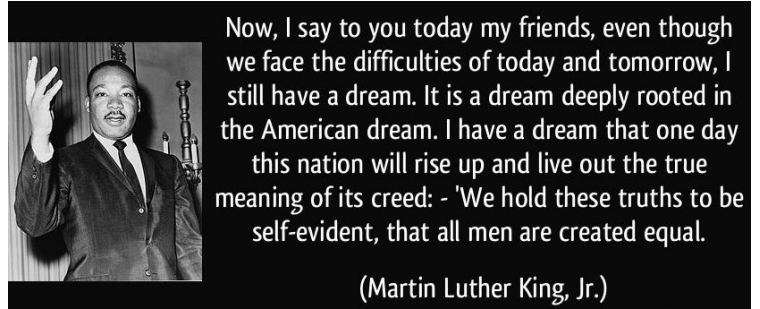
What Has Politics Come to Represent over Our Lifetimes? (Dec. 9)

To draw together our discussions of the history of party politics, the evolving impact of new media and the complexities of contemporary life, we will review the political life of the dutiful and boomer generations and contrast their experiences with that of later generations. We will return to earlier discussions of FDR's fireplace chats, electoral demographics, and the mediation of our collective experience to deepen our analysis of how our sense of the political has expanded from a well-bounded domain of deliberations on national issues into the fabric of how we understand daily life through the impact of developments ranging from the women's movement to the war on terror, which is fought out in local malls and restaurants. Our political anxieties and aspirations have evolved over the last seventy years in ways that we will reflect upon by returning to some points of reference from earlier classes and deepening our analysis of the generational experiences of Americans.

- [Comparing Millennials to Other Generations | Pew Research Center](#)
- [Generation Gap at the Polls Is Echoed in Attitudes on Budget Tradeoffs | Pew Research Center](#)
- [Generation X: America's neglected 'middle child' | Pew Research Center](#)
- [How to Fix Washington: Elect Generation X - POLITICO Magazine](#)
- [Generations and Partisanship | Pew Research Center](#)

The American Dream—in living color (12/16)

In our concluding class, we will bring together several lines of discussions. Race was a major factor in the election, though it was largely indirectly via debates on immigration and whether “black lives,” “blue lives,” and “all lives” matter. The Black Lives Matter movement is an example of a social movement that reaches beyond the confines of traditional conceptions of the political to challenge us to reflect upon the privileges and unconscious assumptions that shape our lives. Following up on the summative discussions in the last few classes, we will return to the research on political psychology on how we think and feel about politics and ethics, and we will reflect upon the disconnects between our political dreams and daily lives with a particular concern for how our experience is shaped by our experiences of race, gender and class. For a final palate cleanser for our civic imagination, we will consider the greatest piece of political rhetoric in the last century, “I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King. To connect MLK’s majestic dream with the mundane choices we make in our daily lives, we will conclude by talking about the assessments of our values provided by Haidt’s Moral Foundations surveys:



- [YourMorals.org surveys](http://YourMorals.org)
- moralfoundations.org
- [Science of Virtues: Evaluation](#)
- [righteous mind Chapter 7](#)
- [Do you live in a bubble? A quiz](#)

Campaign Commentary

- [Campaign Exposes Divisions Over Issues, Values and How Life Has Changed in the U.S.](#)
- [CNN Presidential Candidates](#)
- [NYT Presidential Election 2016](#)
- [Huffington Post](#)
- [RealClear Politics](#)
- [Salon](#)
- [CivilPolitics.org](#)