



Public Lecture Offerings

The Changing Nature of American Politics in the 21st Century

The things we are fighting over have changed. In this lecture, we will discuss the shift from 20th-century debates over tax rates and the role and size of government to 21st-century debates over who can call themselves American and who belongs. Adding to the complexity of the moment is the fact that our two parties are roughly equal in size, and members of each party disagree about most things. This leaves American politics in a state of "calcification." The stakes of elections feel very high for everyone because the world each side wants to build feels extreme to the other side, and owing to close election outcomes, victory for both is always within reach.

Spot Check: The Unique Role of Campaign Advertising in American Elections

Even in the digital age, campaigns spend a lot of money on television advertising. Why? In this lecture, we'll review why television advertising is a powerful medium for persuasion. After developing some tools to help us decode ads, we will watch a few canonical campaign ads — starting with the very first foray into broadcast advertising in 1952 and extending through the 21st Century. There's no doubt that well-made campaign ads move people emotionally — but do they persuade them? Tune in to find out!

How to Win Elections When Politics Has Calcified

This discussion will cover the four drivers of America's current political state: Calcification. The four drivers are increasing distance between the parties; increasing homogeneity within the parties; the rise of identity-inflected issues in political debate; and a rough partisan parity in the electorate. Each of these things plays an important role in making American politics feel stiff and rigid as we head into the 2026 midterms and 2028 presidential elections. We'll explore the implications of calcification for voters and candidates, ultimately asking how candidates can win in a calcified era.

Classroom Discussion Topics

1. Any of the above lecture topics may be adapted for classroom discussion.