

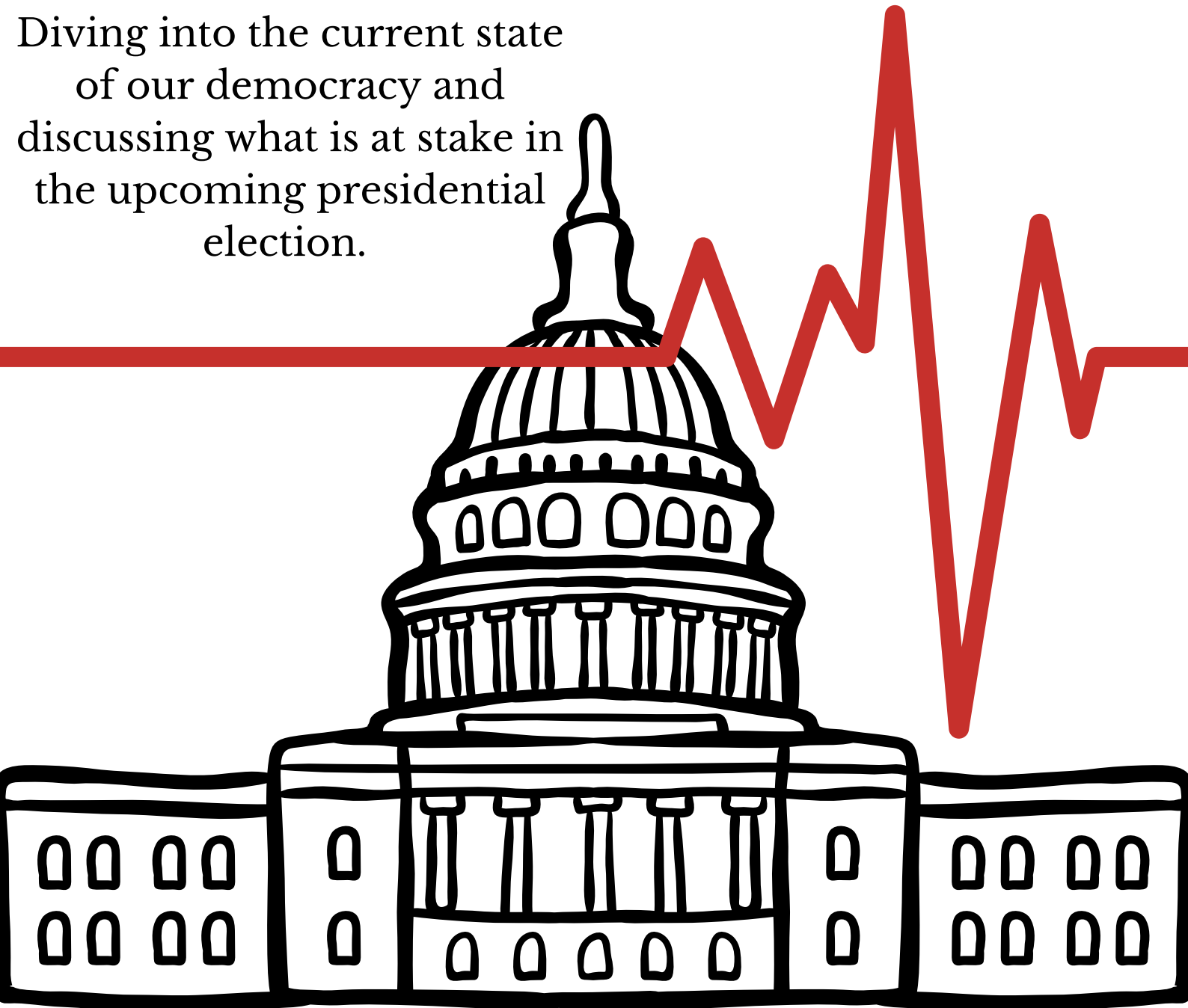
THE POLITICAL PULSE: CHECKING AMERICAS HEARTBEAT IN THE FACE OF THE 2024 ELECTION



Stony Brook
University

Center for Civic Justice

Diving into the current state
of our democracy and
discussing what is at stake in
the upcoming presidential
election.



@CIVICJUSTICESBU

WHY ARE WE HERE?

01 October 2024
Community Dialogue

The political system in the U.S. has become increasingly polarized, but it is vital to not lose our humanity. Amongst unprecedented times and extreme division, we wanted to host a safe space for students to engage in civic discourse with their peers. For college students, it can be difficult to fix tunnel vision with classes and personal life. Holding discourse can benefit relationships, and you can learn more about what it means to be civically engaged. College is a perfect time to grow your critical thinking of the world and how it impacts you, and how you can make an impact! So today please make sure to be engaged and come with an open mind!



TERMS TO KNOW

DEMOCRACY

A system of government where power is vested in the people, either exercised directly or through elected representatives

HYPER PARTISANSHIP

A sharply polarized situation in which political parties are in fierce disagreement with each other.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

A system in the U.S. for electing a president, where voters chose electors who then cast votes for the president. Each state has a set number of electors based on its representation in congress.

TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

In the U.S., two political parties largely dominate the political landscape: the democrats and the republicans.

MEDIA BIAS

When news outlets or journalists present information in a way that unfairly favors a particular viewpoint or agenda, affecting how facts are reported or interpreted.

ELECTION INTERFERENCE

Actions that aim to disrupt, influence, or alter the outcome of an election, such as manipulating votes, speaking misinformation, or undermining the electoral process



What About the 2024 Presidential Election?

What makes the 2024 Presidential Election so unique? What precedents is this election year going to set for America or has set? How has the politics following the campaigns for the Presidential Elections impacted the people?

Throughout the elections years the race to the White House has become increasingly controversial, polarizing, and more recently *unprecedented*. It is becoming more common to see presidential candidates bring up terms like misinformation and disinformation in their campaigns. It has become glaringly clear that the whole of America is in the midst of experiencing and living through a heavily divided American democracy.

The 2024 Presidential Elections are historic and unprecedented for multiple reasons:

- 1) Trump is the first major-party nominee to be convicted of a felony, if he wins the election he will be the first president to be serving with convicted felony charges.
- 2) Vice President Kamala Harris is the first woman of color to run for presidency and is also the first woman of color to be a major-party presidential nominee. She will be the first woman and woman of color to become president of the United States.

Who is Running?

A brief overview of who is running for the 2024 Presidential Election

Donald Trump

(Republican Party)



Believes in liberty, economic prosperity, preserving American values and traditions, and restoring the American dream

Jill Stein

(The Green Party)



Grassroots activist, environmentalist, and advocates for social justice. Government must be part of the solution

Kamala Harris

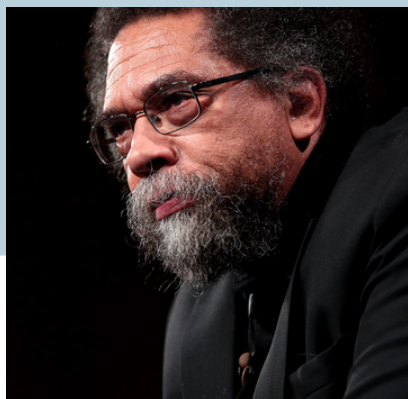
(Democratic Party)



Promotes that the economy should work for everyone, health care is right, diversity is our strength, and democracy is worth defending

Cornel West

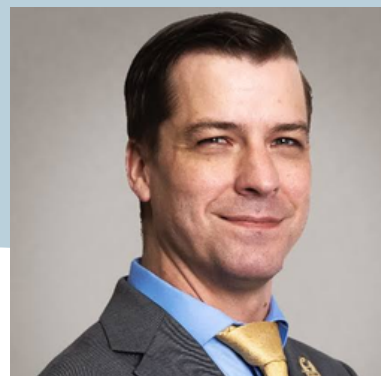
(Unaffiliated)



Independent party, wants to empower poor and working people.

Chase Oliver

(Libertarian Party)



“The Party of Principle”- The Libertarian Party strongly opposes any government interference into their personal, family, and business decisions

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

01 October 2024
Community Dialogue

What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Lets take a look at the different or similar stances the presidential candidates have on some key issues:

Key Issue #1: Abortion

Donald Trump



Abortion: Has stated that he would not sign a federal abortion ban, states should be able to enact their own restrictions

- Holds that abortion rights are a state issue
- Supports access to IVF

Jill Stein



Abortion: Does not support a federal ban on abortion, believes that access to safe abortions is a non-negotiable human right

- Wants to codify Roe v Wade

Kamala Harris



Abortion: Supports the federal right to abortion and wants to prevent states from banning the procedure before fetal viability.

- Wants to codify the protections of Roe v. Wade
- Would not sign a federal abortion ban
- Supports access to IVF

Cornel West



Abortion: States that reproductive rights and Healthcare access is a fundamental right. Advocates for unfettered access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare

- Wants safe and legal abortion, contraception, and fertility treatments

Chase Oliver



Abortion: States "The government does not have a right to regulate personal activities or impose harsh penalties. states must end abortion restrictions before viability"

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

01 October 2024
Community Dialogue

What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Key Issue #2: Climate

Donald Trump



Climate: States he will increase Energy Production across the board, streamline permitting, and end market-distorting restrictions on Oil, Natural Gas, and Coal.

- Says increasing oil and gas production will make the U.S. the world's top energy producer.
- Will withdraw from the Paris Agreement

Jill Stein



Climate: Will not call for a ban on fracking or a prohibition of new fossil fuel infrastructure

- End all forms of subsidies to the fossil fuel industry
- Take the energy industry into public ownership
- Build a nationwide, publicly-owned smart electricity grid

Kamala Harris



Climate: Supports the Biden administration's general approach to climate policies which includes providing subsidies for renewable energy.

- Does not support an electric vehicle mandate
- No longer supports the fracking ban
- Will keep the U.S. in the Paris climate agreement

Cornel West



Climate: Wants to nationalize the Fossil Fuel Industry, by transferring control to the people we can phase out carbon-dependency

- Halt oil and gas production
- Offer restitution to those who suffer from climate change

Chase Oliver



Climate: Advocates for the use of nuclear power. See's it as cleaner, safer, and more efficient; helps curb the negative effects of climate change

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

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Community Dialogue

What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Key Issue #3: Democracy

Donald Trump



Democracy: Has been charged with trying to overturn the 2020 election results. He has pleaded not guilty in all cases and denied any wrongdoing.

- Opposes the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

Jill Stein



Democracy: Wants to revive democracy with a full spectrum of reforms to empower the people

- Implement Ranked-Choice voting for all elections nationwide
- Abolish the Electoral College
- Wants to restore Preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act

Kamala Harris



Democracy: Framed the election in part as a fight to preserve American democracy, she has condemned the efforts to overturn the 2020 election and has supported legislation to expand voting access and counter restrictions in Republican-led states

- Supports the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

Cornel West



Democracy: Believes that citizens should have the ability to fully participate in the electoral process without interference

- Automatic and same-day voter registration
- Vote by mail made eligible for all voters
- Term limits for Supreme Court Justices

Chase Oliver



Democracy: Endorses the Voter Bill of Rights by Lars Mapstead

- Supports term limits for ALL federal officials to keep government accountable

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

01 October 2024
Community Dialogue

What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Key Issue #4: Economy

Donald Trump



Economy: Has highlighted inflation as a key reason for voters to put him back in the White House, saying he would lower prices on everyday goods, boost the economy and increase U.S.-based manufacturing.

- He has vowed to enact a 20 percent tariff on most imports — and even more for goods coming from China

Jill Stein



Economy: Believes in an economy that works for the working people not just the wealthy and powerful. Wants to establish rights to a living-wage job, guaranteed livable income, housing, healthcare, childcare, education, secure retirement, and clean food and water

- Wants lifelong free public education for ALL institution of learning

Kamala Harris



Economy: Wants to ban price gouging, create incentives to build housing, expand tax credit for the middle and low-income households, and offset the costs by increasing taxes on corporations and wealthy Americans

- Wants to restore an expansion to the child tax credit to the maximum of \$3,600 per child and raise the credit to \$6,000 for parents of newborns

Cornel West



Economy: Wants to abolish homelessness and helping to find housing for homeless individuals

- Advocating for Universal Basic Income
- Wealth tax
- Expansive parental leave and disability benefits

Chase Oliver



Economy: Wants to reduce government interference and let individuals decide how to spend their hard-earned money in the economy

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

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What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Key Issue #5: Housing

Donald Trump



Housing: Calls for opening limited portions of federal lands to allow for new home construction and reducing inflation in order to lower mortgage rates; calls for tax incentives and support first-time home buyers; calling to cut unnecessary regulations that raise housing costs

Jill Stein



Housing: Believes housing is a human right; need to end homelessness, support tenants and homebuyers; massively invest in public housing to provide high-quality affordable homes for all

- Fund social housing; build at least 15 million green publicly-owned homes over 10 years

Kamala Harris



Housing: Calls for building three million affordable housing units within four years; wants to provide up to \$25,000 in down-payment assistance to first-time home buyers and has endorsed a bill called the Stop Predatory Investing Act that would create tax penalties for investors who buy large numbers of rental units

Cornel West



Housing: Believes in accessible housing for everyone

- Making affordable, quality housing accessible

Chase Oliver



Housing: Says government is currently overspending and recklessly printing money which is fueling the skyrocketing cost of living and hurting those who can least afford it. Slash spending to decrease inflation

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

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What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Key Issue #6: Immigration

Donald Trump



Immigration: Immigration is one of the cornerstone issues of Trump's candidacy and appeal, dating back to when he first announced his original run for president in 2015. His promises to seal the border and carry out "the largest deportation in American history" top the priorities on his Agenda 47.

Jill Stein



Immigration: Advocates for comprehensive immigration policy and properly funded institutions to ensure a timely and ethical path to citizenship; move away from detention and enforcement response

- Abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) & prosecute all ICE and Customs and Border Protection agents

Kamala Harris



Immigration: Has taken a relatively tough stance on immigration by supporting a bipartisan proposal that would have hired thousands of new border security agents and asylum officers and closed the borders if crossings reached an average of more than 5,000 migrants a day over a week

Cornel West



Immigration: Believes the the U.S, immigration system should be a beacon of hope grounded in the principles of dignity, respect, and human rights

- Wants to end inhuman treatment of migrants

Chase Oliver



Immigration: Says the immigration system is outdated inefficient.

- Simplify the process so immigrants can come, work, and thrive in our communities.
- Immigrant built America, key to future

COMPARE AND CONTRAST KEY ISSUES

01 October 2024
Community Dialogue

What Policies and Stances Does Each Candidate Take?

Key Issue #7: Israel & Gaza

Donald Trump



Israel & Gaza: Has expressed his continued support of the country's invasion of Gaza. He has also urged Israel to "finish up" the war because it is losing support. Has stated he stands with the Israeli leader, with whom he was closely allied as president.

Jill Stein



Israel & Gaza: Demands an immediate ceasefire in Israel and Palestine, end the blockade in Gaza

- End all military aid to Israel and adopt sanctions

Kamala Harris



Israel & Gaza: States Israel has a right to defend itself against Hamas and the United States should continue to send weapons, while also calling for a cease-fire. Has endorsed a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians would live side by side in their own sovereign countries.

Cornel West



Israel & Gaza: Will end military funding to Israel and advocate for Palestinian dignity and liberation

Chase Oliver



Israel & Gaza: Calls for a ceasefire and renew commitment to peace. U.S. should play a constructive role in facilitating dialogue rather than perpetuating the conflict

Deal or No Deal



Let's play representative!

Set the stage: Your table, as a team, are acting representatives in congress, and are confronted with the ability to automatically pass or deny the policies on your table. The policies are anonymous, though they do belong to current candidates running. However, the point of this activity is to look at the policies from an unbiased perspective. You, as a table, will have to communicate with each other to decide to Deal or No Deal the policies. Then we will have some shareback questions!

TERMS TO KNOW

PARTISAN MEDIA

A media outlet that is biased towards particular causes.

MISINFORMATION

False or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive.

FAIRNESS DOCTRINE

A policy ensuring television broadcast news has given equal airing time to both sides on controversial issues. It was instated in 1949 and revoked in 1987. A similar approach demands that stations provide similar coverage to candidates.

PROPAGANDA

Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Department responsible for managing interstate/international communication, including TV media

FREE SPEECH

Principle that individuals/communities can express their opinion without persecution from the state.

What is Political Polarization?

Political polarization is the movement of political views and actions away from the center and toward more extreme views and policies.

- It is a political tool that is articulated to demarcate (separate) frontiers between ‘us’ and ‘them.’
- In a two-party system this embodies the tension of its binary political ideologies and partisan identities.
- Normally in political science the discussion considers the context of political parties and democratic systems of government.



Polarization in the US:

There are two main political parties, Democratic and Republican. While political polarization is growing in other countries it is considered more dramatic in the US. Over the last 30 years the Democratic Party has moved more to the “left,” while the Republican Party has moved more to the “right.”

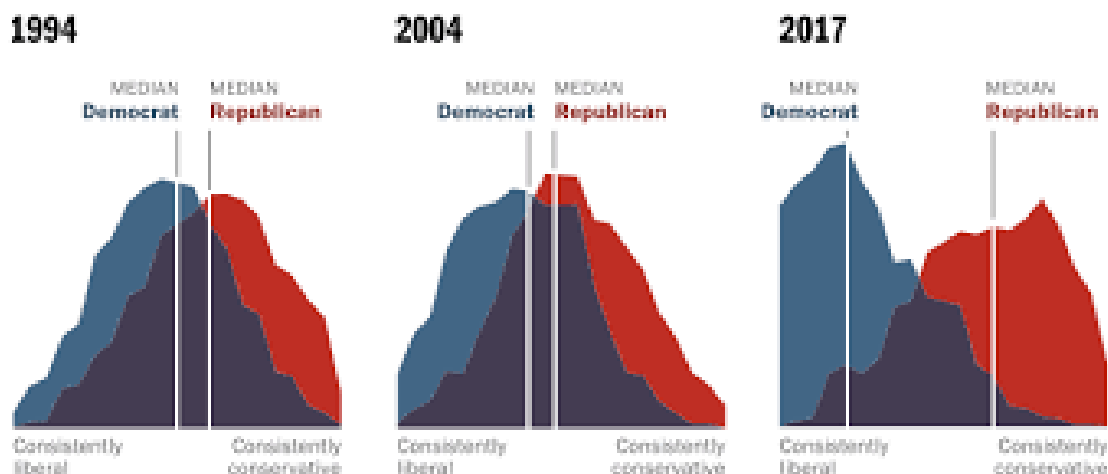
- In general, the **left** is associated with socially liberal policies and economic policies that create a greater social safety net.
- The **right** is associated with socially conservative policies and less regulation of the economy.

How this Impacts People's Decisions:

- People often change their political beliefs to match the positions of their party.
- More Americans now identify consistently with the main policy positions of their party than in previous years.
- Americans also tend to have greater feelings of dislike toward members of the other political party than in previous years.

What are the Consequences of Polarization?

- As elections approach, people increasingly distrust members of the other political party, and it has become difficult for politicians to agree on a way forward.
- Political polarization has also made it increasingly difficult for people to talk with someone with whom they disagree.
- Fifty-three percent of Americans say that talking about politics with people they disagree with is “generally stressful and frustrating.”



What Causes Polarization?:

Election policies:

- Gerrymandered districts often elect candidates who support policies that appeal more to the party base than those at the center of the political spectrum.
- Primary elections can push political parties more toward the poles, since candidates often must appeal to activists within their political party in order to win a primary.

In-group bias:

- Research shows that cognitive biases drive people to change their political opinions to match their group.

Demonizing differences:

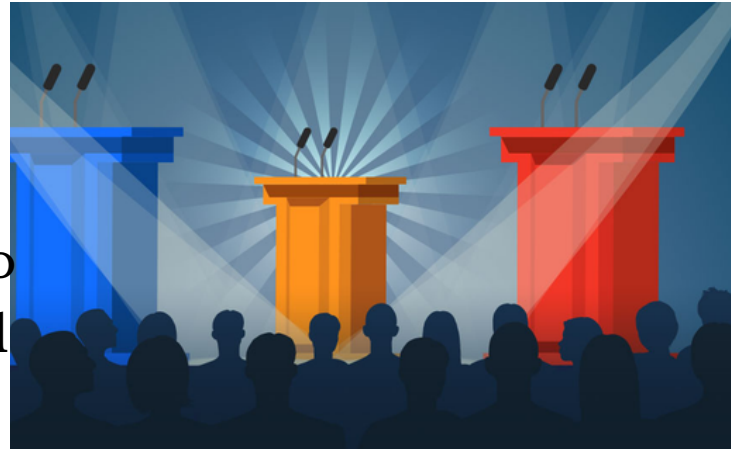
- When political candidates and the media vilify the opposing political party, they increase polarization and contribute to the image of the other group being a threat.
- The growing social and economic differences in our country further fuel divisions.

Media bubbles:

- Many Americans are exposed to partisan news in their social media feeds and often have very few social media friends on the other end of the political spectrum.
- Online platforms use algorithms to expose viewers to increasingly extreme content, which can lead them to encounter fringe political views without even realizing it.
- The 24-hour partisan news cycle on cable television and on the radio has also deepened political divisions.

Election Interference and the Prospect of Third Parties:

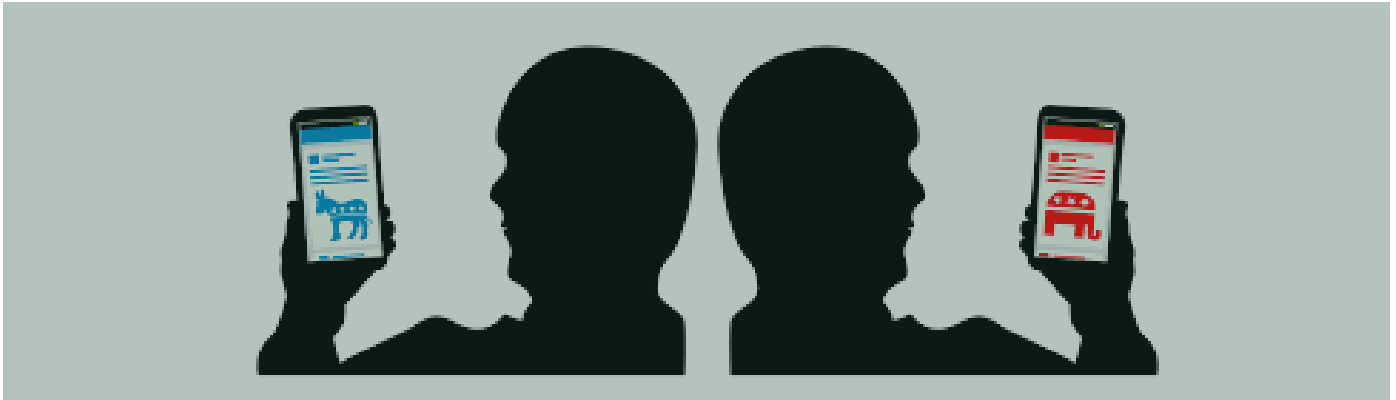
Election interference generally refers to efforts to change the outcome of an election. The existing political system tends to favor the incumbent parties and resists third-party entrance.



- Third parties often face restrictive rules and high thresholds to get on the ballot, varying state by state.
- Third-party candidates are often excluded from major debates, limiting their exposure to the electorate.
- Funding disparity and lack of access to resources, networks, and influence from lobbying groups limits third-party candidates' ability to run competitive campaigns.
- Media tends to focus on the two major parties, limiting visibility and attention for third-party candidates.

Food for Thought

- What does political polarization look, sound, and feel like where you live?
- How do you think polarization might influence the way Americans respond to current issues?
- How do you think polarization might influence how Americans are able to talk with each other about issues that matter?
- What other individual or policy changes do you think could help to decrease the negative effects of polarization?



Key Results of Social Media Use

“Among the top social platforms for news content, Facebook leads the way, followed by YouTube and Twitter...with various reports showing that [Facebook]’s algorithm favors more provocative, divisive messaging, which tends to generate increased discussion and engagement.”

-Andrew Hutchinson

One of the factors causing social media users to seek news on these platforms is that nearly all news organizations rely on social media to engage with the public or to report and promote a story. A growing issue is that instead of clicking through to the complete report, the social media recap is good enough for many users. Thus, social media often promotes an agenda rather than news to be reported. A pivotal danger to this is that what is often passed as “news” is actually misinformation, incomplete statements, or propaganda.

Ways to avoid this can be implementing resources into daily life. This can include getting in the habit of fact-checking things you see on social media, as well as being able to identify the red flags of such aforementioned media. Just by consuming media with a grain of salt, you can help douse the wildfire of misinformation. Also, familiarizing yourself with the common jargon that is usually associated with an agenda rather than factual news can benefit you amongst a polarized world.

The Impact of Polarization

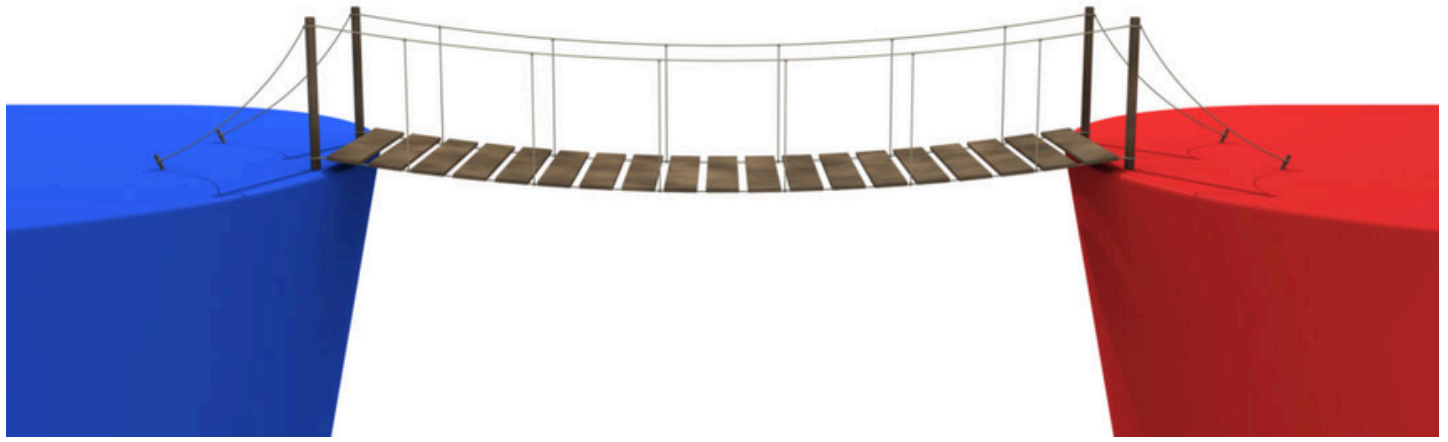
There have been some studies conducted on the relationship between politics and mental health, such as that of Queens University, where they found almost 40 percent of Americans said that politics was a source of significant anxiety and stress. It was stated that "the negative impact was more prominent in those [individuals] who were young, politically engaged, or opposed to the government." The chart below shows the results of how much Americans agreed with the following statements. This demonstrates the impact of politics as a whole on individuals' physical and emotional health.

| Item | Percent Agreeing | Item-Index Correlation |
|---|------------------|------------------------|
| Physical Health | | |
| Politics has caused me to be stressed. | 38 | 0.79 |
| I have become depressed when a preferred candidate lost. | 26.4 | 0.77 |
| Politics has caused me to be fatigued. | 21.4 | 0.8 |
| I have lost sleep because of politics. | 18.3 | 0.82 |
| Politics has adversely affected my physical health, even if only a little. | 11.5 | 0.77 |
| Politics has caused me to be suicidal. | 4.1 | 0.55 |
| <i>Cronbach's Alpha for all health costs items = .85</i> | | |
| Emotional Health | | |
| Exposure to media outlets promoting views contrary to mine can drive me crazy. | 31.8 | 0.68 |
| I have lost my temper as a result of politics. | 29.3 | 0.73 |
| Politics has led me to hate some people. | 26.5 | 0.73 |
| Politics has caused me to think seriously about moving. | 23.3 | 0.64 |
| On occasion, I have regretted comments I made during a political discussion. | 18 | 0.6 |
| I have secretly wished bad things on those who disagree with me politically. | 15.3 | 0.71 |
| I sometimes feel guilty about the way I feel toward those who disagree with me. | 14.1 | 0.62 |
| I have become annoyed when others are critical of my political views. | 11 | 0.71 |
| <i>Cronbach's Alpha for all emotional costs items = .83</i> | | |

Guided Questions:

- 1- Why do you personally care about politics? What are the reasons for participating in it or avoiding it- especially in a presidential election year? Do you have any thoughts on those who say they avoid politics?
- 2- This upcoming Presidential Election is unique and unlike many previous Presidential Elections. How do you think the unprecedented presidential election will affect the future of America? What do you think this means for our democracy?
- 3- Do you think democracy in the US is failing, or in a major decline? And if not what do you think that looks like?
- 4- Many politicians tend to disregard the Gen Z demographic/vote, how do you think that they can incorporate this generation into their campaign? Do you think the mobilization of this generation can have an effect on the election?
- 5- Voting and participating in the elections is a privilege Americans get to exercise. Do you think people feel confident in the candidates they're voting for? Why or why not?

What can you do about the negative effects of Political Polarization?



Focus on issues rather than parties:

- Decide what policies you want to see passed instead of focusing only on which political party you want to win the election.
- Try getting involved in local politics, where issues often matter more than political parties.

Break out of your media bubble:

- Try to follow a variety of news sources that examine issues from different political angles.

Learn to listen:

- Try to understand the perspectives of people on the other side of the political spectrum and listen to other points of view before judging.

Find Shared Projects:

- Seek out projects that can bring about a positive change in your neighborhood or community and that enable you to collaborate with people who are different from you.
- Centering the humanity of others while taking action and shifting away from winning or opposition.

Making Informed Decisions

As news becomes more and more digitalized, the spread of misinformation grows each day. It is very easy to become misinformed, especially when digesting news that comes from social media. It is important to focus on finding non-partisan, reliable sources to educate yourself about politics. Some ways to avoid misinformation include:

Check Sources



Depend on reputable news sources, that are well known and established, along with being non-partisan.

Fact Check



Many social media sites have fact-checking tools, such as X and Facebook. Use can also use Websites like PoliFact to ensure your news it not misinformation.

Be Wary of Headlines

● LIVE

BREAKING

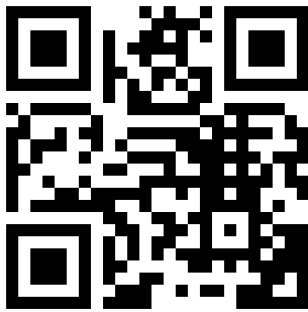
NEWS

Many social media platforms that promote news often use catchy and eye-catching headlines to garner a larger audience and gain attention, which can lead to misinformation



Resources for College Students

Voting Information



Visit [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org) to check your voting registration status, polling location, and learn who is on your ballot. Make sure your vote counts!



Visit [BallotReady](https://www.ballotready.org) for a one stop shop on all of your voting needs, learn about the candidates, find your polling locations and much more!

News Literacy Project: Misinformation Dashboard



The News Literacy Project has a "Misinformation Dashboard" which works to debunk false claims made by politicians that threaten to influence public opinion about the 2024 election.

Guided Questions:

- 1- Misinformation has played a large role in the recent elections, how has that affected the way people vote and what measures can voters take to ensure that misinformation doesn't cloud their confidence in voting?
- 2- Do you think that the rise of social media becoming a news outlet has an impact on the upcoming election? How so?
- 3- In what ways has the influence of media (mainstream, independent) affected voter turnout or shaping the outlook and perspective on elections and politics?

What are your opinions on the current environment that candidates are in this election season especially in regards to third parties? Do you think third parties have a chance to win? Does this contribute or exacerbate polarization?
- 4- What are some consequences of polarized politics that we have witnessed? Do you have any personal experiences with polarization impacting relationships in your life?
- 5-

NON-PARTISAN RESOURCES

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Federal Elections Commission | An impartial regulating body in charge of upholding US federal campaign finance regulations. Supervises the funding of federal elections, guaranteeing openness and adherence. |
| Ballotpedia | Nonpartisan online encyclopedia that offers thorough details on candidates, ballot issues, and election procedures around the country in order to enlighten voters about the 2024 elections. |
| FactCheck.Org | Give unbiased analysis and proof for statements pertaining to the 2024 election. Verifies claims made by politicians and more in order to assist voters in separating false information from true statements. |
| Vote 411 | An informative website that includes extensive information on all candidates (including third party). Also includes information on voter registration by state, and provides accurate and unbiased voting information. |
| Nonprofit VOTE | A non-profit that provides a variety of non-partisan resources surrounding elections and voting. Works with organizations across the country to build civic engagement and voter registration. |
| Brennan Center for Justice | An organization manned by professionals that work to educate citizens on pressing issues concerning elections. They provide non-partisan information and resources for citizens to strengthen democracy. |

RESOURCES

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| CAPS | Offers free and confidential counseling/therapy services to enrolled students. 631-632-6720 |
| CPO | Offers a wide range of prevention and early intervention services and education focused on alcohol and other drugs, mental health, and sexual assault issues. (631) 632-2748 |
| LGBTQ+ Center | An open and inclusive environment for LGBTQ* people in the Stony Brook University community. Center located above West Market. (631) 632-1690 |
| Multicultural Affairs | The Office of Multicultural Affairs provides programs, services, learning experiences, and opportunities that celebrate diversity and promote greater inclusion for all Stony Brook University campus members! (631) 632-9912 |
| Student Support Team | The Student Support Team coordinates efforts to assist students who encounter challenges or concerns in achieving success at Stony Brook University. (631) 632-7320 |
| SASC | Offers students with disabilities support in developing their academic potential by making their educational experience accessible. (631) 632-6000 |

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Acknowledgements:

ASHLEY LIEGI
SILENCE MARSH
KLOEY KUN
ANNA YEUNG
TASMIA CHOWDHURY
ANOOD CHEEMA