This final lecture turns to the present.

- We ask what populism is, why politics seems more polarized, whether ideology is ending or returning, and how to think clearly about political ideas.

Populism is a style of politics, and a thin ideology, that divides society into two camps: the pure people and a corrupt elite.

- The political scientists Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser describe it as a thin-centered ideology, one that attaches to thicker ones such as nationalism or…
- Populism can come from the left or from the right.

Populist movements are old.

- The People's Party, or Populists, won more than a million votes in the American presidential election of 1892.
- In the 1940s and 1950s Juan Perón built a populist movement in Argentina.
- In recent decades populist parties and leaders have won support in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, on both left and right.

Why does populism rise?

- Researchers point to economic insecurity, rapid cultural change, immigration, distrust of institutions after crises such as the financial crash of 2008, and the…
- They disagree about the weight of each cause, and the evidence differs from place to place.

Supporters of populist movements say they give voice to citizens whom established parties ignored, and that elites really have failed them.

- Critics warn that populists claim to speak for the whole people, treat opponents as illegitimate, and may weaken courts and a free press.
- Both points deserve a hearing, and both can be true in different cases.

Polarization is a related concern.

- Political scientists distinguish ideological polarization, which means differences in policy views, from affective polarization, which means dislike and distrust of…
- Shanto Iyengar and colleagues find that in the United States, partisans' negative feelings toward the other party have grown since the 1980s.

Scholars who measure roll-call votes in the United States Congress, such as Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, find that the parties have grown farther apart since the 1970s, to levels not seen in more than a century.

- Fewer members now vote across party lines.
- Primary elections and geographic sorting are among the suggested causes.

Research on whether voters themselves have grown more extreme is mixed.

- Many Americans hold moderate or mixed views, yet identity has become more tied to party.
- Media habits, social networks, and the reward that attention gives to outrage all push toward sorting.
- These trends vary across countries, and polarization is not equally severe everywhere.

Was ideology ever going to end?

- In 1989 Francis Fukuyama argued that liberal democracy might be the final form of government, an end of history in the sense of ideological evolution.
- In 1993 Samuel Huntington predicted that cultural civilizations, and not ideologies, would be the main fault lines.
- Both claims drew sharp criticism.

Events since then complicate the picture.

- Freedom House has reported declines in global freedom for nearly two decades, as more countries have lost than gained ground.
- Authoritarian powers such as China and Russia offer rival models.
- Yet democracy has also advanced in places, and protest movements keep appearing, showing a continuing demand for it.

Meanwhile, the old labels blur.

- Parties of the right may favor protecting workers or limiting trade, and parties of the left may stress cultural issues over class.
- Voters' loyalties sometimes realign by education, region, and age.
- Treat labels as shorthand, and look at what a group actually proposes.

How should you think about politics?

- Start by defining terms.
- Words like freedom, justice, equality, and socialism carry different meanings in different mouths.
- Ask what a speaker means, and state their view in a form they would recognize before you criticize it.

Separate values from facts.

- Many disputes mix them.
- Whether a policy raises employment is a question of evidence, while whether employment matters more than another goal is a question of values.
- Disagreement about facts can sometimes be settled by data, while disagreement about values must be argued, balanced, and sometimes accepted.

Jonathan Haidt's The Righteous Mind, published in 2012, argued that people draw on several moral foundations, including care, fairness, loyalty, authority, sanctity, and liberty, and that different groups weigh them differently.

- His framework is contested, but it helps explain why sincere people can see the same issue so differently, and why contempt is rarely persuasive.

Watch for your own biases.

- People tend to accept evidence that supports their side and doubt evidence that does not, a pattern called motivated reasoning.
- Philip Tetlock's study of expert forecasters, published in 2005, found that experts who held one big theory did worse than those who drew on many sources and adjusted...
- Isaiah Berlin had called these two types hedgehogs and foxes.

Ask what would change your mind.

- If nothing could, you hold a creed and not a conclusion.
- Look at track records: what happened when similar policies were tried elsewhere?
- Prefer sources that correct their errors.

Ideologies are not just ideas.

- They are traditions of argument with histories of achievement and of horror.
- Liberalism built rights, and was slow to extend them.
- Conservatism preserved institutions, and sometimes defended injustice.

Let us bring the course together.

- Lecture one introduced ideology and liberalism.
- Lecture two covered conservatism.
- Lecture three covered socialism, communism, and social democracy.

Where can you go next?

- Andrew Heywood's Political Ideologies: An Introduction is a standard textbook.
- Michael Freeden's Ideology: A Very Short Introduction is brief and clear.
- Isaiah Berlin's essay Two Concepts of Liberty is a classic, and Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism is a landmark study, though a demanding one.

A last practical point concerns your own information diet.

- Check whether a claim comes with evidence you can inspect.
- Be wary of stories that make you angry within seconds, since anger is how attention is harvested.
- Read at least one source that disagrees with you, and read it at its best.

Here is a closing exercise.

- Pick a current political issue, and write a paragraph presenting the best case for each of three different ideologies, so fairly that a believer in each would say…
- Then say where your own view lands, and why.
- That practice is the aim of the course.

Thank you for studying Political Science 220 B with Anderson Academy.

- Questions and feedback are welcome at garyanderson at mail dot grokbot dot com.