Plan for the Day

- Reading Quiz
- Go over learning outcomes
- Announcements
- Answer questions from lecture this week
- Discuss McCarty’s (2007) take on Polarization
  - Causes of polarization
  - Consequences of polarization
- Review for Midterm
Reading Quiz

- Clearly write your name at the top of the quiz
- Turn your quiz over when you are finished
- Good luck!
Learning Outcomes

By the end of section today, you should be able to:

- Summarize McCarty’s central argument about the impact of polarization on policymaking
- Explain the potential causes of polarization in Congress (even if McCarty finds them insufficient)
- Explain the potential consequences of polarization (both positive and negative)
Announcements

- Reminder: Office Hours are Wednesdays 9am-11am in SSB 341, or by appointment (tfeenstr@ucsd.edu). Extra office hours for midterm prep:
  - Friday, February 10th 11am-1pm
  - Monday, February 13th 3-5pm
- Participation grade update on TritonEd—temporary grade number (out of 5) and written feedback
- Midterm is Wednesday, February 15th in class.
  - Bring a blue book!
  - See Prof. Hill’s study guide posted on TritonEd
What questions do you have from lecture this week?
Review: What is polarization?

The parties are more different in the policies that they prefer than in the past...in the mid-20th century, parties may have agreed more on important public policies, while today they agree on important public policies less. Thus the parties are 'polarized' today.
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- “Collapse of ideological diversity within each of the two party coalitions” (Hill, Polarization Lecture, Slide 5).
- “the parties are more different in the policies that they prefer than in the past...in the mid-20th century, parties may have agreed more on important public policies, while today they agree on important public policies less. Thus the parties are ‘polarized’ today.” (Hill, Week 2 notes to students)
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What Caused Polarization?

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- Southern realignment?
- Redistricting?
- Primary elections?
- Changes in the primary electorate (who votes in primaries)?
- Changes in media?
- Changes in the US social and economic structure? (e.g. rising economic inequality)
- Divisions within the electorate on race and social issues?
As you study, you might consider making a chart like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Plausible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Realignment</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Redistricting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Incomplete explanation because increases following redistricting are not major; it doesn’t explain the senate polarization; doesn’t account for decreasing polarization in most of 20th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Elections</td>
<td>Moderates have a hard time winning primaries, which creates stark choices for general electorate</td>
<td>Not compelling because primaries were introduced in an era of decreasing polarization.</td>
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<td>Incomplete explanation because Congress rarely takes direct votes on these issues</td>
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What are the consequences of polarization?

Gridlock (polarization slows the policymaking process)

(Social) policy does not adjust to changing economic and demographic circumstances—

Example 1: Minimum Wage
Example 2: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

More extreme policies

Congress's power is declining, relative to other branches

More executive orders

Judiciary pursues policy goals

Less delegation to the bureaucracy
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Why would polarization affect policy outcomes?

Think back to the Median Voter Theorem—if this is how decisions are made in the real world, should polarization matter?
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    - Role of parties/party leaders who can discipline party members into voting in line with the party
    - Role of divided government
    - Supermajoritarian Institutions (presidential veto, senate filibuster, etc.)
    - Policymaking isn’t driven by the median legislator, but by those whose support is pivotal in overcoming vetoes and filibusters

We’ll talk about this a lot in the week of March 8th. The key point to know here is that these institutional rules like the veto (and how many votes it takes to override a veto) and the filibuster push us away from the MVT and make voters other than the median voter influential.
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  - Strategic Disagreement (blame the other side for the stalemate!)
  - Citizen Trust
McCarty’s Central Argument

The most important effect of polarization is that it makes it harder to build the legislative coalitions necessary to undertake ambitious new policies.
Questions to Ponder

- Which explanation for polarization do you find most compelling? Given this, how would you go about reducing polarization? How do your ideas compare to McCarty’s suggestions in the conclusion of this chapter?

- Think back to our discussions about Federalist 51 (Week 1) and Responsible Party Government (Week 2). What would Madison say about the relationship between polarization and gridlock that McCarty discusses? Try using the terms conformity and transaction costs in your answer.

- How do you think polarization connects to representation? Are legislators able to better represent their constituents under a polarized system?