Two Views of American Politics & Society

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Two views of American politics & society:

- The Culture-War thesis
- The Moderate-Majority thesis
The Culture-War thesis:

- “There is a religious war going on in this country, a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.”

-- Pat Buchanan, speech to the 1992 Republican National Convention
Academic origin:

- James Davison Hunter, 1991, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*

Thesis: increasing conflict is inevitable between two groups in America – the culturally:

- Orthodox
- Progressive
Religious roots of cultural conflicts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theological Issues</th>
<th>Conflicting values</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scriptural authority</td>
<td>Final &amp; absolute</td>
<td>Final &amp; absolute</td>
<td>Open to interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of God</td>
<td>Masculine (stern &amp; vengeful)</td>
<td>Feminine (nurturing &amp; loving)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human nature</td>
<td>Inherently sinful</td>
<td>Flawed by environmental causes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redemption</td>
<td>Salvation through faith</td>
<td>Salvation through social justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural pleasures</td>
<td>To be resisted as corrupting</td>
<td>To be embraced as God’s beneficence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence: voter polarization in Electoral College results

- **Red states** versus **blue states** (2004):
Sharp religious-group divisions in political attitudes

Which should be the more important influence on the laws of the United States? Should it be the Bible or should it be the will of the American people, even when it conflicts with the Bible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The will of the American people</th>
<th>The Bible</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White evangelical Prot.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White mainline Protestant</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults
Americans are sharply divided over the influence of the Christian Right

Have conservative Christians gone too far in trying to impose their religious values on the country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults
Clear religious divide over evolution:

Humans and other living things have...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existed in present form only</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolved over time</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults
An ideological divide over religion in public schools

*Have liberals gone too far in trying to keep religion out of schools & government?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults
Private/religious school vouchers

"Which comes closer to your view? The government should spend money to assist low-income families who want to send their children to religious schools. OR, The government should spend no money for children to attend religious schools.“

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should spend money</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should spend no money</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Moderate-Majority thesis:

- “Americans are closely divided, but we are not deeply divided ....”
- “We divide evenly in elections or sit them out entirely because:
- we instinctively seek the center
- while parties and candidates hang out on the extremes.”

Academic origin:

- Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, 1970, *The Real Majority*

Key argument:

“Elections are won in the middle.”
Evidence: popular vote by county

- It wasn’t really **Red states** v. **Blue states** -- instead, most states were really shades of **Purple** in their voting in 2004:
Given a centrist option, most Americans favor compromise -- even on the *hot-button* issues.

More than two-thirds of Americans say school prayer should be permitted in public schools, but when asked to choose half say they prefer a moment of silence to spoken prayer.

Do you think organized prayer should or should not be permitted in the public schools?

If you had a choice, which would you prefer in the local public schools -- spoken prayer, a moment of silence for contemplation/silent prayer, neither or both?

Source: Quinnipiac 6/03

Source: Gallup 8/01
The preference for a moment of silence is consistent over time

"If you had a choice, which would you prefer in the local public schools: spoken prayer, or a moment of silence for contemplation or silent prayer?" (Options rotated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken Prayer</th>
<th>Moment of Silence/Silent Prayer</th>
<th>Neither (vol.)</th>
<th>Both (vol.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/8-11/05</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most favor improving public schools over providing vouchers

Seven in 10 Americans say they would prefer improving existing public schools over providing vouchers for private or church-related schools.

Which one of these two plans would you prefer -- improving existing public schools or providing more vouchers for parents to use in selecting and paying for private or church-related schools?

- Improving existing schools (69%)
- Providing vouchers (29%)
- Don't know (2%)

Source: Gallup / Phi Delta Kappa 6/02
33. Each December, many public schools present seasonal programs. Which of these statements best represents your views about such programs:

- Public schools should be allowed to put on Nativity re-enactments with Christian music.  
  2005: 36%

- Public schools should have assembly programs in December that have music from the Christian tradition, but religious music should not dominate.  
  2005: 33%

- Public school programs in December should be entirely secular.  
  2005: 20%

- None of the above (vol.)  
  2005: 6%

- Don’t know/refused to answer  
  2005: 4%
Why have the candidates and parties become so polarized?

You can blame:

- **Liberals** for imposing primary-election reforms
- **Conservatives** for blocking campaign finance reforms
- **The news media** for “yellow” journalism
Is there hope for moderates to win control in either party?

- **“New Democrat” moderates**
  - Senator Evan Bayh (IN)
  - Senator Joe Biden (DE)
  - Senator Barack Obama (IL)
  - Senator Mark Pryor (AR)
  - Governor Bill Richardson (NM)
  - Senator Tom Vilsack (IA)
  - Former Governor Mark Warner (VA)

- **“Old Republican” moderates**
  - Senator Lincoln Chafee (RI)
  - Former NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani
  - Senator Lindsay Graham (SC)
  - Senator John McCain (AZ)
  - Senator Mitt Romney (MA)
  - Senator Olympia Snowe (ME)
  - Senator Arlen Specter (PA)
Websites with further information:

- http://people.uncw.edu/lowery
- http://pewforum.org/religion-schools/
- http://publicagenda.org/
- http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics
- http://www.thearda.com/
- http://www.tcf.org/
- http://www.policyattitudes.org/
- http://www.aei.org/
- http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollpdf.htm
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Links to My UNCW Web Pages

- My philosophy of education
- PLS 101, American National Government
- PLS 203, Religion and Politics in the U.S.
- PLS 210, Library Research in Political Science
- PLS 292, The Religious Right in U.S. Politics
- PLS 302, Public Opinion and American Democracy
- PLS 303, Elections and Voting Behavior
- PLS 401, Senior Seminar in Political Science
- PLS 405, Political Parties in the United States
- PLS 510 handout
- Student-Response Systems manuscript
- Student-Response Systems powerpoint presentation
- Curriculum Vita

Links to Other UNCW Web Pages

- UNCW
- Political Science Department
- Randall Library
- SeaPort
- SeaNet (old SeaWeb)
- WebCT
- Careers in Political Science

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(910) 962-3286 [fax]
E-mail: lowery@uncw.edu

- Fall 2006 Office Hours

Links to Other Web Pages

- 18th MP Brigade
- Until Then (when our military personnel are out of harms way)
- The Iraq Syndrome
- What is Political Science?
- What can you do with a PLS degree?
- Careers in Political Science
- Political Science Resources
- Index to Government & Politics Websites
- Register to Vote
PLS 203
Religion and Politics in the U.S.
Roger C. Lowery, Ph.D.

1. A Secular Society
   - Religion in American Public Life
   - For Goodness Sake
   - Just How Secular is Europe?

2. Religion in the American Context

3. Religion and American Political Culture
   - Centrist Public v. Polarized Government
   - U.S. Views toward Muslims & Islam

4A. Religion & the State: No-Establishment Clause
   - Religious Expression in NC Public Schools
   - Religious Attitudes Interactive Questionnaire
   - Evolution and the Law
   - Reading the Polls on Evolution
   - Politics and the Pulpit
   - Morning-after Pill Controversy

4B. Religion & the State: Free-Exercise Clause
   - O Centro Espirita Case - Legal Background
   - O Centro Espirita Case - Court Decision
   - Conscientious Objection and the Law
   - Pledge of Allegiance and the Law
   - Free Exercise v. Civil Liberties

5. Mobilizing Religious Interests

6. Religion & Political Action
   - Abortion attitudes by state
   - Religious Identification - 4-category scale, 1948-2002
   - Religious Identification - 7-category scale, 1960-1988
   - Religious Identification - 8-category scale, 1990-1996
   - Attitudes about the Accuracy of the Bible - 4 categories, 1964-1990
   - Attitudes about the Accuracy of the Bible - 2 categories, 1990-2000
   - Frequency of Church Attendance - 4 categories, 1952-1998
   - Frequency of Church Attendance - 5 categories, 1970-2002
   - Religion an Important Part of Life, 1983-2002
   - Political Party Identification, 1952-2002

7. Religion & Public Opinion
   - American Piety in the 21st Century
   - Religion & Politics Poll Report, 24 August 2005
   - Assisted Suicide
   - Bioethics
   - Death Penalty
   - Faith-Based Initiatives
   - Gay Marriage
   - Just War
   - Human Rights
   - Public Schools
   - Right to Die
   - Right to Die - Gonzales Decision
   - School Vouchers
   - War on Terrorism

8. Political Mobilization of Evangelical Protestants
   - Decline of the Christian Coalition
   - The Rise of Pentecostal Christian Groups

9A. Continuity and Change -- Catholicism
   - American Catholic survey results

9B. Politics and Mainline Protestants

10. Rel. & Politics of Ethnic & Religious Minorities

11. The Other Minorities: Women & Gay People

12. Religion and American Political Life
PLS 302
Public Opinion and American Democracy
Roger C. Lowery, Ph.D.

Academic and Non-commercial Polls and Archives
- Americans and the World
- American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research
- American Religion Data Archive
- Annenberg Public Policy Center of the Univ. of Pennsylvania
- Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections
- Center on Policy Attitudes
- Century Foundation: 2006 Public Opinion Watch Index
- Century Foundation: 2005 Public Opinion Watch Index
- Century Foundation: 2004 Public Opinion Watch Index
- Current Population Survey
- Democracy Corps
- Eagleton Institute (Rutgers University)
- Electoral Vote Predictor 2004
- Eurobarometer Continuous Tracking Survey
- Franklin and Marshall University’s Keystone Poll
- General Social Survey
- Harvard University Institute of Politics
- Inter-university Consortium for Social and Political Research
- Kaiser Polls
- Marist College Institute for Public Opinion
- Mystery Pollster
- NES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior
- National Network of State Polls

Media and Commercial Polls and Archives
- ABC News Poll
- ABC - Washington Post Poll
- American Research Group
- AP - IPSOS Poll
- Behavior Research Center
- Balden Russsell & Stewart
- CBS News Poll
- CNN - USA Today - Gallup Poll
- CNN - 2004 Exit Poll
- CNN - 2002 Exit Poll
- CNN - 2000 Exit Poll
- CNN - 1998 Exit Poll
- CNN - 1996 Poll Compendium
- Diageo/Hotline Poll
- Field Poll
- Fox News Poll
- Gallup Poll
- Global Strategy Group
- Gonzales Research Poll
- GQR Research
- Harris Poll
- Hart Research Associates
- ICR: International Communications Research