

Prof. David Peritz  
Fromm Institute, USF  
Mondays, 1:00 pm  
September 12-November 7, 2016  
(no class Oct. 10)

## **Urgent Issues, Extraordinary Politics: Domestic and International Policy Issues in the Midst of National Elections**

**Overview:** As we lurch toward another national election, there is a deficit of serious political discourse despite a surfeit of serious issues. Internationally, the Islamic State's pivot toward the 'far enemy', the on-going bloodletting in Syria, an increasingly assertive China and Russia, the failure of the Arab awakening, and the inexorable advance of global climate change--all these issues speak to the dangerous times in which we live and the weakened capacity of the US to influence world affairs. Domestically, on-going partisan polarization makes it difficult for the nation to coalesce around even the most urgent political issues, including ever-widening inequality, an increasingly unresponsive political system, a less-and-less competitive education system, a lack of stable middle-class jobs, etc. Is it possible that the national elections will focus political attention on these serious issues, perhaps even generating the national will to address at least some of them? Or will our politics fall short of the urgency of the moment and continue instead the era of policy drift? In this course, we will examine policy issues at stake in a variety of urgent areas, surveying potential solutions but always with an eye on the question of the political viability of various approaches to addressing pressing problems.

### **Outline of Topics and Suggested Readings:**

#### **Week 1: Is more Democracy the Cure for Democracy's Ills? Or Is the Process the Problem? Electoral Reform, Money in Politics, Polarization and Paralysis.**

- Andrew Sullivan, "Democracies End When They are Too Democratic: And Right Now, America is a Breeding Ground for Tyranny," *New York Magazine*, May 1, 2016. (<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/04/america-tyranny-donald-trump.html>)
- Elizabeth Drew, "How Money Runs Our Politics," *New York Review of Books*, June 4, 2015 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/06/04/how-money-runs-our-politics/>)
- Michael Tomasky, "The Dangerous Election," *New York Review of Books*, March 24, 2016 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/03/24/the-dangerous-election/>)

## **Week 2: The New Populism, the Changing Demographics and Dynamics of the American Electorate, and Their Policy Implications**

- “Symposium: 16 for 16,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, Winter, 2016, No. 39 (<http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/39/16-for-16/>)
- Jill Lepore, “The Party Crashers: Is the New Populism About the Medium or the Message,” *The New Yorker*, February 22, 2016 (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/22/did-social-media-produce-the-new-populism>)
- David Frum, “The Great Republican Revolt,” *The Atlantic*, January 2016 (<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/01/the-great-republican-revolt/419118/>)
- Peter Beinart, “Why America is Moving to the Left,” *The Atlantic*, January 2016 (<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/01/why-america-is-moving-left/419112/>)
- Ryan Lizza, “The Great Divide,” *The New Yorker*, March 21, 2016 (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/21/bernie-hillary-and-the-new-democratic-party>)

## **Week 3: Precarious Lives in the New Gilded Age and the Decline of the Employment Model of Social Membership,**

- Christopher Jencks, “Why the Very Poor Have Become Poorer,” *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2016 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/06/09/why-the-very-poor-have-become-poorer/>)
- Derek Thompson, “A World Without Work,” *The Atlantic*, July 2015 (<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/07/world-without-work/395294/>)
- Elizabeth Kaplan, “The Spy Who Fired Me,” *Harpers Magazine*, June 8, 2015 (<http://harpers.org/archive/2015/03/the-spy-who-fired-me/>)
- “It Captures Your Mind,” by Cass R. Sunstein, *The New York Review of Books*, September 26, 2013 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/sep/26/it-captures-your-mind/>)
- Christopher Jencks, “The War on Poverty: Was It Lost?,” *The New York Review of Books*, April 2, 2014 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/04/02/war-poverty-was-it-lost/>)

#### **Week 4: Middle Class Debt, Evictions, and The Crisis of Affordability in Urban America**

- Neal Gabler, "The Secret Shame of Middle Class Americans," *The Atlantic*, May 2016  
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/my-secret-shame/476415/>)
- Barbara Ehrenreich, "Matthew Desmond's 'Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City'," *The New York Times Book Review*, February 26, 2016  
([http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/books/review/matthew-desmonds-evicted-poverty-and-profit-in-the-american-city.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/books/review/matthew-desmonds-evicted-poverty-and-profit-in-the-american-city.html?_r=0))
- Peter Drier, "Housing and the Working Poor," *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, March 29, 2016  
(<http://democracyjournal.org/arguments/housing-and-the-working-poor/>)

#### **Week 5: Racial Disparities in Criminal Justice and the Matter of Black Lives**

- Daryl Pinckney, "Invisible Black America," *New York Review of Books*, March 10, 2011  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2011/03/10/invisible-black-america/>)
- Jelani Cobb, "The Matter of Black Lives," *The New Yorker*, March 14, 2016  
(<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed>)
- Joy James, "The Roots of Black Incarceration," *The Boston Review*, March 22, 2016  
(<http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/joy-james-austin-reed-life-adventures-haunted-convict>)

#### **Week 6: Surveillance in the New Security State**

- David Luban, "Has Obama Upheld the Law?," *The New York Review of Books*, April 21, 2016  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/04/21/has-obama-upheld-the-law/>)
- Charlie Savage, "General Hayden's Offensive," *The New York Review of Books*, May 26, 2016,  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/05/26/general-haydens-offensive/>)
- David Cole, "Can Privacy Be Saved?," *The New York Review of Books*, March 4, 2014,  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/mar/06/can-privacy-be-saved/?insrc=toc>)

## **Week 7: Declining Power in an Increasingly Complex World: Global Warming, Disease, and the Limits of American Power**

- “Symposium: The Election and the World,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, Spring 2016, No. 40  
(<http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/40/the-election-and-the-world/>)
- Kenneth Roth, A Case Against America, *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2016,  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/06/09/a-case-against-america/>)
- Annie Sparrow, “The Awful Diseases on the Way,” *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2016,  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/06/09/the-awful-diseases-on-the-way/>
- Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, April, 2016  
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>)

## **Week 8: The Rise and Fall of ISIS, the Disintegration of Syria and Iraq, and the Lessons for American Foreign Policy**

[NB: I’m not particularly happy with these readings and reserve the right to refine, develop and update them as we get closer to the date of this lecture. -dp]

- Malise Ruthven, “How to Understand ISIS,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 23, 2016  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/06/23/how-to-understand-isis/>)
- Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015  
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>)
- “Syria: Is There a Solution?,” by Mark Danner, *The New York Review of Books*, November 7, 2013,  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/nov/07/syria-is-there-a-solution/?insrc=toc>)
- “Syria: The New Turn,” by David Cole, *The New York Review of Books*, November 7, 2013,  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/oct/24/syria-new-turn/?insrc=toc>)