

Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America (Great Questions in Politics Series) By Morris P. Fiorina

Part of the Great Questions in Politics series Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America combines polling data with a compelling narrative to debunk commonly-believed myths about American politics--particularly the claim that Americans are deeply divided in their fundamental political views. This second edition of Culture War? features a new chapter that demonstrates how the elections of 2004 reinforce the book's original argument that Americans are no more divided now than they were in the past. But is such polarization real or is it the figment of "politicos" in the media who have found a catchy sound bite? Media and the political elite appear to find such divides useful to their purposes. It may be that there are deep divides in terms of these two issues in Red and Blue states but on multiple core issues there is agreement in the conservative direction by the American Electorate. Dan Smee

Author Totally American 9780321366061 There's substantial empirical evidence in this book to suggest that the political polarization that gets so much attention in the media is an illusion -- so far as everyday people are concerned. True there is deep polarization among the political elites but not so much at all among everyone else -- if Fiorina's use of the longitudinal studies (General Social Survey and National Election Studies) is credible. It makes me wonder if we aren't still a nation of sheep! 9780321366061 Fiorina makes some interesting new-ish points attempting to disprove that there is a culture war in the US. Maybe it is only 20% or so but that is still a lot of people and quite meaningful especially if the folks who are interested enough in voting in primaries have quite different views then the candidates will end up with different views and values. This thin little book authored by the well-respected Morris Fiorina (with the assistance of Samuel Abrams and Jeremy Pope) questions this widely held view of a culture war raging in the United States. While there is greater polarization between leaders of the Republicans and Democrats across the country this same polarization is not nearly so manifest among the bulk of the American people. Having reread this book in the age of a stonewalling do-nothing Congress gun-toting anti-government lunatics and the rise of Drumpf I am even less convinced than ever that this country isn't deeply possibly fatally polarized. 9780321366061 This book provides a concise and clear assessment of the political statistical data that has previously been made oblivious to the public eye- proving that neither the Left nor the Right of the political spectrum have been quite as polarized as we have been made to believe. Even regarding the most controversial issues like homosexuality and abortion the data shows that it is not necessarily the voters themselves who have become so militant and polarized but the political parties and their respective representatives. Fiorina raises a significant question central to the theme of this book: Even if citizen attitudes on most issues are not highly polarized has the way such attitudes translate into votes changed? That is even if Americans are not deeply divided on specific issues could it be that their views translate into votes in new ways that somehow magnify the differences that exist? Fiorina emphasizes a number of deceptive tactics utilized by the political parties in order to make the political division between them appear that much more prominent and why they succeed in persuading the majority. The other problem with this book is his hypothesis sets out to prove something we already know is true: media outlets sensationalize small contrasts to get headlines and attract viewers. The book would have been more interesting if his slant would have tried to blame the audience for continuing to click on nonsense rather than the media who is only providing them with what they desire. 9780321366061

Morris Fiorina's Culture War pushes back on the idea that America is an intensely divided political state composed of blue states where liberals dominate and red states where conservatives dominate. Instead he parses data on a variety of issues to attempt to demonstrate that most Americans still belong in the middle of the political spectrum and the views of red and blue America are not truly that divergent. It may be true that many Americans still view themselves as moderates but these Americans tend to be the ones who are least politically active and in some cases their moderation just reflects their desire to adopt socially acceptable positions without having to know anything about politics. His arrangement of seven point scales to reflect positions on controversial issues

seemed designed to put such extreme positions at the opposing ends that there was virtually no way that many individuals would adopt them in a survey. Those individuals would be forced more toward the center of the scale and Fiorina could then argue that they aren't so far apart politically even though the positions they espouse may still be very opposed to each other. Culture War is not a bad book--and Fiorina certainly has a point that the rhetoric of war is overblown and that many political operators are using the idea of a culture war for their own personal and political ends. Yet I think we delude ourselves if we persist in the belief that there is a big sensible political middle and it is only our politicians that are driving political polarization. In addition the text has been updated throughout to reflect data from the 2004 elections, Authored by one of the most respected political scientists in America this brief trade-like text looks at controversial and hot topic issues (such as homosexuality abortion etc.) and argues that most Americans are not polarized in relation to them, Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America (Great Questions in Politics Series)The "culture war" rhetoric recently popularized by some in the media polarizes and stereotypes Americans: Americans are divided in real ways across issues of abortion gun control and governmental control over their day to day lives: However how much this divide actually results in "two Nations" is debatable. Fiorina (2005) provides somewhat of an answer to that question: It is that there is no real culture-divide and Fiorina hammers this point with survey data. Red and Blue states are not divided at all but are centrists in orientation, However when the survey data is examined America appears to be more right of center than smack down the middle centrists, For example both Red and Blue States believe at equal levels that immigration should decrease favor school vouchers and view the moral climate as much worse than previously. Both hold socially progressive ideas of equality for women oppose racial discrimination and tolerance of others moral views, The divide comes in terms of gun control and opposition to legalization of abortion- and perhaps it is these issues that color our opinion of the culture divide, While I agree that perhaps culture war is a bit dramatic he did not convince me that there is not in fact great disagreement among a sizable portion of Americans, I am sure he will come out with another edition after the 2012 election and I'll be interested to see how he discusses the tea party and the ill-will in Congress, We have all heard of the great divide in the United States for so long that it has become something close to received wisdom. Fiorina for those readers who are familiar with his academic research is a skilled researcher well schooled in statistics, It is to his credit that he presents evidence in a way that is accessible to lay readers (his technical publications would not be so easily understandable to nonacademic readers): In short he believes that the idea of a great culture war is dead wrong, [by:] scholars journalists and politicians range from simple exaggeration to sheer nonsense. Chapter 2 suggests strongly that the differences between citizens in red and blue states is not so great as advocates of the culture war say. Indeed the United States in his view remains a centrist moderate country politically, Worth reading by those interested in how well culture war serves as a metaphor for American politics, 9780321366061 I read this in the early 2000s in college and recall that even then I found the arguments less than persuasive: It would be interesting to read a new edition with new research to see if Fiorina still holds to his thesis in light of 2016's grim reality, So repetitive and on a topic which didn't really interest me: 9780321366061 Interesting analysis but imperfect and now quite outdated: 9780321366061 Incredibly boring: at one point the author recites the data tables that he has printed on the page. The books makes some good arguments but in the end I have to say that it didn't fully convince me, Moreover Fiorina marshals many statistics to boost his argument but I found myself questioning some of his methodology, I thought this true especially in the chapters on guns and abortion exactly the issues where you might expect the most disagreement. Our politicians are sent to Washington by the rest of us and the rest of us bear the brunt of responsibility for their actions. Blue states are snobs. Red states are unsophisticated working class stiff.s.e. to be able to play up to their base. He isn't the only researcher saying this either. 9780321366061 Red states versus blue states. As he says in Chapter 1: . .the sentiments expressed. . All in all a good read and a provocative thesis. 9780321366061 This book bored me to hell. Maybe I shouldn't have taken AP Gov. Duh.g. both sides need to compromise. 9780321366061

"This is quite simply the most penetrating -- and the most concise -- work on these contemporary American political culture. Fiorina, Abrams and Pope brilliantly demystify the conventional wisdom that we have become 'one nation, one flag and one blue.'" --Henry Kissinger, *Columbia, Philadelphia Inquirer*

CULTURE WAR?



THE MYTH OF A POLARIZED AMERICA



Second Edition

MORRIS P. FIORINA
with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope