

# Controversy with Civility

What's Happened,  
What's Going On, and  
What Can We Do?

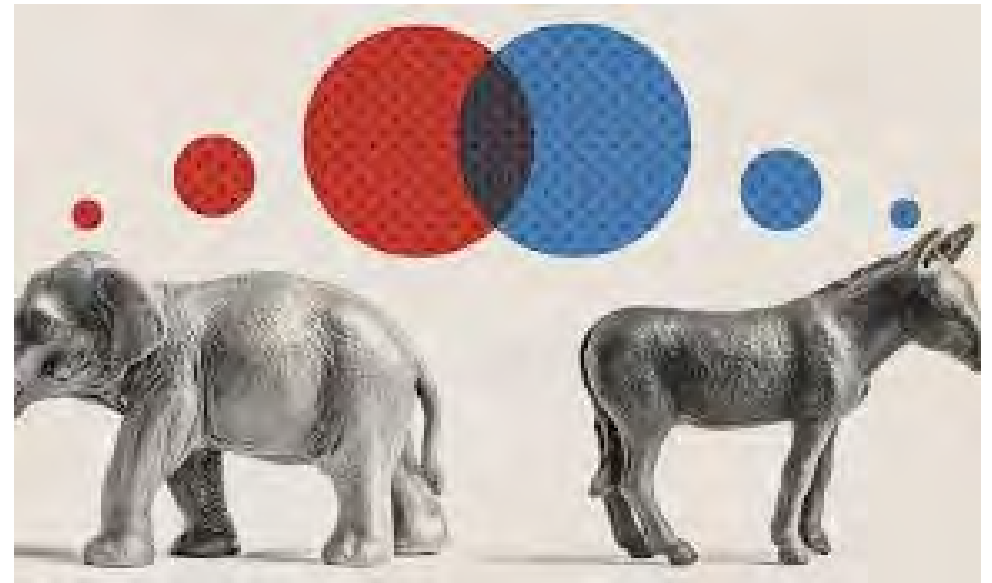
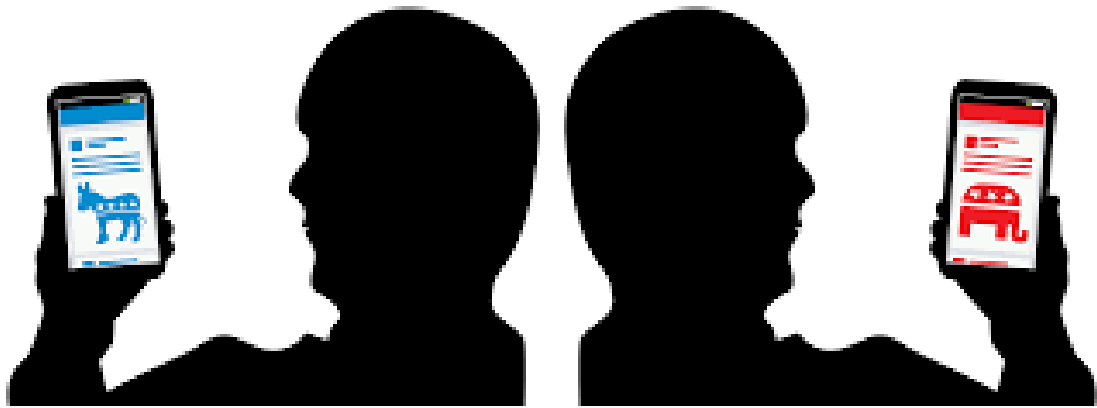
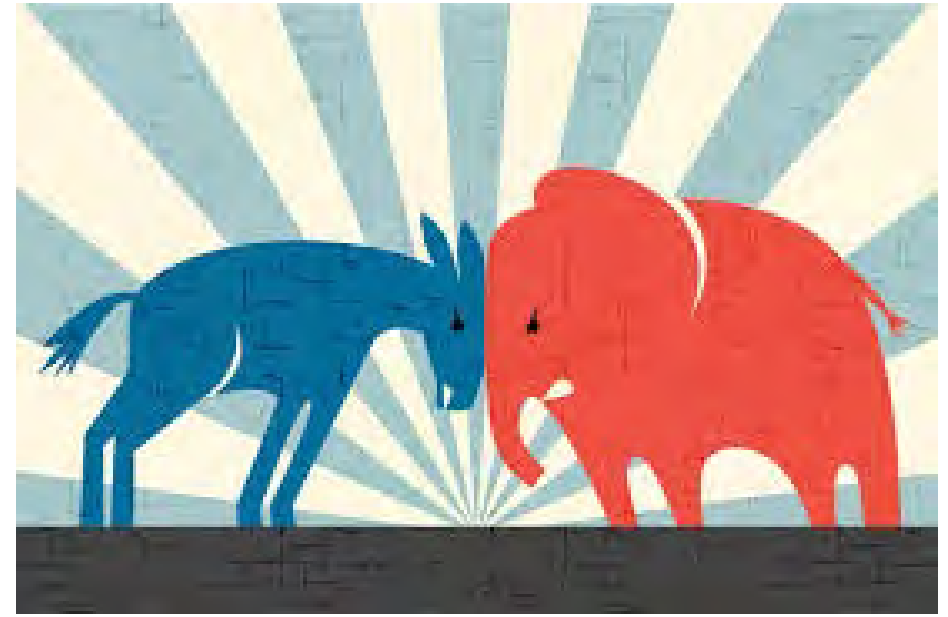
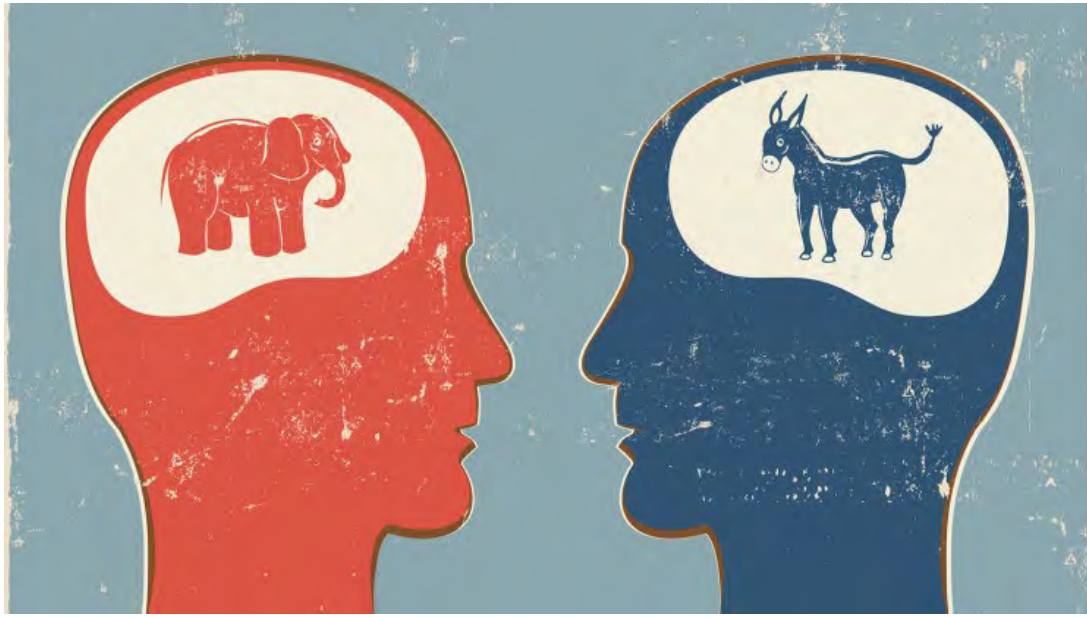


# ★ **UNCIVIL** ★ **AGREEMENT**

## Political Polarization

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- Have we become politically polarized?
- What does this mean?
- What does this look like?
- How did this happen?



## Specifically (and Contextually)...

- “Society is sewn together by the complexity of its social divisions”

~and~

- “The available evidence suggests that the chances for stable democracy are enhanced to the extent that groups and individuals have a number of cross-cutting, politically relevant affiliations”

~so~

- As long as we don’t cluster into a small number of super-tight catch-all groups, and as long as partisan cleavages are not defined by social cleavages and cooperation and compromise are valued, stability and civility are possible.

~so~

- What happened?
- Did we break the system?

- Parties (and ideologies) have become more homogenous and divided.

- “Democrats and Republicans have chosen ideological teams, and their sense of belonging to one side has divided them more powerfully than their policy differences have...

- More than simply disagreeing, Democrats and Republicans are feeling like very different kinds of people”.

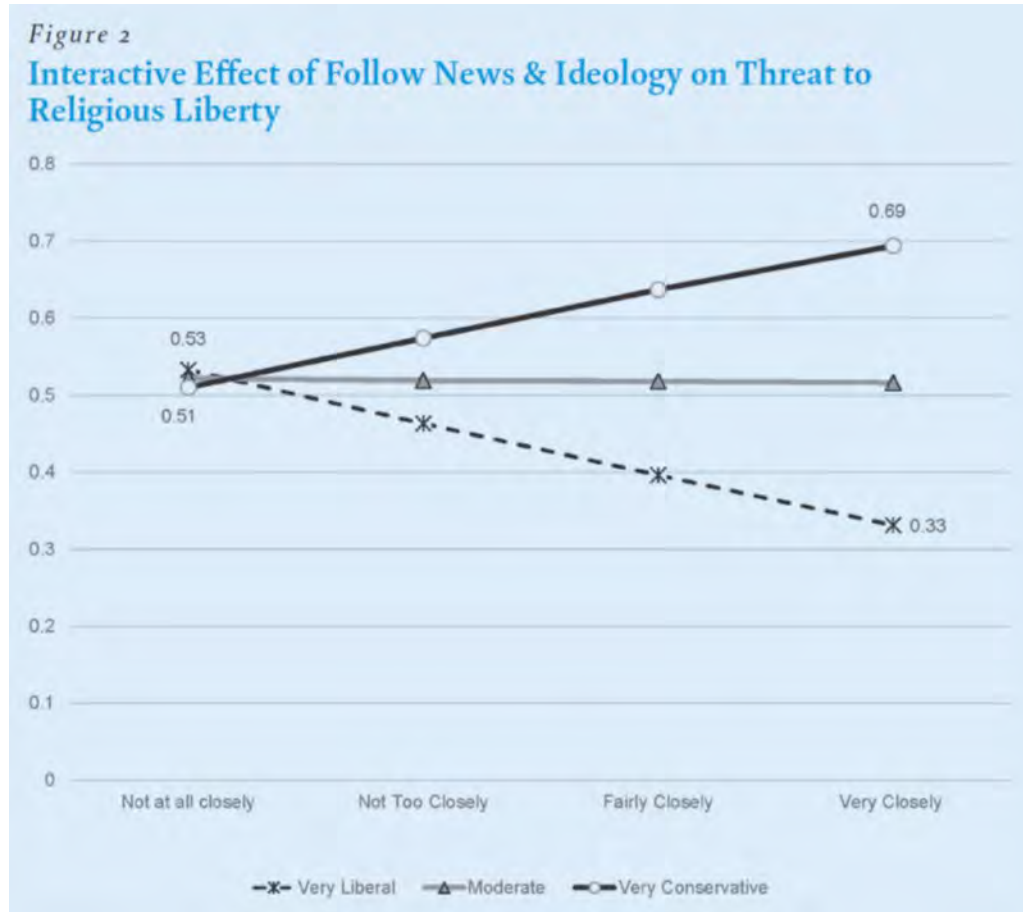
- Furthermore, Democrats and Republicans, and Liberals and Conservatives, have a lot more information about who their social and political enemies are.

~so~

- Let’s think about the news and cues we use...

## A Simple Example:

Using the Public Religion Research Institute's American Values Pre-Election Survey question: "The right of religious liberty is being threatened in America Today", we find that...



- "...attentiveness to news polarizes Democratic and Republican identifiers and conservative and liberal ideologues on questions of religious liberty. Perceptions of threat increase as Republicans and conservatives paid more attention to the news."



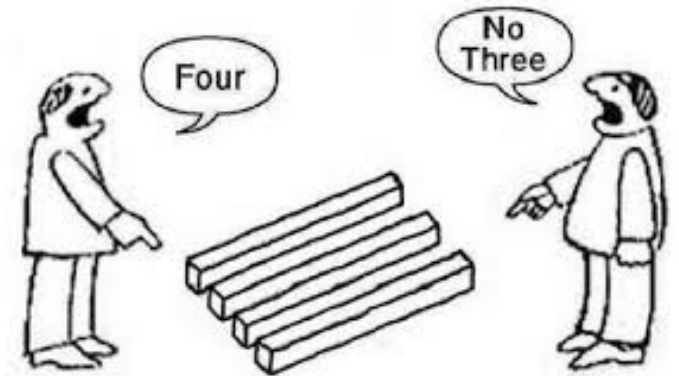
OK, I get it –we're polarized

What else is going on?

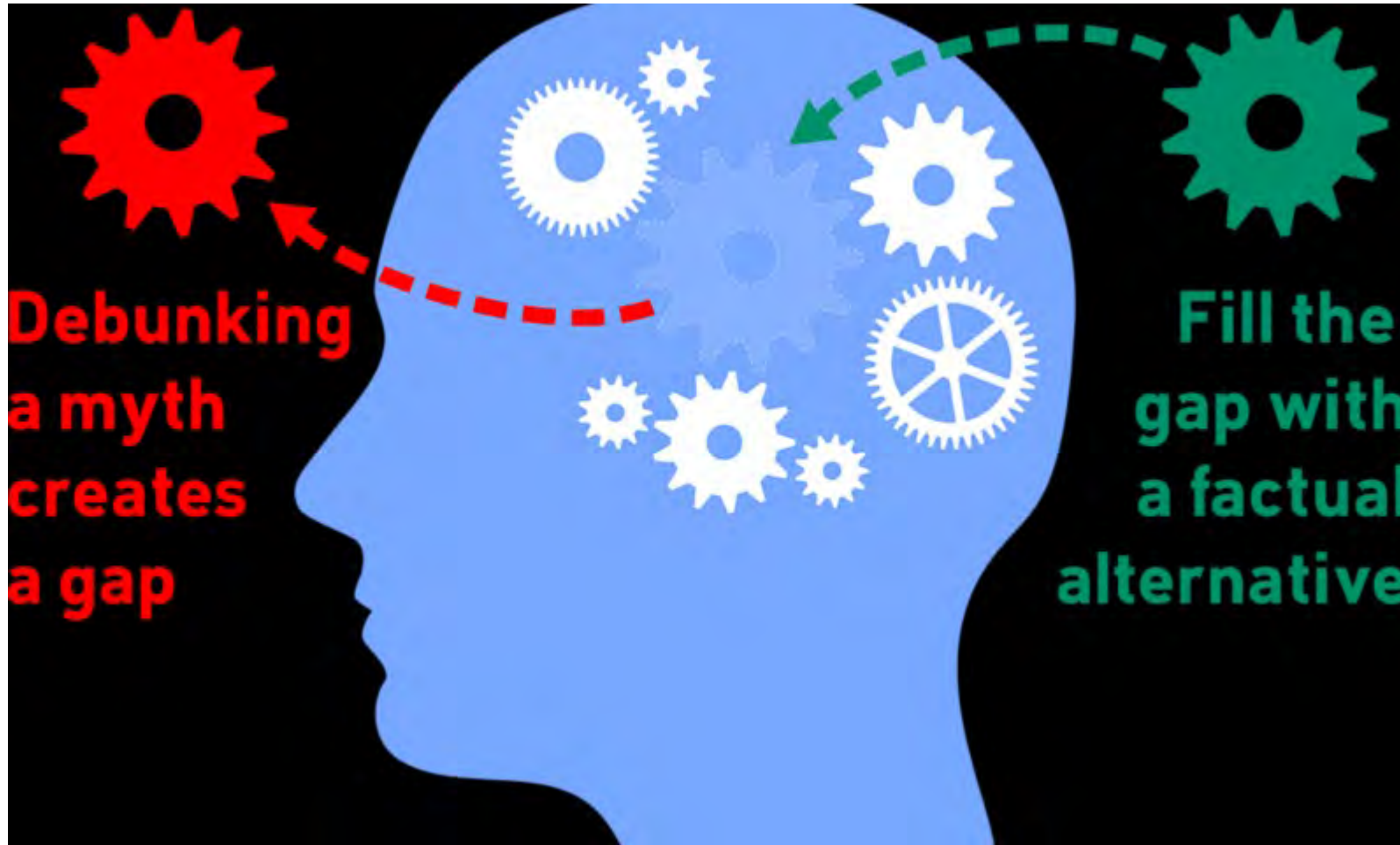
How is this playing out in your lives?



"All this talk about civility is interfering with my constitutional right to yell at my co-workers."



# Mind the Gap: Misconceptions, Misinformation, & Ignorance



- <https://undsci.berkeley.edu/teaching/misconceptions.php>



# A Strategy

# When the temperature rises: Open The Front Door

- O = Observe
  - A concrete, factual observation
- T = Think
  - Thoughts based on observations, but not intended to put the other person on the defensive
- F = Feel
  - Emotions you or others may have as a result of what you observed/conflict
- D = Desire
  - Desired outcome

*(with gratitude to Dr. Tasha Souza)*

# How it Works: A Scenario

- Own it:
  - *I* observed
  - *I* think
  - *I* feel
  - *I* desire
- Pause, process, and proceed:
  - Point out what you noticed (rolling eyes, arms folding, etc). **O**
  - Indicate what this makes you think (that you said something contentious that might need to be discussed further). **T**
  - Indicate a potentially emotional response you or others may have (discomfort, misunderstanding, fear). **F**
  - Indicate a desired outcome (someone giving voice to their gestures, a civil conversation on the topic). **D**



# In Search of Healing

America is facing one of the deepest divides in our history — and, no matter who wins the election, a difficult path forward



Not just politically, but socially, conversationally, institutionally, and individually.

The tyranny of absolutes is not helpful, so

- Listen
- Think
- Feel
- Process
- Respond

Don't normalize what's not normal  
Don't agree to be agreeable

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

~and remember~

"Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."

# Resources

- <https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/cetl/handling-hot-topics.asp>
- [Discussing Traumatic Events](#) from UC Berkeley  
*Guidelines on how to prepare for and structure a discussion, if you choose to do so*
- [Brené Brown on Empathy \(video\)](#)  
*3-minute video on distinction between empathy and sympathy with strategies about how to listen to and connect with someone who is suffering*
- [Calling In: A Quick Guide on When and How](#) by Sian Ferguson  
*Distinction between calling out and calling in as ways to get someone to stop an oppressive behavior (calling in attempts to do this in the most loving, self-respecting way possible)*
- [The Faculty Focus Special Report on Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom](#)  
*"Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension" (p. 4)*  
*"Seven Bricks to Lay the Foundation for Productive Difficult Dialogues" (p. 6)*  
*"Overcoming Racial Tension: Using Student Voices to Create Safe Spaces in the Classroom" (p. 9)*  
*"Managing Microaggressions in the College Classroom" (p. 10)*
- [Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#) from Southern Poverty Law Center  
*Strategies for responding to bigotry at work, home, in public, and in yourself*
- [Responding to Microaggressions with Microresistance: A Framework for Consideration](#) by Cynthia Ganote, Floyd Cheung, and Tasha Souza (pp. 3-7)  
*Theory of how microresistance can be an effective response to microaggression*
- A solution from Communication: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/14/communication-professor-establishes-rules-his-students-talking-about-trump-class>
- [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds?utm\\_social-type=owned&mbid=social\\_facebook&utm\\_brand=tny&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3rBSeS1yIQLGT0ii5Qqz-Xm1XNqZ25KMXkToxDPSSbyK\\_fvxVjigXOXyY](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds?utm_social-type=owned&mbid=social_facebook&utm_brand=tny&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3rBSeS1yIQLGT0ii5Qqz-Xm1XNqZ25KMXkToxDPSSbyK_fvxVjigXOXyY)
- Touch of Grey, The Grateful Dead.