**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In the 1950s and '60s most informed observers agreed that the nation's two major political parties were too similar and agreed on too much. Today the complaint is precisely the opposite--there is too much partisan polarization. This class will examine the causes and consequences of that shift by looking closely at the "extreme makeover" experienced by both leading parties in the long 1970s, a period that began in the mid-1960s and lasted into the early 1980s. In this era the rules and rituals of US politics underwent sweeping changes, as did political coalitions that had remained stable since the 1930s, as growing numbers of Americans pursued goals that seemed impossible to achieve through consensus. This course will examine the most important of those changes and the actors, ideas, and events that propelled them in order to explain how and why consensus gave way to polarity, making extensive use of leading political analysis from the period supplemented by historical interpretations. It will do so against the backdrop of the current moment, and will invite students to consider how past fights inform the debates of today.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:**
* Students will understand the primary features and distinguishing beliefs of the postwar consensus and the voting blocs that supported the two major parties.
* Students will know the major critics and critical issues that destabilized the postwar consensus.
* Students will consider why the parties reformed in the ways that they did.
* Students will read quickly, carefully, and critically by engaging with texts that disagree with one another.
* Students will make clear arguments that they can support with demonstrable evidence verbally and in written work.
* Students will write clearly, succinctly, and artfully.

**AREA OF CONCENTRATION:** Americas

**TEACHING METHOD:** Seminar

**EVALUATION METHOD:**
Class participation (30%), short reading responses relating readings to current events (20%), three-page paper on question of your choosing (20%), five-to-six page final paper (30%)

**GRADING BASIS:** P/N

**TENTATIVE READING LIST:**
Coursepack available through Quartet copies and on Canvas