

Politics and Culture from All Sides Fall 2026

A lunch series available as a one-credit reading group and open to all Tufts University students, faculty, and staff.

Wednesdays, 12:00–1:15 PM, Eaton Hall, Room 201, beginning September 16
Facilitated by Professor Eitan Hersh and Arik Burakovsky

September 16: **How should federal drug rules and state abortion laws interact?**

Reading: U.S. Supreme Court. [Danco Laboratories, LLC v. Louisiana](#) and [GenBioPro, Inc. v. Louisiana](#), Nos. 25A1207 and 25A1208. Order granting stays, with dissents, May 14, 2026.

Amy Howe. [“Supreme Court allows for access to abortion pill by mail for now.”](#) SCOTUSblog, May 14, 2026.

Discussant: Professor **Liana Woskie**, Department of Community Health

September 23: **Can mountain grandeur be measured?**

Reading: Gordy Megroz. [“Have We Been Measuring Mountains All Wrong?”](#) *National Geographic*, September 16, 2025.

Discussant: **Solly Coles**, Norbert Wiener Fellow, Department of Mathematics

September 30: **How useful is “settler colonialism” as a political framework?**

Reading: Aziz Rana. [“Who’s Afraid of ‘Settler Colonialism’?”](#) *Dissent*, Fall 2025.

Discussant: Professor **Aziz Rana**, Boston College Law School

October 7: **Does liberalism need serious opposition?**

Reading: Lionel Trilling. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. London, UK: Secker & Warburg, 1951. Preface, pp. ix–xv.

Discussant: Professor **Ichiro Takayoshi**, Department of English

October 14: **How can higher education rebuild public trust?**

Reading: Yale Committee on Trust in Higher Education. [Report of the Yale Committee on Trust in Higher Education](#). April 10, 2026. “Recommendations,” pp. 23–32.

Discussant: Professor **Peter Levine**, Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life

October 21: **Why does settling Mars still capture our imagination?**

Reading: Henry Wismayer. [“The Mars Delusion.”](#) *Noema*, June 18, 2026.

Discussant: Professor **Danilo Marchesini**, Department of Physics and Astronomy

October 28: **What explains generational differences in LGBTQ identification?**

Reading: Daniel A. Cox, Jae Grace, and Avery Shields. [“What’s Behind the Rapid Rise in LGBTQ Identity?”](#) Survey Center on American Life, March 6, 2025.

Discussant: Professor **Brian Schaffner**, Newhouse Professor of Civic Studies, Department of Political Science

November 4: **What do the 2026 midterms tell us about American politics?**

No advance reading. Selected results and analysis will be posted on Canvas after Election Day.

Discussant: Professor **Meredith McLain**, Department of Political Science

November 18: **Why have children?**

Reading: Anastasia Berg, Brian Dijkema, and Rachel Wiseman. [“Why Have Children?”](#) *Comment*, June 5, 2025.

Discussant: Professor **Eitan Hersh**, Department of Political Science

December 2: **Does political weirdness strengthen or weaken conservatism?**

Reading: R.J. Snell. [“Beware the Cul-De-Sac of Weirdness.”](#) *Public Discourse*, March 16, 2026.

Discussant: Professor **Patrick Forber**, Department of Philosophy

December 9: **What should remain distinctly human in an age of AI?**

Reading: Pope Leo XIV. [Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence](#). Encyclical letter, May 15, 2026. Paragraphs 97–100, 112–130, and 143–150.

Discussant: President **Sunil Kumar**, Tufts University

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