COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL

**BRIDGING THE AMERICAN DIVIDE**

B8773

Fall A Term 2017

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Purpose

Last year’s presidential campaign made it clear that Americans are a deeply divided people. It also gave rise to the recognition by many that they didn’t understand the lives and times of “the other half.” The purpose of this course is to help interested Columbia Business School students gain a better understanding through an outside of “the bubble” experience.

Method

Class sessions will be devoted to topics exploring the causes and consequences of a divided America. These will be followed by a four-day visit to Youngstown, Ohio where students will be engaged in learning activities. These will include social settings as well as meetings with individuals associated with organizations whose fortunes have been changed by de-industrialization—manufacturers, unions, local government, and nonprofit service-providers. In addition, students will write a paper, not to exceed 10 pages in length, on a topic worked out with the instructors. And finally, students will organize an event to share their learnings with the CBS community.

Requirements

Students must apply for one of the 20 seats in the course. As becomes a select group, students are expected to be prepared for and participate thoughtfully in all aspects of the course, including the six class sessions, site visits, and the community gathering.

Grading

Contribution to the learning process and the paper will be weighted equally in determining the final grade.

SESSION TOPICS AND READINGS

9/19 Session 1: Polarization and Populism

Evidence on the rise of polarization and the populist movement in the U.S.; competing explanations; apparent consequences.

**Readings**: Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, Polarized America (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), Ch. 7; Fareed Zakaria, “Populism on the March,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2016), pp. 9-15; David Autor et al, “Importing Political Polarization: The Electoral Consequences of Rising Trade Exposure,” *MIT Working Paper*, December 2016

9/26 Session 2: Globalization and Outsourcing

Effects of competition from abroad, trade imbalances, and the outsourcing of employment.

**Readings**: David Autor, David Dorn and Gordon Hanson, "[The China Shock: Learning from Labor-Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade,](http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080315-015041)" *Annual Review of Economics*, October 2016; Gary Pinkus et al, “We Can’t Undo Globalization, but We Can Improve It”, *Harvard Business Review*, January 2017

10/3 Session 3: Technology and Automation

The longstanding debate over the relationship between technological innovation and the demand for labor; potential impact of machine learning and robotics on employment in the U.S.

**Readings**: Klaus Schwab, “The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond”, *Foreign Affairs*, December 2015; Shailendra Palvia and Vijay Vemuri, “Forecasts of jobless growth: Facts and Myths”, *Journal of Information Technology Case and Application Research*, March 2016 pp. 4-10; James Manyika et al, “A Future That Works: Automation, Employment, and Productivity”, McKinsey Global Institute, January 2017

10/10 Session 4: Legal and Illegal Immigration

Effects of immigration from abroad and migration within; winners and losers from changing the system.

**Readings**: George Borjas, “Immigration and the American Worker: A Review of the Academic Literature”, Center for Immigration Studies, April 2013; Ariel Burstein et al, “Tradability and the Labor-Market Impact of Immigration: Theory and Evidence from the U.S.”, *Columbia Working Paper*, April 2017; Ping Xu et al, “Imported Inequality? Immigration and Income Inequality in the American States” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, September 2015, pp. 147-171

10/31 Session 5: Public Policy and Culture

The role of domestic policies in the dividing of America; the cultural explanation of populism.

**Readings**: Benjamin M. Friedman, The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth (New York: Random House, 2005), Ch. 16; Charles Murray, Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010 (New York: Random House, 2012), Part III.

11/14 Session 6: Conclusion