

## **SYLLABUS FOR AMERICAN TRIBALISM, Summer 2025**

### **INSTRUCTOR:**

Allen Buchanan, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Arizona

919-695-2038

[allenb@duke.edu](mailto:allenb@duke.edu) (please do not use my AZ email address)

### **COURSE TOPIC:**

A critical exploration of the conflicting tribalistic political ideologies we see today in America, with emphasis on the negative effects of this phenomenon on morality, discourse, national unity, and democracy.

Required text: *Political Tribalism: How it Hijacks Our Minds and Diminishes Our Humanity*, Allen Buchanan, Routledge Publishers, 2025

### **COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **Class 1, July 10:**

Introduction to instructor and course topic, including explanation of why it's useful to see political tribalism as a kind of ideology.

No assigned reading from required text.

Required reading: article on U.C. Berkely research on lessening political disagreement (link distributed by email to all students).

Be prepared to share personal perceptions and experiences of political tribalism.

Ponder and be prepared to discuss this question: is political tribalism a new phenomenon in America?

#### **Class 2, July 17:**

The Evolutionary Roots of Political Tribalism: Are we hard-wired for it?

Required reading: Introduction and Chapter 1, *Political Tribalism*

Recommended reading: *Our Moral Fate: Evolution and the Escape From Tribalism*, Allen Buchanan, Chapter 4.

**Class 3: July 24:**

The Moral Aspect of Tribalistic Political Ideologies: How They Turn the Moral Mind Against Itself and Make Us Do Immoral Things for the Sake of Being Moral. How Tribalistic Political Ideologies Drive Out Truth-Seeking in Favor of Sorting, Signaling, and Purely Defensive Score-Keeping.

Required Reading: Chapter 2, *Political Tribalism*

**Class 4: July 31:**

The Supreme Emergency Framing and Its Consequences for Morality and Decency

Required Reading: Chapter 3, *Political Tribalism*

**Class 5:**

The Death of “We the People”: How Tribalistic Political Ideologies Provide Irreconcilable National Histories and Make Political Unity Impossible.

Required reading: Chapter 4, *Political Tribalism*

**Class 6:**

Identity Insecurity as the Best Explanation of the Prevalence of Tribalistic Political Ideologies. Social Media as a Masked Identity Fashion Show. Is There Any Hope For Us?

Required reading: Chapters 5, 6, and Conclusion, *Political Tribalism*