

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT MEDIA AND POLITICS

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Paradigm Publishers
Boulder • London

after the 2000 presidential election came to identify "Blue States" as Democratic and "Red States" as Republican, although liberal versus conservative attitudes on religion and other "social issues" within this broad socioeconomic range are another complicating variable.

As working-class people, or their children, move up into the middle class and go to college, those who follow business-oriented majors tend to stay on the right through life, while liberal-education majors are more inclined to become liberals, remaining so if they go to work in the public, nonprofit sector (especially teachers and professors) or in media, the arts, and other intellectual fields. If they advance toward upper-class status, those who remain liberal as labor-union or Democratic Party officials, media executives, or "stars" are often termed "limousine liberals" (think Sean Penn, Rosie O'Donnell, and Oprah Winfrey), implying a compartmentalization between class status and political attitudes. It is, however, less common for those who attain this level to remain liberal (which is why the concept of the limousine liberal is something of a paradox) than to swing back toward the right, the natural tendency, almost by definition, of people who attain status, wealth, and power—as, for example, teachers or college faculty who become administrators, journalists who become editors, and performers who become executives.

PREDICTABLE PATTERNS OF POLITICAL RHETORIC

The following list of predictable patterns, like the "Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" in Chapter 1, is intended mainly to enable you to recognize a particular line of argument when you see it, not automatically to dismiss it as biased. It is a necessary and perfectly legitimate part of argumentation to make the strongest case you can for your own cause and to point out the faults in opponents' positions. Once you recognize these patterns, the more important task is to evaluate whether the points being played up and downplayed are well-reasoned and supported, or whether they are just appealing one-sidedly to knee-jerk emotional response.

<i>Leftists will play up</i>	<i>Rightists will play up</i>
Right-wing bias in media and education; power of business interests and administrators	Left-wing bias in media and education; power of employees and unions

Crimes and fraud by the rich; luxury, waste, selfish interests, and control of government by private industry and the military	Crime and fraud by the poor; luxury and waste by government bureaucrats; selfish interests and control over government by labor unions, teachers, environmentalist and civil rights organizations
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Conservative ethnocentrism and sentimentality toward the middle and upper classes and America abroad	Leftist "negative thinking," "sour grapes," anti-Americanism, and sentimentality toward the lower classes and Third World peoples
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U.S. military strengths, right-wing "hawks" scare tactics about foreign adversaries' strengths and menace	Foreign adversaries' strengths, menace, and manipulation of left-wing "doves"; left-wing scare tactics about negative consequences of American military actions
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Conservative rationalization of right-wing extremism and foreign dictatorships allied with the United States (e.g., South Vietnam in the Vietnam War, El Salvador in the 1980s, Saudi Arabia)	Liberal rationalization of left-wing extremism and Communist dictatorships or guerrillas (e.g., Cuba, Sandinista Nicaragua, North Vietnam, Aristide in Haiti, Mugabe in Zimbabwe)
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A NOTE ON TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY MODIFICATIONS TO TABLE 2.1

The worldwide, political spectrum in table 2.1, which goes back to the twentieth-century foundation for the left-to-right spectrum, has undergone considerable change, and as noted earlier, does not aim to be all-inclusive. The major change since the 1990s has been the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite Communist governments in Eastern Europe. At this writing, there still exist some Communist dictatorships on the far left (most prominently Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, and China, though the latter two have moved toward a capitalist economy while remaining political dictatorships) and some semi-fascistic or plutocratic dictatorships on the far right such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Guatemala, or military dictatorships like Pakistan and Myanmar (Burma). The year 2011 was marked by "the Arab spring," in which masses in Egypt, Syria, Libya, and elsewhere in the Middle East rose up against long-entrenched dictatorships whose