

# MARKETING COLLOQUIA

SPRING 2015

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February 5, 2015

*Where:* 741 JMH

*When:* 3:00 PM to 4:20 PM

### PERCEIVING POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES: IDENTITY, EXTREMITY, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIMATE POLICY

**ABSTRACT:** How politically polarized are Democrats and Republicans in the United States? I consider how ordinary Americans (mis)perceive political polarization, and how perceived polarization poses barriers to enactment of climate policy. My colleagues and I examined data from nearly four decades of nationally representative samples, controlled laboratory experiments, and field studies. We found that ordinary Americans exaggerate polarization between the attitudes of Democrats and Republicans. For example, people overestimate how much Democrats support increased spending on government services and how much Republicans oppose such spending. We also found that perceptions of polarization are egocentric. People perceive greater political polarization when they strongly identify as either Democrat or Republican, when they personally hold more extreme partisan attitudes, and when people's partisan identities are aligned with their partisan attitudes. These perceptions of political polarization abet partisanship in Americans' evaluation of climate policy. Both Democrats and Republicans exhibit arbitrary partisan evaluations of climate policies, favoring those policies that are attributed to their own party and opposing policies attributed to the opposing party. Furthermore, people overestimate how much partisan framing influences other Democrats and Republicans—particularly exaggerating reactive devaluation of the opposition party's policies. I conclude by considering how psychologically wise interventions might overcome partisanship.