COPING WITH AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

International Conference "Coping with Affective Polarization"

May 27-28, 2027 | Berlin, Germany

About the Conference

Political conflict can become deeply emotional, with people disliking those who belong to opposing political groups. This can have detrimental consequences: contact with those who think differently is often avoided, and personal relationships come under strain. Coping with these and further consequences poses a challenge for individuals, groups and democratic societies alike.

Research on this phenomenon, known as affective polarization, has grown rapidly in recent years, yet important questions remain open: How should affective polarization be conceptualized, particularly in political systems with several parties and camps? What shapes polarization dynamics, including their development over time? How does affective polarization play out in everyday interactions and public discourse? How do people, groups and societies cope with affective polarization, and what can be done to reduce its harmful consequences?

To discuss these and related questions, we invite scholars to the international conference "Coping with Affective Polarization". The conference is hosted by the Einstein Research Unit "Coping with Affective Polarization – How Civil Society Fosters Social Cohesion", an interdisciplinary consortium of researchers from psychology, political science, sociology, philosophy, and media and communication science at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin.

We aim to bring international researchers from these and neighboring fields into conversation and welcome contributions at various stages of the research cycle, including, but not limited to, presentations of existing data, planned studies or theoretical reflections. Contributions may, for example, address:

- individual differences, emotions and identities, as well as (social) media and public discourse
- consequences and correlates of affective polarization, such as mental health, well-being and social relationships
- social interactions within and between political groups in the context of affective polarization
- the role of parties, elites and civil society actors shaping contexts of affective polarization
- lab or field interventions and training programs to cope with the consequences of affective polarization, including their practical implications for activists and political action

We also welcome conceptual and normative work, for instance on when affective polarization becomes a problem for democracy and when it is part of ordinary political conflict.

Affective polarization and its various consequences matter well beyond the academic world.
The program will therefore also include an exchange with practitioners from civil society and politics on what research can offer to those who deal with it every day.

Keynote Speakers

We are delighted to announce the following confirmed keynote speakers and panelists:

- **Shanto Iyengar**, Professor of Political Science, Stanford University
- **Luana Russo**, Professor of Political Science, Maastricht University
- **Gijs Schumacher**, Professor of Political Psychology, University of Amsterdam
- **Tereza Capelos**, Professor of Political Psychology, University of Southampton

Further speakers and panelists will be announced. The program and organizational information will be continuously updated on our conference website.

Formats

We accept two types of contributions: short individual talks (10-12 minutes) or scientific posters (A0).

How to Submit

Please submit an abstract of max. 300 words via the link on our conference website.
The submission portal will be open from November 1 to November 30, 2026. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by the beginning of 2027.

Registration Fee and Travel Grants

Registration will open in January 2027. The conference fee will be EUR 100 per participant (including catering).
A limited number of travel grants is available for early-career researchers.
Further information on how to apply will be available on the conference website.

Contact

For questions, please contact Dr. Nadja-Raphaela Baer, Scientific Coordinator of ERU-CAP via affective-polarization2027@hu-berlin.de

Kind regards,
The conference organizing team

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