

# Mike Cowburn

Graduate School of North American Studies

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## Education

**Freie Universität Berlin**      Ph.D. Political Science      2019 – 2023

Dissertation: Party Factions and Partisan Polarization in Congressional Nominations: How Ideological and Factional Primaries Influence Candidate Positions

Committee: Christian Lammert, Sean M. Theriault, Max Steinhardt, Rachel M. Blum, and David Bosold

The thesis demonstrates changes in the dynamics of competition in U.S. congressional primaries, offering evidence that between 2006 and 2020 ideological differences between candidates proximate to competing factions became the dominant reason for contested nominations, first in the Republican and then in the Democratic Party. I consider causal mechanisms of this development and implications for candidate positioning, empirically testing the selective and adaptive polarizing effects during the nomination process. Taking a contest-centered approach, the thesis foregrounds the dynamics of and reasons for primaries to better understand the implications for candidate positioning. In doing so, the thesis demonstrates that trends of intra-party factionalism and ideological narratives during the congressional nomination process influence candidates' positions. Though primary voters do not reward non-centrist position-taking, candidates behave as if they do, adapting their positions both between and within election cycles.

**Freie Universität Berlin**      MA North American Studies      1.0      2017 – 2019

The MA study focused primarily within the discipline of political science, but also included courses in cultural studies and interdisciplinary classes. The thesis focused on the topic of polarization in the U.S. Congress and received the highest grade of 1.0.

**University of Exeter**      BA Hons Politics      2:1      2005 – 2008

The BA program gave a broad introduction to the discipline of political science, the dissertation focused on media representations of the U.S. presidency and received a 1<sup>st</sup> class grade.

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## Research Interests

U.S. Politics, Political Parties, Congress, Primary Elections, Intra-Party Factions, Ideology, Candidate Selection, Polarization, Radicalization, Elite Communication.

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## Peer-Reviewed Publications

**Cowburn, Mike** and Michael T. Oswald. 2020. "Legislator Adoption of the Fake News Label: Ideological Differences in Republican Representative Use on Twitter." *The Forum* 18(3): 389–413. <https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2020-2015>

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## Book Chapters

**Cowburn, Mike.** 2022. "Experience Narratives and Populist Rhetoric in U.S. House Primaries" in Michael T. Oswald (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism*. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80803-7\\_26](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80803-7_26)

**Cowburn, Mike.** 2020. "The Transformation of the Congressional Primary" in Michael T. Oswald (ed.) *Mobilization, Representation and Responsiveness in The American Democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24792-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24792-8_5)

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## In Progress

**Cowburn, Mike** and Rebecca Kerr. "Inclusivity and Decentralisation of Candidate Selectorates: Factional Consequences for Centre-Left Parties in England, Germany, and the United States" [Revise & Resubmit, Under Review]

**Cowburn, Mike** and Marius Sältzer. "Partisan Communication in Two-Stage Elections: The Effect of Primaries on Intra-Campaign Positional Shifts in Congressional Elections" [Under Review]

Blum, Rachel M. and **Mike Cowburn**. "How Local Factions Pressure Parties: Activist Groups & Primary Contests in the Tea Party Era" [Under Review]

**Mike Cowburn** and Curd B. Knüpfer. "The Emerging Fault Line of Alternative: Intra-Party Division in Republican Representatives' Media Engagement" [Under Review]

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## Commentary & Analysis

**Cowburn, Mike.** 2020. "[Not Just the Presidency: Congressional Primaries 2020.](#)" Atlantische Akademie

**Cowburn, Mike.** 2020. "[Fostering Engagement in Primaries and Caucuses.](#)" APSA PoliticalScienceNow

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## Conference Presentations

01/2022 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Politics Group of the UK Political Studies Association (PSA)<sup>1</sup>

Paper: "How Local Factions Pressure Parties: Activist Groups & Primary Contests in the Tea Party Era"

09/2021 117<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA), Seattle, WA  
Paper: "The Effects of Primaries on Intra-Campaign Positions in Congressional Elections"

Paper: "Intra-Party Division and News Media Engagement Among Republican Legislators"

06/2021 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the European Political Science Association (EPSA)<sup>1</sup>

Paper: "Primary Roots of Partisan Polarization: The Effects of Primaries on Intra-Campaign Positional Shifts in Congressional Elections"

06/2021 Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies (DGfA)<sup>1</sup>

Paper: "Congressional Primaries in the 21st Century: Participation, Inequality, and Intra-Party Division"

04/2021 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference (MPSA)<sup>1</sup>

Paper: "Partisan Communication in Two-Stage Elections: The Effect of Primaries on Intra-Campaign Positional Shifts in Congressional Elections"

03/2021 Political Studies Association Annual Conference (PSA)<sup>1</sup>

Paper: "Inclusivity and Centralisation of Candidate Selectorates: Factional Consequences for Centre-Left Parties in Germany, England, and the United States"

01/2021	45 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Politics Group of the Political Studies Association (PSA) <sup>1</sup> Paper: "Legislator Adoption of the Fake News Label: Ideological Differences in Republican Representative Use on Twitter"
11/2020	Annual Meeting of the Political Science Section of the German Association for American Studies <sup>1</sup> Paper: "Republican Legislator Adoption of the Fake News Label"
09/2020	116 <sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) <sup>1</sup> Paper: "Ideological Difference & Party Destabilization in Congressional Primary Contests"
08/2020	European Consortium for Political Research General Conference (ECPR) <sup>1</sup> Paper: "Intra-Party Ideological Disagreement in Congressional Nomination Processes"
07/2020	Early Career Network Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association <sup>1</sup> Paper: "The Rise of Ideology in U.S. Congressional Primaries"
06/2020	Annual Conference of the European Political Science Association (EPSA) <sup>1</sup> Paper: "Ideological Competition in U.S. Congressional Primaries"
06/2020	Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies (DGfA) <sup>2</sup> Paper: "Polarizing Primaries? Income Inequality & Congressional Candidate Selection"
04/2020	78 <sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference (MPSA) <sup>2</sup> Paper: "From Personal to Ideological: The Transformation of the Congressional Primary" Paper: "The Evolution of the Fake News Label: Ideology & Time in Congress as Determinants of Republican Representative Use on Twitter"
12/2019	British Association for American Studies Postgraduate Conference, British Library Paper: "Communication in Congressional Primaries: The Rise of Ideology in Intra-Party Contests"
11/2019	Annual Meeting of the Political Science Section of the German Association for American Studies, Heidelberg University Paper: "Democratic Re-Engagement? The Ideological Foundations of Growing Primary Participation"
06/2019	Threatened Democracies: Interdisciplinary Conference in North American Studies, University of Göttingen Paper: "Fractured Parties and Factional Nominations"
06/2019	Intra-Party Politics in Times of Crisis: Party Congress Research Group Annual Meeting, University of Strathclyde Paper: "Intra-Party Factionalism and Ideological Competition in US Congressional Primaries"
11/2018	Annual Meeting of the Political Science Section of the German Association for American Studies, Passau University Paper: "Mediators of Faction: The Transformation of the Congressional Primary"

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<sup>1</sup> Virtual conference due to COVID-19.

<sup>2</sup> Conference canceled due to COVID-19, proposal accepted, conference paper written and shared with panel.

## Invited Talks & Media

- 11/2021 "Right-Wing Alternative Media and Republican Party Social Media Engagement"  
Social Media and Politics Podcast. Michael Bossetta. Episode 136.  
<https://socialmediaandpolitics.org/right-wing-alternative-media-social-media-engagement-congress-republican-party-twitter/>
- 11/2021 "Republican Party Factionalism as a Response to Racial & Economic Inequality"  
Freie Universität Ringvorlesung Lecture Series, 'What Stands Between Us and What Stands Before Us: Pasts, Presents and Future of (In)equality in the U.S.', Berlin
- 04/2021 "Polarization, Congressional Primaries, and Fake News"  
U.S. Studies Online, USSOcast Podcast, <https://usso.uk/usso-cast/>
- 03/2021 "The State of the Parties and Their Future Under the Biden Presidency"  
Atlantische Akademie Teachers' Seminar, The United States in 2021 and Beyond
- 11/2020 "US-Wahl 2020" ("US Election 2020")  
CouchFM Election Night TV & Radio Coverage, Berlin
- 11/2020 "Kongresswahl 2020", Amerikawählt! Wahlabend 2020,  
("Congressional Election 2020", Atlantische Akademie Virtual Election Evening)
- 11/2020 "US Election System & Postal Voting", interview with Fluter Magazine,  
<https://fluter.de/us-wahlssystem-briefwahl-interview> [in German]
- 09/2020 "Ein Ausblick auf die Kongress-, Gouverneurs- und einzelstaatlichen Wahlen: Gelingt den Demokraten die Rückeroberung des Senats und weiterer Einzelstaaten?"  
("A look ahead to the congressional, gubernatorial and state elections: will the Democrats succeed in retaking the Senate and other states?")  
America Decides: 2020 Election Series, Bonn University
- 06/2019 "Demokratie unter Beschuss? Donald Trump und der Populismus", ("Democracy under Attack? Donald Trump and Populism")  
Tolerantes Brandenburg Series, Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Gymnasium
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## Other Training

- 08/2021 Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis  
Courses: Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis
- 08/2021 Summer School of the ECPR Standing Group on Political Parties, Aarhus, Denmark
- 07/2021 Data Science Summer School, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin  
Courses: Intro to R Programming, Data Visualization with R, Research Design & Causal Analysis with R
- 03/2021 ECPR Virtual Winter School in Methods and Techniques  
Courses: The Statistics of Causal Inference
- 03/2021 Applied Statistics Workshop Series, NTNU Business School, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- 07/2020 Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis  
Courses: Applied Regression, Advanced Stata Programming
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## Awards & Grants

09 – 12/2021	STIBET Doctorate Promotion of the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD) three-month stipend (September to December 2021)
2021	American Political Science Association (APSA) Political Communication Section's Executive Committee Travel Reimbursement
2021	American Political Science Association (APSA) Travel Grant
2021	Virginia Gray Graduate Research Grant from the APSA Political Organizations and Parties (POP) Section
2021	John Sullivan Award for Best Graduate Student Paper in the APSA Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior (EPOVB) Section
2019 – 2023	Freie Universität Berlin Graduate School of North American Studies (GSNAS) forty-month Doctoral Research Stipend (October 2019 to January 2023), including Annual Travel Grant

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## Teaching Experience

### Freie Universität Berlin

Instructor

32513	U.S. Political Parties in a Partisan Era (MA)	Fall 2021
32503	Polarization in U.S. Politics (BA)	Spring 2019

Tutorial Leader

32000T	Understanding North America B—Political Science (BA)	Spring 2019
32000T	Understanding North America B—Political Science (BA)	Spring 2018

### University of Exeter

EDU3014	Learning for Teaching: School Experience (with in-school placement)	2007/2008
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## Professional Association Memberships

American Political Science Association (APSA)

Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)

European Political Science Association (EPSA)

International Political Science Association (IPSA)

European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR)

UK Political Studies Association (PSA)

German Association for American Studies (DGfA/GAAS)

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## Miscellaneous

Software Stata, Microsoft Office, Zotero, R (Basic), LaTeX (Basic)

Languages English (native), German (B2)

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## Selected Non-Academic Employment

Account Director	Ideal ( <a href="http://www.ideal.co.uk">www.ideal.co.uk</a> )	April 2010 – February 2017
Administrative Assistant	Liberty ( <a href="http://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk">www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk</a> )	July 2008 – February 2009

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## References

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