What’s the Matter With Kansas?

Part III
Capital, Wealth, and Values

Last lecture we discussed the role of wealth, party politics, and factions.

This class we seek to complete the discussion of the Frank book
Dissent and Patriotism

Were Democrats openly critical of President Bush on Iraq operating in a manner that was unpatriotic or even reckless by creating more dangers for American troops in the field?

There is the connotation of disregard for America that sounds treasonous, which is exactly as far as Ann Coulter went.
Dissent and Patriotism

Dissent may be on principle or opportunism. Note what Republicans said about Clinton regarding Kosovo.

Neither party is totally guilty or innocent of this behavior. We must remember that political rhetoric is by nature contrarian and opportunitistic!!!

How often are politicians honest?
Persuasion and Political Identity

Rhetorical and symbolic strategy of persuasion: flip populism to support fiscal conservatism and convince people that the party of the New Deal is now party of elitists while convincing average people that GOP is their real champion, even on economic issues.
Persuasion and Political Identity

This is also accomplished by attacking those that seek fact or hold opposite opinions.

- Are conservatives anti-intellectual?

- Do ultra-liberal intellectuals dominate the country?

- Is Professor Churchill of U of Colorado typical, or an anomaly?

http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,148579,00.html
A key theme of the Great Cultural Backlash is that the majority of the country disagrees with liberalism but that liberals continuously thwart conservative agendas.

From where does this monolithic left-wing agenda gain its power?
The Grand Strategy of Party Power

FDR built the NEW DEAL COALITION on economic liberalism, uniting the coasts with the South.

Reagan was central in forging a coalition between traditional Republicans and social conservatives, even though Reagan was not really a social conservative in practice.
The Grand Strategy of Party Power

- Who gains the most out of this coalition between Cons and Mods in GOP, especially in regard to national policies?

- The Mods provide more money than the Cons and seemingly control the GOP. See Bush vs. McCain in 2000 primary elections.

- The current administration and Congress offers an empirical case; a better test than the past.
Bush and Conservatism

How many of Pres. Bush’s achieved policy goals are based on social conservatism?

Clearly President Bush has run as a conservative, but now conservatives are trying to make him follow through instead of just talk the talk.
What’s wrong with being conservative?

Why might one reconsider voting for Republicans based on social conservatism, according to Thomas Frank?

What is Frank’s main beef with the Great Backlash against Liberalism?
What’s wrong with being conservative?

Frank’s concern is that conservative politicians typically do not deliver on social issues instead and mainly champion fiscal conservative issues.

What is wrong with that for many in Kansans?
What’s wrong with being conservative?

The True Believers vs. Opportunists, who is who?

- Senator Sam Brownback?
- What is delivered in the Culture War?
- How many conservative leaders actually wish to deliver on social issues?
- How many issues are lost causes?
What’s wrong with being conservative?

Frank believes he makes an empirical generalization by saying that Kansas has always been a trend setter and that the rest of America may begin to experience many of the same conservative trends.

In the end though, he is more a journalist than a political scientist. How many of his points could withstand further empirical scrutiny?
Parting Lessons

A strong point made by Frank that is a lesson to Democrats or “Progressives” is that conservatives are highly organized and active especially at the grass-roots level.

Tactics include grass-roots organization, control of local/state governments, mobilizing conservative candidates and voters, spreading conservatism in general.
Parting Lessons

The GOP and conservatives are also well funded as broader movements in the Play For Power and operate systematically during National elections.

The Reagan Strategy has been actively fostered over several decades, yielding control of Federal government today.
Parting Lessons

Coalitions must be held together with ideas, principles, but also policies and material benefits that favor those who support politicians.

Ideas and principles mobilize people to vote for one party; ideas and principles also must be used to discredit the opposing party – here is where the symbolism and rhetoric come in of the Great Backlash.
Parting Lessons

The role of big business and capital is important, but this clashes often with social issues.

Can this coalition be maintained if social conservative issues do not receive higher priority in next few years?