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POLITICAL POLARIZATION AS A CO-ADAPTIVE PROCESS

Political polarization is often characterized as the outcome of an increasingly factionalized and competitive information environment. We argue, in contrast, for an account that views technological change and political polarization as a co-adaptive process. This talk begins with a brief review of cultural evolution and co-adaptation, and then considers the application of these theories to over-time change in media technology and political polarization. Using formal models, we suggest that a reciprocal/co-adaptive (rather than unidirectional) relationship can best account for real-world dynamics in technology and politics in the US. We consider the implications of these findings for our understanding of (a) media “effects,” (b) the cumulative, long-term impact of technological change, and (c) innovation in the design of communication platforms in modern representative democracy.

TIME

**Monday, May 19, 2025
12:10PM-1:30PM**

LOCATION

SSC 125