GU POLITICS FELLOW MARTIN O’MALLEY
DISCUSSION GROUP OUTLINE
IS AMERICA BECOMING MORE POLARIZED OR LESS?

Discussion Group Synopsis
The United States of America has gone through periods of deep division and polarization throughout our history — periods where a governing consensus seemed almost impossible to reach. Today, some wonder if this is one of those cycles, or if we have entered a new era where disruption and obstruction are increasingly becoming the twin goals of most political action.

Over the course of eight weeks we will look at a variety of issues that will define progress or decline for the common good of these United States in the decades ahead. Beginning with a discussion about the elements that came together to rapidly forge a new consensus around civil marriage equality, we will examine whether we are approaching or drifting further away from a new consensus on climate change, criminal justice, gun safety, immigration reform, wage and labor policies, and waging peace in a troubled world.

Can Catholic Social Justice teaching — the Dignity of every person, the Common Good we share, the essential Unity of spirit and creation — help us find a way forward together on some of the most important public issues of our times?

Week 1 – Civil Marriage Equality
What were the values that drove the new consensus for Civil Marriage Equality so quickly?

Week 2 – Immigration Reform
Are we still a nation of nations, or are we becoming an island nation?

Week 3 – Criminal Justice
Is it possible to respect equal rights under the law, and also reduce violent crime?

Week 4 – Climate Change
What are the values that will turn the challenge of catastrophe into an opportunity for greater prosperity and security?

Week 5 – Gun Safety
If so many Americans believe that universal background checks for gun purchases makes sense, why can’t legislatures and Congress reflect that consensus?

Week 6 – Wage and Labor Policies
Are there basic shared values of fair play and decency that most Americans subscribed to when it comes to building an economy where work is rewarded with greater opportunity for all?

Week 7 – Fighting Wars and Waging Peace
Is there new consensus emerging on America’s role in the world?
Week 8 – Political Parties
Will political parties become a help or a greater hindrance to restoring consensus and compromise to self-governance in America?