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# Blog Post #10- Manipulating Public Opinion

## The Splitting of the Overton Window

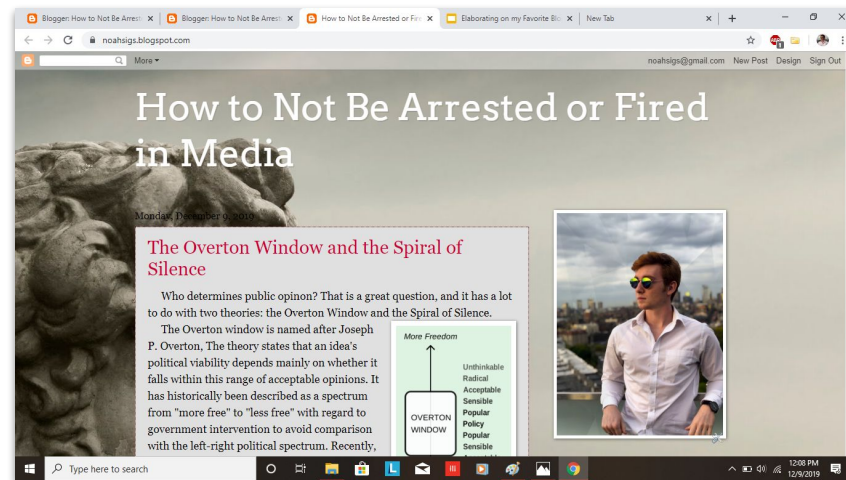
Presented by Noah Sigsworth

Created for Professor Smith's *Media Law and Literacy* Final

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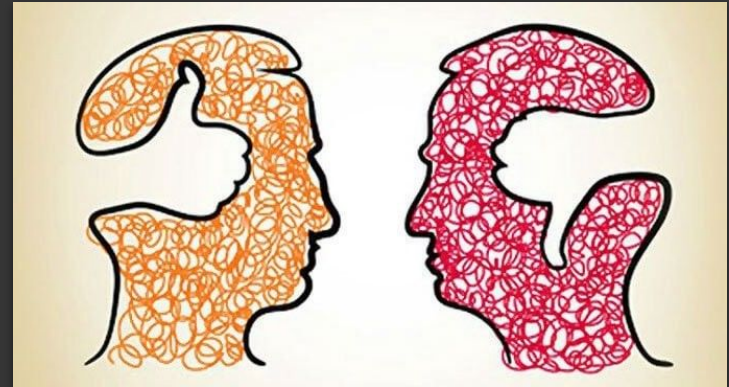
# On Blogging:

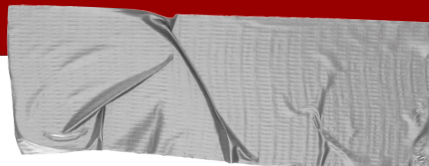
- Revealed the complexities and practical impact of the First Amendment
- Writing helps you absorb information incredibly well
- Shown how the First Amendment evolved
- Doesn't apply to private actors
- A great way to process information
- Our data is valuable



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**Who determines  
what policy is on  
the table?**





# Main Points

**Three main points** that sum up political manipulation.

→ **The Overton Window**

The range of political viability

→ **How it is Manipulated**

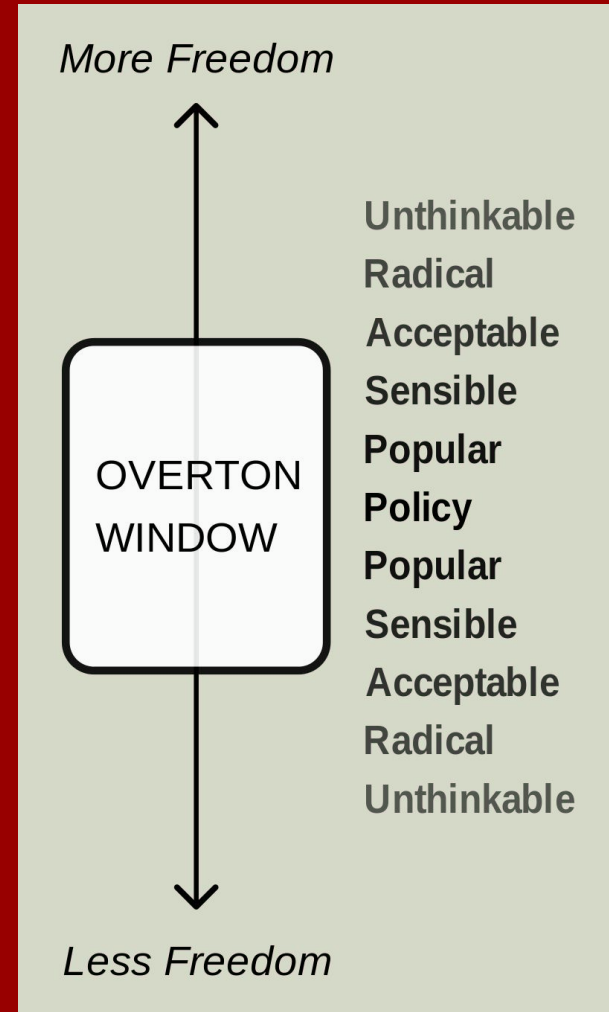
Top 10 Reasons the Race for Flashy  
Headlines Create Poor Objective  
Datasets

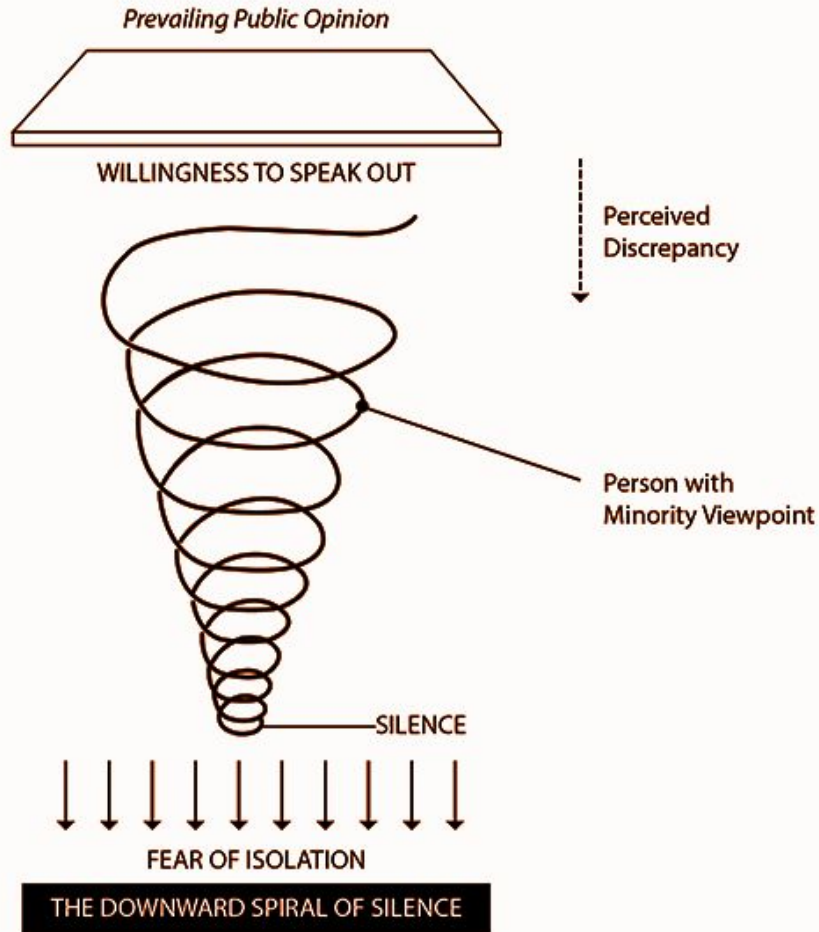
→ **America Today**

It's not always easy to say what you feel.

# What is the Overton Window?

- Named after Joseph P. Overton, stated that an idea's political viability depends mainly on whether it falls within this range
- Described a spectrum from "more free" to "less free" with regard to government intervention to avoid comparison with the left-right political spectrum
- Concept is description of how ideas work, not advocacy of extreme policy proposals





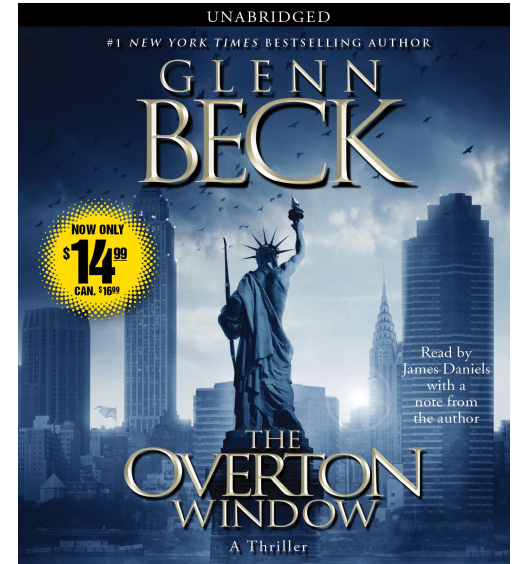
## Spiral of Silence

- A social group or the society in general might isolate, neglect, or exclude members due to the members' opinions
- Individuals have a fear of isolation
- Fear of isolation consequently leads to remaining silent instead of voicing opinions
- The assessment of one's social environment may not always correlate with reality
- A process of formation, change, and reinforcement of public opinion

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# Manipulating the Overton Window

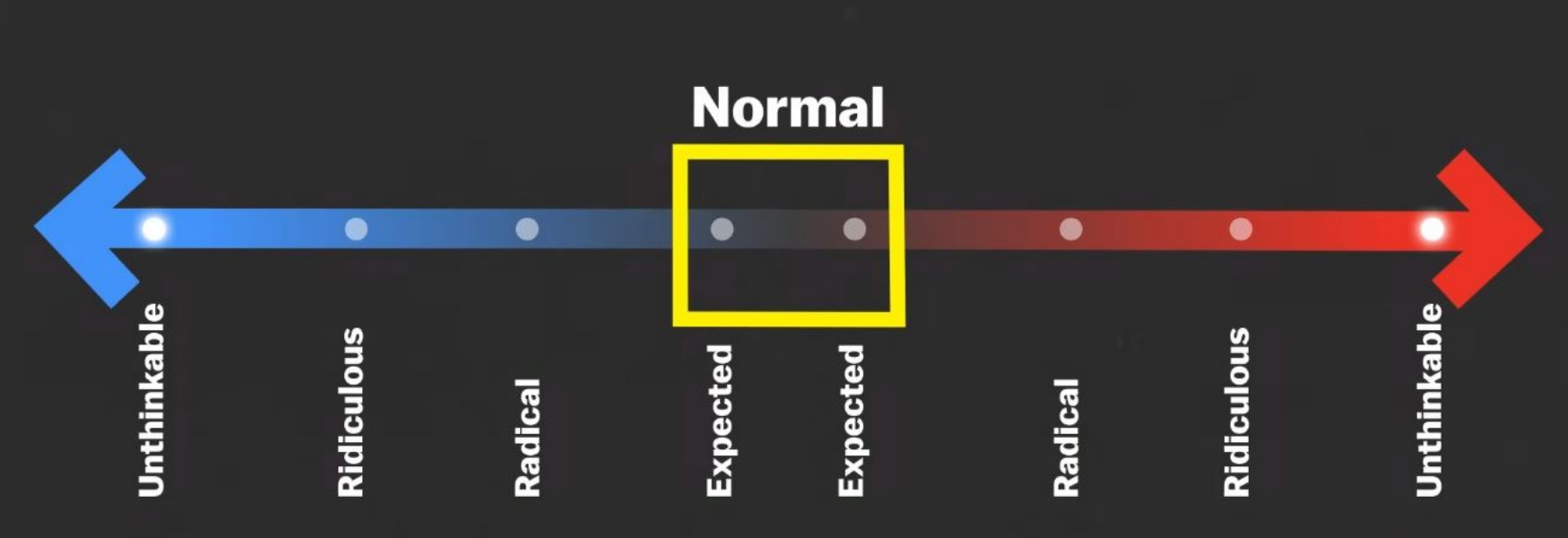
- Joe Lehman continued Overton's work after his death in 2003
- Lehman actually coined the term "Overton Window"
- "Weaponized" it, setting up training sessions on the concept for other right-leaning think tankers
  - "Step by step, ideas that were once radical or unthinkable—homeschooling, tuition tax credits, and vouchers—have moved into normal public discourse. The conscious decision to shift the Overton Window is yielding its results."
    - -Josh Trevino



Glenn Beck imagined a weaponized Overton Window by a dystopian left

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# Examples of Manipulation







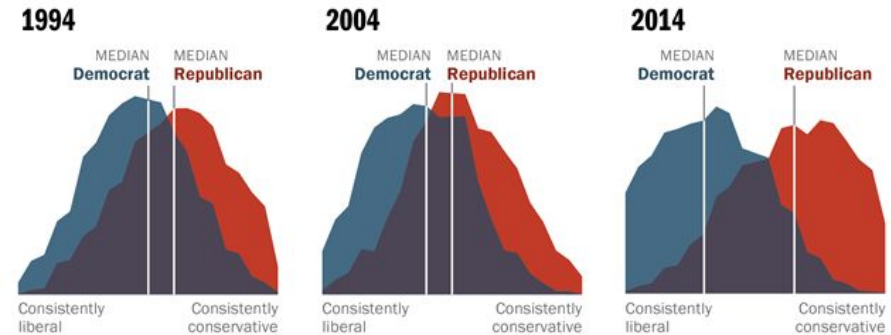
**America's  
Overton  
Window has  
nearly been  
split in half.**

# Where is the Center?

- The more divided we become, the harder it is to locate the Overton Window
- Now a window of policies that are acceptable to the Republican base and another for Democrats
  - On the national level, **there is no window.**
- A choice between two poles
- A symbol for what we have lost

## Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

*Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values*



Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public

Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Sources

<https://newrepublic.com/article/138003/flaws-overton-window-theory>

<https://www.vox.com/2017/12/21/16806676/striker-through-how-trump-overton-window-extreme-normal>

<https://www.mackinac.org/OvertonWindow>