

The Politics Classroom
Host: Professor Floros
Ep. 2023.07: Happy Birthday, UIC Radio!
In the Classroom: Maxx, Sam, and Meghna

Professor Floros

As regular listeners of this podcast know, this show started as a live radio show in the spring of 2019. After a year and a half hiatus during COVID, it returned in August of 2021 as a podcast, but I have always maintained my connection with UIC Radio where I got my start. So, when UIC Radio's 23rd birthday rolled around in January, I participated in its 23rd birthday party. The radio station chose to celebrate by doing a 23-hour marathon, and I drew the very ridiculously early timeslot of 6 am. So, the following is an edited version of that live show. If you've listened to the very back, back, back episodes of this podcast, you will notice some similarities in my speech patterns, et cetera, et cetera. You will also get a sense of how hard it is for me to be articulate first thing in the morning. The theme for this show was 23 events in 23 years. So, sit back and enjoy this really depressing walk through the last 23 years, again to celebrate the 23rd birthday of UIC Radio where music and culture ignite.

Intro music: Three Goddesses by Third Age

Professor Floros

Hi, everyone, it's Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio, where music and culture ignite. We are live to celebrate the 23rd birthday of UIC Radio at the ungodly hour of six in the morning. And, because I couldn't possibly do this alone, I have some guests in the studio with me today.

Maxx

Hi, I am Maxx Guffey. I am a second year UIC student with junior standing. I'm interested in politics. I've been interested since like I've had interests. This is what energizes me: government, policy, all of that. My first job I ever had was being an intern for my Congresswoman. So.

Professor Floros

Fantastic.

Maxx

I'm here to talk about it all.

Professor Floros

Fantastic. All right, who else do we have?

Sam

Hi, this is Sam. I really didn't know that you had such a good track record in politics already. I'm a political science major, junior year. I worked for Cook County in high school.

Professor Floros

That's cool.

Sam

So, that was fun. The county commissioner Larry Suffredin.

Professor Floros

Okay. We don't, this doesn't have to be a competition, but I'll take it.

[Voices overlapping]

Sam

Okay.

Maxx

I gotta get that one.

Sam

I just want to feel like I'm on par.

Professor Floros

And if she feels like she wants to join us later in the program, who else do we have?

Meghna

Hello, everyone. My name is Meghna. I am also a junior. I am a poli sci major. I am the station manager here at UIC Radio. And yeah, that's pretty much all about me. I'm not going to compete in this internship thing. So.

Professor Floros

Okay, great. So 23rd birthday, UIC Radio. This is The Politics Classroom, decided to have a talk about the politics that have gone on in the last 23 years, looking at one event that shaped our world each year for the past 20 years. Okay. I'm going to start off with the year 2000. And I have a question for...can I call you my panelists? I don't even know what...[overlapping agreement] Okay, do you know what a hanging chad is? Who wants to explain a hanging chad?

Maxx

Is this a game show?

Professor Floros

It can be. You know, I just talk. We just, this is a talk show. And so, I needed to make it a little bit more fun than me just talking for an hour.

Sam

It's fun. I'm into it.

Maxx

So 2000s, we have a little election going on that time and we have the hanging chads which this taking us to Florida?

Professor Floros

Yes, it is.

Maxx

Yeah. Just some little ballot counting.

Professor Floros

Yeah.

Maxx

Well, fun time there.

Professor Floros

That's right. And so basically the ballot was really stupid in Florida that year. And there were, you had to like, punch through to like cast your vote. But apparently that didn't work very well. And so during the recount, because Florida was so close that year between George Bush, the younger, and Al Gore, who at that time was vice president in the recount, they had to look and see whether or not the thing had gone all the way through. And so, the hanging chads were the little pieces of the ballot that were still stuck to the ballot.

So, not only was that crazy and horrible, but this led to a Supreme Court decision with surprisingly long-lasting implications. So, this was the Bush v Gore decision. And because I could talk about any one of these 23 things for 400 years, I will just skip to the point where the Supreme Court ruled that the recount had to stop in Florida. Bush was ahead in Florida. And so, he ended up winning Florida, which tipped him over in the electoral count, and he ended up becoming president of the United States.

One fun fact. Well, I have two fun facts. First fun fact. The lawyers who went head-to-head at the Supreme Court in Bush v. Gore, later teamed up, same team, to fight the Proposition 8 ban on same sex marriage in California, many years later, 2012. So, they were adversaries in 2000 and worked together. Other fun fact. Do you know how many Supreme Court justices, current Supreme Court justices have ties to Bush v. Gore?

Sam

Oh, would it be? I heard a whisper of five.

Professor Floros

Too many.

Sam

Oh,

Maxx

Four?

Professor Floros

You're getting closer. It's three! [overlapping ohs]

Three. Chief Justice John Roberts, and Brett Kavanaugh worked on the Bush side. And Amy Coney Barrett's law firm, also worked on the Bush side. And she was only in Florida for a short period of time. But all three of them were working as lawyers in some capacity around Bush's campaign that they had ties to this case. And Bush nominated both John Roberts and Brett Kavanaugh to the Court of Appeals. And it was Bush who elevated John Roberts to be the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. So, I guess if you want to become a Supreme Court justice, help a president, help a man become president when maybe he shouldn't have been?

Maxx

Oh, I would say that, that would help boost the resume just a little bit?

Professor Floros

I think so. I think so. Okay, we're gonna move on to 2001. Who can guess what event I picked for 2001?

Sam

A Space Odyssey?

Professor Floros

That is very accurate. Good job. No, clearly, it's 9/11. And again, we could do 40 shows on 9/11, so I'm actually not going to talk about it. Because, well, I will talk enough about it that it probably takes too much time. But I don't think that people who came of age after 9/11 can really in their bones grasp how fundamental a change that event was not only for the United States, but because for the United States, the world. You could take full bottles of shampoo on airplanes; you didn't have to take your shoes off at airports, and more specifically, the United States, though it had experienced terrorism in the past, certainly nothing on that scale. And the ramping up of the security state in the United States, the War on Terror around the world. I mean, just absolutely transformed the world as we know it. Obviously a very consequential event that I am giving almost no time to. Found out about it, I was the receiving manager in Barnes and Noble, and someone came flying back into the receiving room and told me what had happened. And no one knew what was going on. And so, I walked down the strip mall to the Dick's Sporting Goods, because they had TVs. And I was there when one of the towers fell on TV right in front of my face. It was a little crazy.

Sam

Wow.

Maxx

Wow.

Professor Floros

And then I went to graduate school a year later and the rest is history. That was very sad. A lot of these are going to be sad, sorry, because the most consequential events tend to be ones that have great impact are not usually super fun, joy, joy, happy things.

Maxx

It's not always sunshine and rainbows in history.

Professor Floros

It is not usually sunshine and rainbows. Okay, let's move on to 2002.

Maxx

Yay, I, I'm alive now in the timeline.

Professor Floros

Oh, fantastic. Well, you know what else huge happens in 2002?

Maxx

What?

Professor Floros

The physical Euro currency is introduced to the world.

Sam

I was really surprised when I saw this topic because I had no idea that Euro was...I assumed it had something to do with post-World War II even. [laughter] I just thought if it started...

Professor Floros

No. In 1993, there was the Maastricht Treaty when the European countries decided, actually I. Gosh, that's totally wrong. That's when they decided to form the EU. It was later, I think. I can't remember. This is terrible. I used to teach this, but I haven't in so long. Anyhow, they decided we are, I think it was the Maastricht Treaty, we are going to share a currency. And so, in 1999, they pegged everybody's currency to the Ecu. E-C-U, the European Currency Unit. So, everyone was still spending drachmas, and francs and all this thing, but it was tied to this invisible currency.

Maxx

A cryptocurrency? I'm just kidding.

Professor Floros

No, just invisible. And then January 1, 2002, the paper money and coins became available. And everybody had, I don't know if everybody went to the bank on January 1, but everybody had to like go and trade in their drachmas and francs for Euros.

Sam

Wow.

Professor Floros

Yeah. And let me just say, I did the Euro rail pass around Europe in the spring and early summer, well, early summer of 1996. And do I wish there was a Euro then because every country we went to, we had to change currency. And Germany, God bless its soul, had weird things on its ATM, and I couldn't get any money out. And we had like three weeks of our trip left. And I, honest to God, thought we had no money for three weeks. And it just turned out that German ATMs were, didn't like my bank card. But it was, so I would have loved the Euro, and then I wouldn't have had to worry about whether I had enough money in Germany. Four days in Germany, we ate like, day old bread. With jam. Because we had no money. How about that? Okay. [Professor Floros laughs]

Sam

That's crazy!

Professor Floros

I can, see I can even turn a good news story into something that's somewhat tragic. Okay. Moving right along - 2003. Big event, the invasion of Iraq. So, here's the quiz question for 2003. Who said, "We will be welcomed as liberators?" when asked about the US plan to invade Iraq?

Sam

I mean, is the safe guess to say George Bush?

Professor Floros

That is the safe guess and you, the person is very Bush adjacent?

Meghna
Cheney.

Maxx
Cheney?

Professor Floros

That is correct. Yes. Dick Cheney on a Sunday morning news show said, "We will be welcomed as liberators." And while some people did, the good feelings did not last long. The war lasted six weeks. I don't know, well, you guys were probably too young, but you have seen probably the iconic image of George Bush on the aircraft carrier in his flight suit with Mission Accomplished banner in the background? Well, that was to mark the end of the war against the Hussein regime. Unfortunately, the insurgency that came in opposition to the US occupation of Iraq lasted seven years until the US withdrew in 2010. So that, that wasn't great.

This was my first political protest. Before the war on a snowy day in Pittsburgh, my friend and I marched against the war. In the snow and ice somebody like did a die-in on the street and laid there for a while, and the police were like "you need to get up," and he's like, "okay," and he got up. And that was the end of the die-in on the street.

Okay, again, I can make anything. Okay. 2004, the tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Sam
This is one I'm unfamiliar with.

Maxx
Yes, same.

Professor Floros

Okay, well then, I guess my quiz question of which country was most affected by the tsunami? None of you know.

Sam
Indonesia?

Professor Floros

That is correct! Good job, Sam! Ding, ding, ding, ding.

Yes, sadly. The epicenter,

Sam
True.

Professor Floros

The epicenter of the earthquake was off the coast of Sumatra. And overall, total, the tsunami was responsible for the death of 228,000 people in 14 countries, 170,000 of those in Indonesia.

Sam
Wow.

Professor Floros

Something that most people may not know, who know about the tsunami, is that the tsunami is also responsible for ending a war. The closest area to the epicenter on Sumatra was the Aceh region. And they had been fighting a war of independence against the Indonesian government. And obviously, when the tsunami hit, that area was the most heavily devastated, and the rebels agreed to stop fighting to allow humanitarian aid to come into the country. This jumpstarted a peace process and a peace treaty was signed the next year. So, that was good for ending the war. But again, so many people in Aceh died as a result of the tsunami.

I told you, the good times are rolling on the 23 years of politics to celebrate UIC Radio's 23rd birthday. I probably should have tried to come up with better good news stories.

Meghna

Yeah, that's okay. All of this was happening while UIC Radio was also happening. So...

Maxx

We got to keep it real here.

Meghna

Yeah.

Sam

21st century.

Professor Floros

Yeah. Hasn't all been good? Okay, well, we're sticking with water.

Maxx

A lot of environmental.

Professor Floros

Yes. I was surprised about how many like natural disasters ended up on the list. And yet, this is also prime time climate change skepticism.

Meghna

Yeah,

Professor Floros

Yeah. The next year, we'll move to is 2005. Is this like really crazy? Like, should I be doing something else? Like

Sam

No, this is good.

Professor Floros

Okay, we're moving along, and I feel very weird. [overlapping conversation]

Sam

I am learning.

Professor Floros

Okay. Gotcha.

Maxx

This is a learning experience.

Professor Floros

Yes, people, hopefully you are also learning as well. So, 2005, another water-related natural disaster: Hurricane Katrina. Made landfall, well, second landfall, in the US on August 29, 2005. I did not know until I was researching this, that it actually grazed Florida before it went into the Gulf. And I don't know if it was a tropical storm or only a hurricane, a Level One hurricane, when it hit Florida. But then it gained a lot of power in the Gulf of Mexico, became a Category Five, which is the highest level of hurricane there is. By the time it hit land, it had reduced to a Four. But around 1400 people died. Most of the death was caused due to the flooding of New Orleans when the levees that had been holding back the Mississippi River failed.

Also doing a deep dive because I have ADHD and I can't stop doing deep dives on things and going down rabbit holes. New Orleans is built on like silt and clay. And the city is sinking. And so, it sinks like a ridiculous amount like six feet every 100 years or something insane. New Orleans is below sea level. And so, they have these levees to keep Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. Well, they failed. Turns out that the Army Corps of Engineers that built the levees was responsible for the levees failing, but because they are a part of the US government, they are immune from being sued for damages.

Here's the quiz for Hurricane Katrina. What did George Bush say, when he visited New Orleans, that outraged pretty much everyone in the United States?

Maxx

I am not familiar with his reaction.

Professor Floros

Okay. He was touring New Orleans with his director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA. Does that trigger anything?

Meghna

Was it something along the lines of like, "The government is here to help everyone?"

Professor Floros

No. Let me give you a hint, one more hint. The director of FEMA's name was Michael Brown. See, you guys were too young for this.

Sam

Yeah, I'm familiar with like the general story, but I don't know any of the details.

Professor Floros

Okay, so touring damaged New Orleans, and also remember that like 200,000 people had been stranded in the Superdome in New Orleans because they hadn't evacuated but there was like no food, and it was it was horrible. So,

Maxx

A humanitarian crisis.

Professor Floros

It was. Absolutely. And you know what's funny? It's not funny. Cuba offered to send humanitarian aid to the United States. That was

Maxx

Wow!

Professor Floros

Yeah, that was embarrassing. But Bush said in a press conference, after touring the disaster, and like the Superdome and all this stuff, he said to Michael Brown, the director of FEMA, "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job."

Maxx

Huh?

Professor Floros

And people were like, "Are you kidding me?" Okay. It was a bigger deal in 2005. All right, I need to get a couple more years through before we take our first break. So, let's talk about 2006 and North Korea's first nuclear test.

Now, they were very proud of their nuclear test. But it was such a low yield explosion that most people speculate it was just a misfire, but it was still nuclear detonation. And that was crazy. But here's what I found really crazy. So, if you had to name two current 2003, adversaries of the United States, who would you choose?

Maxx

Adversaries in 2003?

Professor Floros

Like now, today, who are the, who are the biggest challengers to the US?

Sam

[Sam and Meghna overlapping] Russia and China?

Maxx

China?

Professor Floros

Okay, very good. So, everybody thinks like "China, they're so terrible; this is awful." Well, in 2006, the North Koreans contacted the Chinese 20 minutes before their nuclear test, to let them know that they were doing the test. And the Chinese sent an emergency message to their embassy in Washington, DC, who then immediately alerted the White House that this was coming. And so, in the 20 minutes, between when China was notified, and when the test happened, George Bush already knew about it, because of how swiftly the Chinese reached out to let them know that it was coming. I would not have guessed that. And I think that's amazing. But maybe they were just worried that the US would think it was them and would launch a missile. I'm not sure. But I still think that that is awesome. And it shows

that even, I mean, they weren't as big adversaries back then as they are now, but even adversaries can cooperate when the stakes are high enough.

Maxx

Yay. Slight win for humanity

Sam

Progress.

Professor Floros

Okay, I think you folks will like the next one. 2007. The iPhone debuts.

Maxx

For all the listeners, I'm an Android user.

Professor Floros

I am too. I have never used an iPhone.

Maxx

Oh, wow. Gotcha.

Professor Floros

I don't like...Well, never mind, I'm going to lose sponsors that I don't actually have. Alright, so here's your quiz question. How much did a four-gigabyte iPhone cost when it was released on June 29, 2007?

Maxx

My first number, and it's probably off is 160.

Professor Floros

Dollars?

Maxx

I don't know.

Professor Floros

Okay.

Sam

I would say like 300.

Meghna

I'm gonna go 399.

Professor Floros

It's actually 499.

Sam

Wow.

Professor Floros

Which again, it's 499 in 2007.

Meghna

That's right before the recession, too

Professor Floros

Right before the recession. The eight gigabyte was 599.

Maxx

Hmm.

Professor Floros

And you had to sign a two-year contract with AT&T.

Maxx

[Everyone overlapping] Oh, wow.

Sam

Wow.

Maxx

I was just low balling it just because I knew of it like exponentially rise. Right? Wow.

Professor Floros

Yeah, it started that way. So that is, depending on what inflation calculator you use, \$747 in today's money, but how, I looked up how much an iPhone 14 Pro costs - 1000 bucks. So even brand-new technology in 2007 cost less than a new...Now granted, the iPhone 14 Pro probably does a few things that the original iPhone did not. But it revolutionized everything. Now people can carry computers in your pocket. That was never possible before.

So that's why your professors get really mad when you're texting all the time in class. Because we weren't allowed to text when we were in class because they we didn't have cell phones. So that's why. It's jealousy more than really wanting you to pay attention and learn.

Maxx

This is the inside scoop.

Meghna

Yeah,

Professor Floros

I'm telling you. Okay. 2008. Obama, elected President, first Black president in the United States. Again, this is such a huge event that we're not gonna spend any time on it. But quiz question, which of the following states did Obama **not** win in 2008: Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, or Florida? We'll go around the horn.

Maxx

Ah, Georgia.

Professor Floros

Okay.

Sam

I'm gonna say, Ohio.

Meghna

I'm gonna go Indiana.

Professor Floros

Georgia is correct.

Sam

Oh,

Professor Floros

I was surprised, too. I would, I would not have believed that Indiana went for Obama, but that, he, they did. So, of the four, Ohio, Indiana and Florida all went for Obama in 2008. And Obama ended up with 365 electoral votes to McCain's 173. You only need 270 to win. So, it was somewhat of a blowout. All right.

Last year before we take a break, 2009. Sonia Sotomayor joins the Supreme Court, or is nominated and confirmed to the Supreme Court. First Latinx member of the Supreme Court. I believe she was only the second, third woman. And she was the first of two Supreme Court nominations that Obama had. It should have been three.

Sam

That's right.

Maxx

Yeah.

Professor Floros

[Professor Floros growls]

Okay, but do you know what Sonia Sotomayor, as a judge, was known for before she joined the Supreme Court? So, a case that she had worked on as a judge or a decision she made as a judge that made her famous before she was nominated to the Supreme Court? This is a hard one. I did not know this. It has to do, well, it was in 1995, which will be no clue whatsoever.

Meghna

Can you give like any context to the content of the case? Like any little

Professor Floros

It was about a labor dispute, dealing with America's pastime. Yeah, see nobody knows what America's pastime anymore.

Meghna

Baseball?

Professor Floros

Baseball, right! Sonia Sotomayor saved baseball.

Maxx

Hmm.

Professor Floros

In 1994-95, the players went on strike. The supreme, Supreme Court, [frustrated] the World Series was canceled because of the strike in '94. And the players alleged that the owners had violated federal labor law by unilaterally changing their contract by doing something with free agency and a couple of other things that baseball labor, but they revoked things in the contract, in the contract that had expired, and that was a violation, the players claimed, of national labor law. And so, the National Labor Relations Board stepped in, and the owners went to court to overrule the National Labor Relations Board. Sonia Sotomayor found that indeed, the owners did violate national labor law and forced them back to the table, which made the season go on in 1995, though it was an abbreviated season. And it saved baseball because baseball fans were super pissed that the World Series had been canceled. I mean, there wasn't any playoffs at all. And they were super pissed. And if the strike had gone on, who knows if baseball would have ever recovered.

Maxx

What is America without it sports?

Professor Floros

Nothing.

Maxx

Huge,

Professor Floros

Huge. Okay. We are going to take a break. You're listening to Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio, live celebrating Radio's 23rd birthday. UIC Radio, where music and culture ignite!

Music interlude: Happy Birthday by Birds of Norway

Professor Floros

All right, everyone, welcome back! This is Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio, where music and culture ignite. We are back with the 23rd birthday celebration of UIC Radio. We are going through one event a year for the last 25 years. We got through, 23 years, sorry. So, we got through the 2000s. We are now in the 2010s. And we are again gonna start with a natural disaster because they usually have really big impacts. So, our 2010 event is the January 12 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti that led to the deaths of approximately 220,000 people, including 102 UN staff who were killed when the building in which the UN mission was housed collapsed.

Sam

Wow.

Professor Floros

And a lot of people died under the rubble. As if an earthquake that killed 220,000 people was not bad enough, what other disaster struck Haiti a few months later, that was brought by people? So, it was kind of a natural disaster, but it was human-induced after the hurricane, or after the earthquake. Anybody remember this?

Sam

I have no idea.

Meghna

I'm so sorry. Could you repeat the question?

Professor Floros

You're taking care of all my fans?

Meghna

Yeah. I am.

Professor Floros

Okay. Well, so what was the natural, but human-induced disaster that struck Haiti later, in the year after the earthquake, earthquake in 2010?

Maxx

Like a dust storm?

Professor Floros

Human-induced. This is going to blow your minds. There was a massive cholera outbreak in Haiti that affected approximately 820,000 people and led to the death of 10,000 people. And cholera was brought to Haiti by UN peacekeepers who were deployed to Haiti to help in the aftermath of the earthquake. The latrines set up in this one peacekeeper camp were very poorly set up, and they drained down into a river. And so through the fecal matter that ran into the river, cholera got into the, the water supply. And 820 people got cholera, and 10,000 of them died. So the hits just kept on coming for Haiti. Just insane. And, like no one could sue the Army Corps of Engineers over the levees in New Orleans, the UN is safe from prosecution, being sued because of sovereign immunity.

Maxx

Hmm.

Professor Floros

And guess who makes those rules?

Maxx

The UN

Professor Floros

The UN. So, nobody could sue the UN for 820,000 people sickened with cholera after a massive earthquake that killed 220,000. Again, sorry, these are really, these are really depressing. I'm sorry, but this is the world

Meghna

This is the world we live in.

Professor Floros

2011 - the Arab Spring, which is a little bit of a cheat, because it actually started in December of 2010. Do you know what was the catalytic event that sparked the Arab Spring?

Maxx

I know what it is, but I, I don't know the catalyst.

Professor Floros

Okay. It happened in Tunisia. This is going to be really depressing. So, a young man, he was a fruit seller, college educated but jobs were very hard to come by for youth in Tunisia. So he was selling fruit on the street. And he was supposedly harassed by police for not having the right paperwork. And he was, well, I don't know his motivation. But he, this was a very traumatic event for him, and he set himself on fire in protest of the situation in Tunisia. Protests broke out in Tunisia; those protests spread to Algeria, followed by Oman, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco. He ended up holding on for a couple of weeks, but he died in early January. And 10 days after he died, the dictator of Tunisia fled the country because of the protests in Tunisia.

Later in January, protesters gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square, and on February 11, the president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak resigned. Protests then started in Libya. In March, Saudi and Emirati troops went to Bahrain to occupy the country at the request of the Bahrain's government because of protests that had broken out there. In June, the president of Yemen was injured during an assassination attempt, and on and on, and on. This Arab Spring, which was maybe a little bit too hopeful of a phrase to call this, led to government reform all over the Middle East and North Africa, so that other people wouldn't get overthrown, but it led to the overthrow of leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, and eventually Yemen, and civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

There was a brief spell of democracy in Egypt, and then it was overthrown in a coup; a much longer run with democracy in Tunisia, until relatively recently, when that seems to have gone down the tubes. And out of all of this unrest, we see the rise of ISIS. Yeah. Okay.

Hopefully you will like this next one: 2012. Washington State and Colorado legalize recreational use of marijuana.

Meghna

Yeah! [everyone giggles]

Professor Floros

Today 39 states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana. While 21 states and DC, including Illinois, have legalized recreational marijuana. However, marijuana is still classified by the federal government as a Schedule One narcotic, which strangely, well, not strangely, but Schedule One narcotics are considered drugs with "no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse." So, 39 states and DC have legalized it for medical use, but the federal government classifies it as a drug with no currently accepted medical use. Yes, very strange. So marijuana, Schedule One. What schedule do you think heroin is?

Sam

Also Schedule One? [overlapping]

Professor Floros

Also One. How about meth and cocaine?

Sam

Schedule Two.

Professor Floros

You knew that?

Sam

Yeah. I've read about the schedules.

Professor Floros

Okay. Yes, meth and cocaine are actually less restricted. I don't know it's restricted; they're still very illegal. But marijuana is considered more dangerous than meth and cocaine. Also in Scheduled Two, by the way, are Vicodin, Demerol, which I think is what they use to block pain during labor. I don't know I've never had a baby. Oxycontin.

Sam

Wow. [overlapping disbelief]

Professor Floros

Fentanyl. And my favorites, literally, Adderall and Ritalin are all Schedule Two. Which is why, let me just say for my ADHD compatriots out there, why you can only get one month at a time and no refills. I went to get it the other day, and they wouldn't let me get it because I had put in the refill somewhere else. And while it had been cancelled there, it hadn't been cleared from the account. And so they were like, "No, you're trying to get it too soon." So I had to call the other pharmacy, tell them to delete it from their records so that I could get it. It is like super controlled.

Sam

Wow. The insurance system.

Professor Floros

Yes, but also drugs that are, have high street value. And yeah, apparently the double, the what I actually take is like gold, because it's like, you can't find it anywhere in the United States. Okay. That was a nice little ADHD moment on The Politics Classroom. I'm trying to normalize the fact that people have things like that, and so I talked about it probably way more than anybody cares about.

All right, 2013. I would rather talk about drugs, but in 2013, you had the Boston Marathon Bombing, April 15 2013, near the finish line of the marathon. Two homemade bombs went off killing three people, including an eight-year-old boy and injuring hundreds, including seven people who lost limbs. The perpetrators were two brothers, and I'm totally going to screw up their names, but Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, and after the bombing, they went back to their lives. Dzhokhar was a student, and he went back to the dorm, went to the gym, did his student thing. But the FBI released their photos a couple of days after the bombing, so they went on the run. In a standoff with police, the older brother, Tamerlan, was shot. And then as Dzhokhar was trying to get away in a stolen SUV, he ran over his

brother and dragged him 30 feet. Still did not kill him, though he did die later at a hospital of his wounds. Dzhokhar was found later that night injured, because he had also been shot by the police, in a boat in a man's backyard. He had crawled under the tarp and was chilling out in the boat.

So, he went on trial, he was convicted on 30 federal charges. And because this was federal case, he was sentenced to death. So, there's no death penalty for state crimes in Massachusetts, but there's still a federal death penalty. So, he was scheduled to death. He appealed that. The First Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the death penalty for reasons of things that had happened during the trial, but the Justice Department appealed that, and in March of 2022, the Supreme Court ruled that the First Circuit had erred in vacating his, the death penalty and reinstated it. So now the First Circuit is still considering Tsarnaev's appeal but based on other criteria than what went before the Supreme Court. And the parents of the eight-year-old who were killed, advocated that he not get the death penalty, because as long as this stayed in the courts, then they had to relive the death of their son over and over and over again. But the case continues.

2014 was when the Russia-Ukraine conflict, in its modern iteration, got started. But I chose to focus on the annexation of Crimea in March of 2014, by Russia. So, Crimea is a peninsula that had historically been part of Russia but had been given to Ukraine in 1954 by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Do you know why Russia was so interested in getting Crimea back? If we take out like, "Oh, historically, it's part of us." What was the strategic? Do you know what the strategic reason was?

Sam

No, I can't think of it

Maxx

Probably resources.

Professor Floros

Not quite,

Meghna

If it's a peninsula, access to water and transportation, that kind of thing.

Professor Floros

Exactly. So, the Crimean Peninsula goes into the Black Sea. The Russian Black Sea Fleet is anchored in Sevastopol, which is a major city in Crimea. And they had leased, Russia leased the base, the naval base from Ukraine. It was supposed to, the lease was supposed to be up in 2017, but the pro-Russian president at the time extended it till 2042. And Putin took the opportunity to take it. It is through the Black Sea that one gets to the Mediterranean. And so, if the Black Sea was closed off to Russia, its only naval path to the West would have been through the Arctic Sea, and a mostly ports that are iced over for a big part of the year. So strategically, having access to the Mediterranean through the Black Sea is of ridiculously vast importance to the Russians.

2015, Obergefell versus Hodges. The Supreme Court acknowledged a constitutional right of gay and lesbian couples to marry everywhere in the US, and ruled that states had to recognize same sex marriages that were performed legally in other states. With the Dobbs decision that said there is no constitutional right to abortion from 2022, in a concurring opinion, Clarence Thomas suggested that maybe gay marriage should not be constitutionally protected. And so, in December of 2022, Congress passed and Biden signed the Respect for Marriage Act that removes all language in federal law, including

the Defense of Marriage Act that defines marriage as between a man and a woman and that a spouse has to be someone of the opposite sex. And in addition to protecting same sex marriage, the Respect for Marriage Act also protects interracial marriages, which also use the same kind of basis as Roe v. Wade and Obergefell had. Though Clarence Thomas, who is in an interracial marriage, didn't mention that as one of the things that might get overturned, but he, okay anyhow. So now by law, federal law, gay marriage and interracial marriages are protected.

Okay, 2016

Maxx

Ah, what a year!

Professor Floros

Trump. I didn't have anything to say. I think there's, yeah. Okay.

Sam

Enough said

Professor Floros

Yes. 2017. Are you excited? Over half of Americans were reported to listen to podcasts.

Meghna

Shout out.

Professor Floros

Yeah,

Meghna

To whoever is listening right now.

Professor Floros

That's right. I have not taken over the world yet with my media domination, but I'm working on it. So, I need to get half of America if they're listening.

Maxx

Shout out to the listeners. I wouldn't have my internship if it wasn't for people listening in to podcast, so

Professor Floros

Really?

Maxx

Yeah, I'm an intern for NPR.

Professor Floros

Oh, tell them about The Politics Classroom, found on all major podcast platforms, because I really want them to pick up my show, so it has professional sound editing.

Maxx

You're already there with the, with the tote bags, I mean.

Professor Floros

I know! I'm following in their footsteps, I'm telling you. Global domination soon, except I'm self-funding everything and so that, that's not going to take me very far. I don't make that much money.

Okay, 2018 had a major Turkish offensive into northern Syria, because the Syrian Defense Forces were the Kurdish folks who were controlling that area were deemed by Turkey to be a terrorist organization that had ties to the group that Turkey considers a terrorist organization within Turkey. And they didn't want them anywhere near the border. And so, the US pulled out and left its Kurdish allies to fight Turkey. And Turkey took over a whole area. About 300,000 people got pushed out of this region, along with the Kurdish fighters, and then Turkey relocated a bunch of non-Kurdish Syrian refugees that had been in Turkey, relocated them into this area that had been controlled and populated by Kurds. So NATO partner, hooray! [sarcastic]

All right. Last thing before another music break, 2019. Protests began in Hong Kong over the introduction of a bill that would allow extradition to mainland China of suspected criminals. This went on until the, basically the pandemic shut it down. And there is now a new security law that cracks down on secession, foreign interference, terrorism and subversion against the central government. So, Hong Kong, which is supposed to be ruled under a different system than the mainland, at least until 2047, I think, is now beginning to look more and more like mainland China, and a lot of people left because they don't want to live in mainland China.

So again, everything is depressing, but we're gonna take a quick break, and when we come back, we'll have just a few more years to get through. So, you are listening to Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio, where music and culture ignite.

Music interlude: Happy Birthday by Birds of Norway

Professor Floros

Fantastic, thank you so much. I'm so happy that you were listening to this hour of going through 23 political events in 23 years. We have way exceeded our time. But Jacob is being kind enough to let us finish. We have three years left to cover. We've been through the 2000s, the 2010s. And now we're into the 2020s.

Professor Floros

Again, an event that I'm not going to talk about because it's so huge: the 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police sparked a summer of racial reckoning. It absolutely affected how I taught my War on Film class, completely changed the topics, the movies that I decided to show. And hopefully, although I'm pessimistic, sparked real change. Again, I think that might be a little optimistic, but hope springs eternal. Terrible event during COVID lockdown. Everyone, in the United States, and probably most people in the world are aware of that event. Okay. Everything is depressing.

2021 started off with literally a bang. January 6, 21-, 21. Supporters of President Trump attempted to, allegedly attempted to impede the official proceedings of Congress...no I guess a bunch of them have been convicted, so there you go...official proceedings of Congress by trying to stop the certification of Joe Biden's election, which also led to Trump's second impeachment. [disgusted sigh] Okay. But I want to go back to the beginning of our show and ask if you know what the link is between the 2020 election aftermath and Bush v Gore.

Meghna

I don't remember if this is accurate, but weren't a lot of people citing Bush v Gore as like, the reason that there should be a recount of the 2020 election votes, for some reason I cannot remember.

Professor Floros

I don't think so. That is not the answer to the question that I was looking for. And that may be true, but I really try not to pay actually very much attention to all of the efforts to overturn the election. So I'm not exactly sure about that. But I do know that Bush v Gore was cited for another reason, not related to recounts. Because remember, Bush, or I'm sorry, Trump wanted the counting to stop, right, because the mail-in ballots were counted later in many states, and that's where he lost in those states. So here's, here's the, here's the link as quickly as I can. So, in the majority opinion for Bush v. Gore, maybe it was the majority, maybe? Anyhow, it was one of the opinions, concurring, something. Former Chief Justice William Rehnquist had suggested that the Constitution's language around the role of state legislatures in determining election laws might limit the role of state courts, in judicial proceedings regarding state election law. And we didn't go through all the details in Bush v. Gore, but that basically revolved around the Florida Supreme Court having, according to the US Supreme Court basically created election law in ordering recounts. And so, in that opinion, former Chief Justice William Rehnquist said, well, the Constitution may actually limit what courts can do around election laws.

And nobody really bought into that. But it has risen like a zombie and has emerged as the independent state legislature "theory". And I put theory in quotes, because it's not really a theory. But after the 2020 election, while the Supreme Court decided not to hear a case that challenged the expansion of voting drop boxes due to the pandemic, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Neil Gorsuch all indicated that they would be willing to hear that case based on this notion of the independent state legislature "theory". And again, they didn't hear it in that case. But there is currently a case pending before the Supreme Court, Harper vs. Moore, in which they're deciding whether or not the state Supreme Court of North Carolina can overturn a redistricting map drawn by the North Carolina State Legislature. And if Harper v Moore goes, I don't know who Harper is, and who Moore is; I think Moore is the governor, but anyhow, if the independent state legislature catches on to more than three justices, that basically State Supreme Courts will have no say about whatever their state legislatures do when it comes to election laws, which seems crazy.

Okay, last year, also a year I wasn't going to talk about: the Supreme Court decision that the Constitution does not hold a constitutional right to an abortion for people with uteruses in America, which has already in the, whatever, eight, nine months since that decision, really kind of up-ended women's health and people's bodily autonomy and all kinds of things, and indicated with that decision that they're just getting started. So, 50 years of precedent, down the tubes. So, we end again, with a really depressing event. But as we went through these years, hopefully you saw that, sadly, very depressing events can really impact what happens in the world.

I think of the 23 events we went through...Just really quickly, before we leave, let's go around and say, if you can remember back to an hour ago, which of the 23 things that we talked about, were you most interested in/intrigued by/think had a big effect? You can answer that question any way you want. I will just say that I think the biggest event was half, over half the country listening to podcasts. I think that was the most consequential of the 23. But anyone else want to chime in?

Maxx

I think that just starting with the hanging chads. I think that just set a precedent and set the whole spiral for quite a lot of the events that we are experiencing even today.

Professor Floros

Yeah

Maxx

So, I'm gonna go with that.

Professor Floros

Okay. Bush v. Gore. There it is.

Sam

I'm really not sure. I mean, I think Obama. Obama was a really significant moment that I remember being a kid during and realizing that like, there were, you know, there were adult things like politics that...

Professor Floros

Okay

Sam

...had effects on my life.

Professor Floros

That's really fair. You know, I, my political awakening happened as a function of the Gulf War, which was a lot, a lot longer before than Obama. But these things happen when, when you become aware of adult things in the world, it can really affect how you view it. Meghna, did you have a favorite or a most consequential or?

Meghna

Um, I think for me personally, the most consequential might be Hurricane Katrina just because of the way that it exposed so many inefficiencies in American infrastructure. And no one did anything. We looked at it. We said, "Yeah, that that sucks. That's not good at all," and then just kept moving on as if nothing ever happened. Like you said, you can't hold the Army Corps of Engineers accountable when they're from the government. So pretty consequential in that sense.

Professor Floros

It also, which I didn't mention, was when Kanye West said on live on national TV that George Bush didn't care about Black people. And Mike Myers was sitting there nodding, and then he started like shaking his head really fast. So,

Maxx

And then they immediately cut away.

Professor Floros

Yep, there we go. We're ending on a kind of good note. Anyway,

Sam

That's a good note.

Professor Floros

Okay. So, I want to thank everybody for sticking with me way past my scheduled hour. You can catch The Politics Classroom on Tuesdays at 1 pm on uicradio.org, or the Radio FX app, or you can subscribe

to The Politics Classroom on any major podcast platform. This is Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio, where music and culture ignite. Thank you to my panel; have a good one everyone! Class dismissed.