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Serving up Politics: Effects of Political Polarization on Service Sector Workers in the United States

Ort: RESOWI, SZ 15.22, Universitätsstraße 15, Bauteil G, 2. Stock

Vortrag von **Prof. Yasemin Besen-Cassino** (Montclair State University, USA)

Saying “Merry Christmas” or “Happy Holidays,” the decisions to mask or not to mask during the recent Covid-19 pandemic, allowing the homeless to stay in stores or calling the police or simply displaying the Pride flag during Pride month have all become points of contention in retail and service sector jobs. A substantial portion of the political polarization in the United States have taken place at coffee chains, fast food stores, supermarkets, and retail establishments. These political divisions have made the already precarious lives of service sector workers more challenging and unsafe. Using data from Bureau of Labor Statistics, original surveys as well as in-depth interviews with service sector workers, I find that service sector workers experience violence and harassment particularly during election years and especially based on four major issues: Pride displays, Black Lives Matter movement, attitudes towards the homeless and masking/social distancing rules. I explore the lived experience of service sector jobs and the daily techniques workers use to navigate political divisions and offer comparisons as well as policy suggestions.

Yasemin Besen-Cassino is a Professor of Sociology and University Distinguished Scholar at Montclair State University. She served as the Editor of *Contemporary Sociology*, a flagship journal of the American Sociological Association, Book Review Editor of *Gender & Society* and the Managing Editor of *Men & Masculinities*. Author of six books, her research focuses on sociology of labor, organizations, work and gender. Her work appeared in many popular venues such as the *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Atlantic*, *Newsweek*, *CNN*, *MTV*, *Fortune*, *GQ*, *Daily Mail* and *Ms. magazine* among many others. Her work has been supported by the National Science Foundation, American Association of University Women (AAUW) as well as the W.E. Upjohn Foundation.