2020

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THE FOLEY INSTITUTE

The Thomas S. Foley Institute
for Public Policy and Public Service

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The Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service

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Established at Washington State University in 1995, the mission of the institute is to foster congressional studies, civic education, public service, and public policy research in a non-partisan, cross-disciplinary setting.

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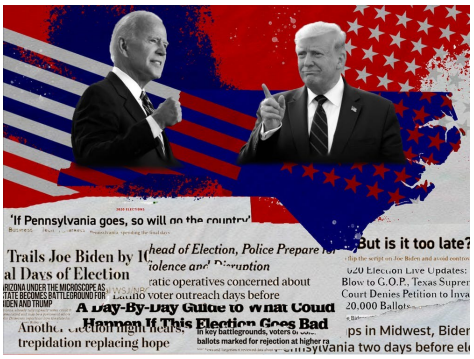
Director's update

Few of us will be sad to see 2020 in the rearview mirror.

The pandemic and roller-coaster economy were bad enough, but our tumultuous politics and acrimonious election compounded everything.



Given the Foley Institute's public education role, our events since March, when WSU moved classes online, have been focused on helping make sense of those big issues.

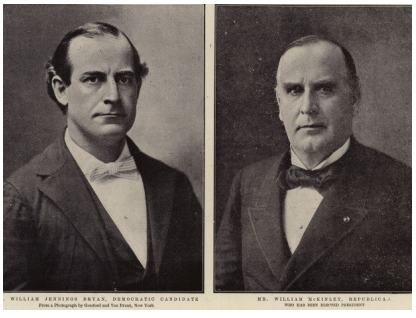
At the end of spring semester, we hosted speakers who discussed the ramifications of the pandemic on healthcare, on voting, and on social connectedness (see page 20). Then in the fall the institute presented a series of events focused on the 2020 election. Each week we hosted some of the nation's leading political experts discussing various aspect of the campaign and election (see page 15).

These events were all held virtually and livestreamed to the public. This allowed hundreds of viewers from across the country to watch and participate in the discussions live, and thousands more to view the recorded events later. WSU students could also register for an on-line course about the election, based around the fall lecture series. You can still watch any of these events by going to the institute's YouTube channel.

I write this as we approach the end of 2020, and now that the election is over, we should take stock of what voters decided. Joe Biden won the presidency by a 306 to 232 margin in the Electoral College, the same margin Trump won in 2016. Unlike Mr. Trump, Biden also secured the popular vote by a substantial margin of over four percentage points.

Mr. Trump's loss was not a surprise. The campaign took place amid a raging pandemic and an economic recession, and Trump consistently trailed Mr. Biden in the polls. Despite being a populist, Trump was never popular as president. He lost the popular vote in 2016 by 3 million votes, never received above a 50 percent approval rating during his presidency and lost his bid for reelection by more than 7 million votes.

The good news is there was a record turnout in the election. The 155 million votes cast represented almost 67 percent of eligible voters. It was the highest turnout since 1900, when William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan (continued on page 26).



Foley Institute News

Introducing the Foley Community Advisory Board

Over the summer, the institute established a community advisory board, with the aim of developing a strategic development plan for the institute and helping it extend the reach and visibility of its programs.

Chaired by former Spokane Mayor **David Condon**, (left) the other founding board members pictured above are, left to right: **Rich Cowan**, President, North by Northwest Productions; **Marcia Garrett**, Director, Regional Relations for WSU, Seattle office; **Nancy Isserlis**, Former Spokane City Attorney, member of the Washington Public Disclosure Commission; **Tim Peckinpaugh**, Partner, K&L Gates; **Lambert van der Walde**, Vice President, UnitedHealth Group; and **Howard Wright III**, Chairman Seattle Hospitality Group, and former Foley intern. In coming years the board will grow in size and additional members will be added. The institute is truly grateful to our board members for their willingness to advise and promote the institute at this time.

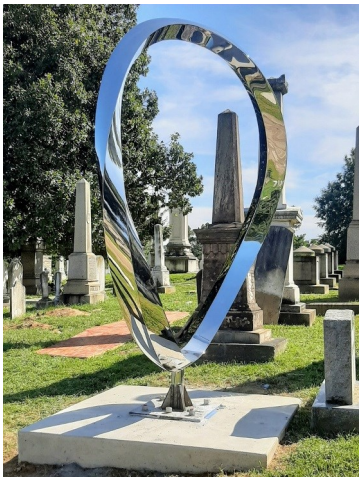
Board chair David Condon said, "I know first-hand the impact that Speaker Tom Foley has had not only for Eastern Washington but for our country. The institute that bears his name is an extraordinary asset to WSU and the citizens who endeavor to engage with our fragile democracy. It is for these reasons that I have joined with the institute to expands its programs and presence."

Speaker Foley's final resting place

In 2020, a special sculpture was placed in the Congressional Cemetery as a tribute to Speaker Foley and to mark his final resting place.

Heather Foley writes:
"Before Tom passed in 2013, he told me he would like to lie in rest in Congressional Cemetery, located on the west bank of the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C. Officially titled the Washington Parish Burial Ground, it's the only American "cemetery of national memory" founded before the Civil War. More than 65,000 individuals are memorialized there, including many who helped form the nation and the city of Washington.

Tom loved to walk our dog Jo Jo there. Each morning he would arise early and take his dog for a walk through the grounds of the cemetery, until he finally became too ill to do so.



I wanted something more than an ordinary stone to mark Tom's resting place. I looked for seven years for an appropriate marker before finally finding the beautiful work of a Chinese sculptor, Wenqin Chen. Chen's shiny stainless-steel circle or Endless Curve #4, as the piece is titled, spoke to me immediately and to my love for Tom. Tom had a great fondness for chrome. He loved chrome faucets on his sink and chrome accents on his furniture, particularly his favorite Barcelona couch and chairs, which were chrome and leather. I thought the Endless Curve was a perfect tribute for his resting place where I will put some of his ashes.

You can find the Endless Curve when you enter the cemetery among other former Members of Congress, as I thought he would want to be found among his peers."

Distinguished lectures

Authoritarianism in America

On October 8, **Steven Levitsky**, professor of government at Harvard University, delivered the Foley Distinguished Lecture on the dangers of authoritarianism facing American democracy. Professor Levitsky is coauthor, with Daniel Ziblatt, of ***How Democracies Die*** (Crown Publishing 2018). He spoke about how rising levels of income inequality, turbulent transitions of political power, and presidents with visibly authoritarian instincts can destabilize a democracy, even ones that are old and established like the United States.

Levitsky's research shows the unprecedented divisiveness of contemporary politics in America, noting that the 1990s saw an abandonment of many traditional political norms and a shift to the tactics of constitutional hardball. Over time, he said, polarization has deepened and what he termed "the soft guard rails of democracy" have been put in jeopardy.

He explained that while America still has strong political institutions, an adherence to mutual toleration and forbearance are necessary to maintain democracies. Political parties in America are the gatekeepers of democratic processes and without a shared commitment to institutional restraint, these parties are doomed to fail in this endeavor. In his final remarks, Levitsky suggested the Republican Party in particular will likely remain susceptible to extremism unless it broadens its electoral base and becomes more diverse.

Ireland: Brexit and the border

(Honors Bhatia Lecture)

On October 29, **Paul O'Connor**, director of the Pat Finucane Centre in Northern Ireland, spoke at the Foley Institute about how Brexit is impacting relations over the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

After a brief overview of conflicts Ireland has faced, including its long and complicated shared history with Great Britain, O'Connor discussed the complexities around national identity for people living in Northern Ireland, and how the Good Friday Agreement addressed those questions.

Regarding the European Union, he said, there are many in Ireland who strongly believe that Brexit is a violation of the Good Friday Agreement, which states "there can be no change to the constitutional status of Ireland without agreement from the people that live there". Much of the current debate, he said, reflects the unresolved nature of Britain's colonial past

Distinguished lectures

Middle East Meltdown

On March 10, **Ryan Crocker**, former Ambassador for the United States to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Pakistan, presented the Foley Distinguished Lecture on the subject of failed states in the Middle East.

He explained that when states fail, political actors move towards the "empty space" to seize power. A problem, he suggested, was that colonial nations such as France and Britain had not been interested in building democratic institutions and laws, but rather were interested in enriching themselves. The failure of colonialism ultimately led to a political vacuum as monarchies in the Middle East fell and Arab Nationalists rose to power in countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Libya. Many of these were militaristic leaders such as Khadafi, who ascended to power in Libya.

Ambassador Crocker argued that elections alone do not create a democracy. Democracy requires the institutions of governance and rule of law even before figuring out election processes. While states with power strive to remake the world to advance their own interests, democracy requires that the interests of the people be protected. Essential conditions for a democratic society include security, economic opportunity, social services, and individual liberties.

The rise of Islamic State in 2014, Crocker said, demanded a lot of US attention. What made the Islamic State more successful than some previous regimes in the region, he said, was that they understood the importance of governance, and the importance of providing for some of the needs of people under their control. For example, Crocker noted how they sent delegations into hospitals to learn how to provide services. They asked for information on medical inventory, nurses, doctors, and medical qualifications, to show they were going to govern in a style that helped people.

Inevitably, however, the Islamic State's own extremism, along with extreme U.S. military pressure led to its collapse. Crocker concluded by warning that in the future, ungoverned space may provide opportunity for another Islamic State or extremist group to return.

Seeing politics differently

Comedy & Politics

On January 23 the Foley Institute welcomed **W. Kamau Bell**, a stand-up comedian and television host, to talk about the role comedy plays in politics. Bell also serves as an ambassador for Justice for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Mr. Bell discussed his experience as a comedian, saying he was uncomfortable with traditional political comedy shows as they tend to take either a left or right-wing approach to comedy. This encouraged him to write his own show, United Shades of America, which has aired on CNN since 2016. His show uses humor to explore the challenges face by people in various American communities that he visits.

Comedy, Bell said, can bring people together on divisive issues and so he sees it as a natural platform to address questions of inclusion, identity, and racism. His role, he continued, is to delve deeply into these issues and create comedic content that allows everyone to better understand each other. Through comedy, we are able to have smarter and better conversations, he said.

This event took place as part of WSU's MLK Day and week of celebration.

Conspiracy theories

On October 2, **Amy Allen,** professor of political science from Penn State returned to the institute, this time to discuss the politics and pathology of conspiracy theories.

She explained that conspiracies are a form of paranoid-schizoid politics which include characteristics of persecutory anxiety, extreme political polarization, and the demonization of opponents. Professor Allen said these characteristics are seen in extremists in both the Democratic and Republican parties, liberals and conservative, and that they are reminiscent of symptoms of those with paranoid schizophrenia.

Some well-known conspiracies that follow this pattern, Allen said, include those who believe the Sandy Hook school shooting was fake or President Obama was possessed because he had flies land on him.

American politics

Elections and Ballot Security

L-R: Cornell Clayton, Kim Wyman, Julie Wise, Paul Gronke, and Justin Burns

On February 28, the Foley Institute held its annual symposium cosponsored with the Washington Secretary of State's Office in Olympia. Introduced by Washington's Secretary of State, **Kim Wyman**, this year's symposium focused on election and ballot security.

Speakers included King County Elections Director **Julie Wise,** Reed College professor **Paul Gronke**, and the Chief Information Security Officer for the Secretary of State's Office, **Justin Burns**.

Gronke discussed how election security could be improved by utilizing data to provide real-time forensic monitoring and analysis of elections. He currently heads a group of researchers testing election security in the Pacific Northwest, with a goal of ensuring greater integrity of the monitoring process.

Burns discussed the twin challenge of maintaining privacy and transparency while advancing technological security measures. He explained how multiple agencies, such as the Washington Air National Guard, provide equipment to detect anomalies within the election system.

Wise explained how her office works to ensure public trust. Recent steps to increase election security have included the use of more security cameras, biometric requirements for accessing files at the election offices, and allowing greater access to public observation of ballot counting through Perspex walls.

Impeaching President Trump?

On November 14 **David Adler**, constitutional scholar and President of the Alturas Foundation, and **Stuart Chinn**, University of Oregon law professor, spoke at the institute about the Trump impeachment hearings.

L-R: Stuart Chinn and David Adler

Dr. Adler discussed the history of the impeachment process as outlined in the Constitution, as developed from processes used by the United Kingdom during colonial times.

Professor Chinn explained the constitutional threshold for impeachments and the legal understanding of what constitutes a "high crime or misdemeanor." He argued that violation of norms alone are not impeachable offenses. However, in the instance of the phone call between President Trump and President Zelensky of Ukraine, it was important to investigate whether there was quid pro quo or potential extortion, offenses that would be impeachable.

International politics

Latin America and right-wing populism

On October 9, Harvard political science professor **Steven Levitsky**, speaking at the institute the day after his distinguished lecture (page 4), discussed the emergence of far right-wing movements in Latin America and how shifting economic factors have produced political instability in the region over the last three decades.

Levitsky explained that poverty and inequality in Latin America laid the groundwork for political instability during the Cold War. After the Cold War, coups in Latin America became less common and democracy slowly emerged in the regions. Then, between 2000 and 2012, Latin America saw a dramatic rise in its exports, allowing many countries to increase their budgets and finance popular social programs.

However, satisfaction with moderate left-wing parties began to wane as regional economies stagnated in the wake of the 2008 recession. In combination with corruption and high crime, the economic downturn led to the electoral rise of far right parties. Although there is recent evidence that political forces are again moderating in the region, Levitsky warned, more far right parties could emerge if moderates fail to deliver on their promises.

Jihadist in Mali

On November 19, **Peter Chilson** of the English department at Washington State University spoke about Amadou Koufa, a Jihadist leader in Mali, about whom he has researched and written for many years.

Koufa is regarded as one of the most dangerous players in the ongoing civil war in Mali. He and his followers are part of the reason Mali is considered the world's most dangerous peacekeeping assignment for the United Nations. Koufa and his followers are especially opposed to Mali's efforts to expand and improve education in the country. They have attacked schools to prevent children from learning non-Arabic languages and to keep women and girls from becoming educated. Mali, one of the poorest nations in Africa, has many other problems, including a lack of healthcare services and infrastructure in many rural areas.

Multiple attempts to end Koufa's dangerous and violent influence have been made. Most recently, the French believed that they had killed Koufa and released a statement in 2017 announcing his death, but two months later a time-stamped video was released showing Koufa was in fact still alive.

International politics

Turkey today: Conflict and crisis

On August 29, **Chris Kilford**, Research Fellow with the Conference of Defense Associations Institute in Canada, spoke at the institute about the west's relationship with Turkey.

Dr. Kilford, offered a broad overview of recent Turkish history, explaining how the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was the initial catalyst for the continuing instability of Turkey. He described conflicts with neighboring countries, the rise of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and, more recently, mass migration into the country as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Kilford also described the history of military coups in Turkey, including the failed coup intended to overthrow President Recep Erdoğan in 2016. He suggested that Turkey is unlikely to see civil war, but emphasized the necessity of new leadership within the country.

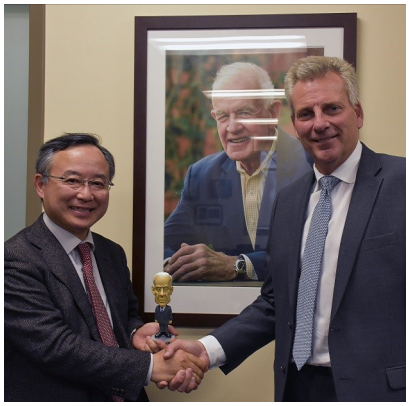
Brexit?

On October 21, **Craig Parsons**, professor of political science at the University of Oregon, and **Todd Butler**, professor of English at Washington State University discussed the process for the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union (EU).

L-R: Craig Parsons and Todd Butler

Professor Parsons said a fundamental problem confronting the Brexit negotiations was that the British public's embrace of it was based on a series of inaccuracies about trade and globalization and appeals to anti-immigrant fears. He also discussed the many practical difficulties of Brexit, arguing that the EU has the most open free trade system in the world and it would be incredibly difficult to disentangle the UK from it.

Professor Butler placed Brexit in historical context, suggesting similarities between the Britain of the 1640s, when King Charles I suspended parliament for 11 years, and today, when voting patterns for Brexit appear to loosely reflect similar forms of cultural and social polarization.



Trade and security in East Asia

On September 24, Japanese Consul-General **Yoichiro (Giro) Yamada** spoke at the Foley Institute about the future of security and trade relations between Japan and US.

Consul-General Yamada explained how investment and reforms had helped to resolve the tense relationship between the U.S and Japan during the 1990s, but also noted that new concerns were emerging as the U.S begins embracing more protectionist policies. He concluded his remarks by expressing the hope that democratic nations like the U.S. and Japan could work with each other to create a shared commitment to preserve peace in the region for future generations.

Policy

A Cultural Policy for the 21st Century

On Thursday October 24, the Chair of the National Endowment for Humanities **Jon Parrish Peede** spoke at Foley Institute about the importance of preserving American history and the methods that the NEH uses to inspire civic education and historical learning.

Chairman Parrish Peede explained how the NEH is the leading federal agency supporting projects that preserve historical infrastructure, as well as artifacts and native American languages. He said that across the nation the arts and cultural sector is an $800 billion industry, and he called on Americans to continue to enrich the lives of young people and fellow citizens.

He concluded by noting the lack of civic education and how a variety of different voices from different backgrounds are needed to fill this educational gap in an inclusive way.

The Politics of Addiction

L-R: Jonathan Kaplan, Harold Kincaid, Andre Hofmeyer, William Kabasenche

On September 26, **Andre Hofmeyr**, professor of experimental economics and **Harold Kincaid**, professor of economics, both at the University of Capetown, South Africa, and **Jonathan Kaplan** of Oregon State University discussed the politics of treating drug addiction. **William Kabasenche,** from WSU's School of Politics, Philosophy and Public Affairs, moderated the event.

Professor Kincaid presented evidence that mainstream policy approaches to treating addition miss many addicts who are transient or do not suffer from debilitating levels of addition.

Professor Hofmeyr discussed the need to focus more attention on the psychological factors of addictions, such as how individuals weigh risk and time preferences. Risk preferences showed, for example, no difference in attitude between smokers and non-smokers.

Professor Kaplan focused on the role genetics plays in addiction, noting that studies show that upwards of 50% of people inherit addictive behavior. He argued that policies aimed at environmental factors are likely to be more effective at reducing addiction than responses to individual causes.

Marijuana: Evil Weed or Medical Miracle?

On September 4, WSU's **Rebecca Craft**, professor of psychology at WSU, spoke at the institute about her current research on health consequences of the legalization of Marijuana.

Professor Craft addressed misconceptions about current research surrounding the effects Cannabidiol (CBD) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) on the body, as well as why marijuana is still considered a schedule one drug by the FDA. While it is clear that more research is necessary to determine the long-term health outcomes of marijuana use on the body, she suggested that the outlook is very promising.

Policy

Science, Ethics, and Public Policy Symposium
Designing animals: The science and ethics of gene-editing

L-R: Aleta Quinn, Paul Thompson, Samantha Noll

On October 23, **Jon Oatley**, Washington State University, **Aleta Quinn**, University of Idaho, and **Paul Thompson**, Michigan State University, and moderator **Samantha Noll**, WSU, discussed the science and ethics of gene-editing on agricultural animals.

Professor Oatley's presentation focused on the history genome-editing in animals. He said this process began with the domestication and selective breeding of animals over 10,000 years ago.

Professor Thompson discussed the policies surrounding gene-editing, and how decisions during the Reagan administration reflected an unwillingness to pass new legislation or create new regulatory regimes to oversee bio-technology.

Professor Quinn spoke on the ethical implications of genomic-editing, including the process of taking cells from one animal and combining it with another to engineer an animal with specific characteristics. This process could serve to artificially increase the population of endangered species and could also create a surplus in genetically identical organs for people.

Jon Oatley

The biology of political differences

On November 6, **John Hibbing**, Foundation Regents University Professor of political science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, spoke about experiments exploring the biological bases for political differences in individuals.

Experiments show that conservatives are more likely than liberals to spot negative images and focus on them for longer periods when shown a variety of pictures. They were also more likely to definitively categorize stimuli and leave less room for ambiguity during such events.

Professor Hibbing reminded the audience that biological and genetic differences are not necessarily the same thing. He estimates that research would show that two thirds of the bases of our political attitudes can be attributed to our collective experiences and one third to our genetic makeup.

Policy

Climate change: Will politics kill us?

Left to right: Brian Baird and Bob Inglis

Former members of Congress **Bob Inglis** (R) and **Brian Baird** (D) spoke at the institute on November 14 about bipartisan solutions to climate change.

The two served in Congress together for six years, representing different sides of the aisle. They said they formed a close friendship during the time they served together, and now are working to find ways to address the climate crisis.

Mr. Baird, who formerly represented Washington's third congressional district, explained that climate change policies are created with future generations in mind. He emphasized the need for politicians to cohesively address the challenges posed by climate change. He said people of opposing political orientations should work together towards responsible and effective policy. To generate this dialogue, climate change conversations must be framed to appeal to the perspectives and dispositions of all.

Mr. Inglis, who formerly represented South Carolina's fourth congressional district, discussed his and Baird's revenue neutral carbon tax policy, which would apply a tax to imports from countries with different carbon taxes without increasing the size of government as an example of a policy that both parties could support.

In conclusion, Baird suggested that if more elected officials joined together to address climate change as a common goal, it could be the catalyst for broader forms of bipartisan cooperation.

Climate change: A moral imperative

On November 4, **Robin Meyers**, an NPR commentator, author, and senior minister of Mayflower Congregational UCC Church, discussed climate change and its connection to Christianity.

Rev. Meyers rejected the Old Testament conception of dominionism, where humans are viewed as dominating every living thing on the earth. When the bible was written, he argued, humans did not have the technology or the population they do now. These developments no longer make it prudent to view the world this way.

Meyers compared climate activist Greta Thunberg to biblical prophets, suggesting that they tell people things they would rather not hear. He concluded that climate change is a moral imperative, because it compels people to act even if we do not wish to hear the message.

Policy

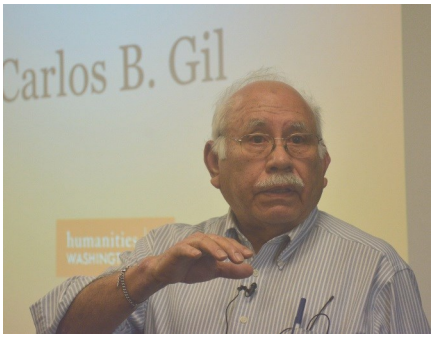
Islamophobia and American Elections

On February 18, **Lawrence Pintak**, professor of journalism and former dean of the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at WSU, spoke about the ways Islamophobic rhetoric has been used by politicians throughout American history in electoral campaigns.

Professor Pintak explained how Islamophobia was utilized recently by politicians such as Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election, but such sentiments can be traced further back in American history to individuals such as Francis Scott Key.

Today, he suggested, the right-wing media in particular has helped fuel anti-Islamic attitudes by framing crimes committed by Muslims in sensationalistic and negative ways, and by targeting prominent Muslim political leaders like Representatives Ilhan Omar and Rashida Talib. Despite the recent rise in anti-Islamic rhetoric, Pintak said most Muslims are proud to be American and identify with American values.

Moving to America



On January 30 the institute welcomed **Carlos Gil**, writer and emeritus professor of history at the University of Washington.

Professor Gil, the author of *We Became Mexican-American: How Our Immigrant Family Survived to Pursue the American Dream*, described his family's 100-year journey of migrating to America. He explained that the challenges of assimilation and becoming part of America do not necessarily go away with time, noting that, "assimilation is a trans-generational process; it is complex, and it is personal."

DACA and the Supreme Court

On March 3, **Luis Cortes Romero**, a graduate of the University of Idaho School of Law, and a DACA recipient, discussed his experience as the co-counsel in a 2020 Supreme Court case upholding the DACA program.

DACA, which stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, provides a pathway for lawful residency in the United States via green cards for children brought into the country as minors illegally but who have lived most of their lives here. Cortes Romero discussed the legal questions involving the DACA program and how it has been treated in the courts, as well as the Trump administration's opposition to it.

Following a decision by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled DACA unlawful, Cortes Romero and colleagues represented DACA recipients in an appeal to the Supreme Court. Oral arguments were held in November 2019, and the Court issued a decision upholding the program in June 2020.

Washington State politics

Addiction in the Northwest: Addressing the drug crisis

L-R: John Roll and Bob Lutz

On September 24, **Bob Lutz** and **John Roll** discussed addiction in the Pacific Northwest and how to address the opioid and drug crisis.

Mr. Lutz, health officer for the Spokane Regional Health District, explained how addiction is a chronic brain disorder, and suggested that the first time a person with a drug addiction interacts with someone in a capacity to help, it should not be in the criminal justice system. He supports Washington's 2019 opioid response bill which would provide treatment, opioid overdose reversal medication, and a variety of other services to combat the crisis rather than tougher criminal penalties.

Professor Roll, vice dean for research at WSU's Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, explained that opioid abuse is not the only problem today, and that methamphetamine usage, for example, is also on the rise at similar levels. He discussed the need to integrate new forms of treatment, such as "contingency management" techniques, which provide positive reinforcement for behavioral change in addicts.

A conversation with Washington State's Attorney General

Washington State's Attorney General **Bob Ferguson** returned to speak at the institute on October 28. He discussed recent litigation his office is engaged in, including 50 lawsuits against the Trump administration. These include 26 involving the enforcement of environmental protection laws and several cases around DACA and other immigration-related issues.

Mr. Ferguson also addressed the debate over enforcement of I-1639, the bill that raised the legal purchase age for semi-automatic assault rifles and required enhanced background checks. His office has had to step in when some local law enforcement officers refused to carry out the enhanced background checks.

District 9 Legislative Delegation

On Wednesday December 4, the institute was pleased to welcome back State Senator **Mark Schoesler** (center), and State Representatives **Mary Dye** and **Joe Schmick**.

They met with students, faculty, and community members, and provided their annual preview of the upcoming legislative session.

Virtual programming: 2020 Election Series

The institute's livestreamed events

As WSU moved to mostly online instruction from March 2020, due to the pandemic, the institute also moved its events online from that time. Over the course of the fall semester, the Foley Institute hosted a weekly series in which the nation's leading political scholars discussed various aspect of the 2020 campaign and election, streamed directly to the institute's YouTube channel, attracting thousands of viewers from across the country.

Political polarization

Featuring **Lilliana Mason**, professor of political science, University of Maryland at College Park.

Professor Mason discussed the forces that have produced the current state of partisan polarization in the U.S. She also described the recent rise of extreme partisanship, where individuals are increasingly inclined to engage in violent political acts.

Her explanation of the partisan divide focused on social identity theory and she attributes the hyperpolarization of the contemporary era to the increasing overlap of partisanship with other social identities such as race and religion.

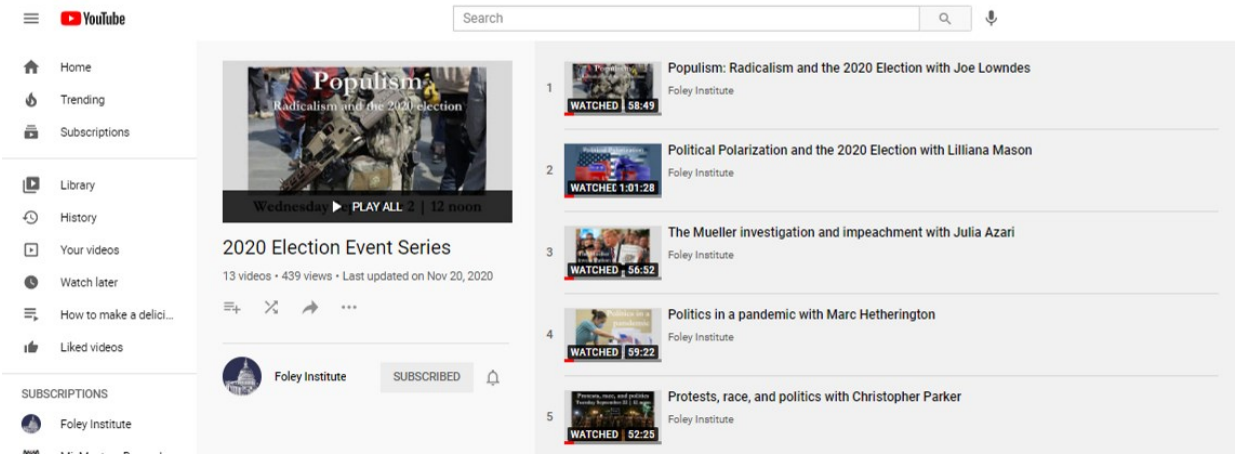
Mason is the author of *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became our Identity* (University of Chicago Press 2018)

Populism and radicalism

With **Joe Lowndes**, professor of political science, University of Oregon.

Professor Lowndes discussed political populism in the U.S. and how it was shaping the election. Populism, he said, is a mode of discourse used by politicians who claim to represent the common people or silent majority in opposition to a corrupt elite. Populism has both left-wing and right-wing variants. Typically, for left-wing populists, foes of the people are economic such as big banks and corporations, while right-wing populists tend to focus on cultural or academic elites or experts that work in government institutions and global organizations.

Lowndes explained how left-wing populism evolved in the U.S., beginning with the People's Party in the 19th Century, but more recently the GOP has evolved into a right-wing populist party under the leadership of President Trump. Recently, right-wing populists have protested across state capitals against government measures to combat the pandemic, such as mask-wearing. Protests included a variety of groups that were only loosely connected, groups such as Proud Boys, para-military militias, anti-vaxxers, and Trump supporters, but all embraced a form of right-wing populism in their views and rhetoric.



2020 Election Event Series

Conspiracy theories

With **Joe Uscinski**, professor of political science, University of Miami.

Professor Uscinski discussed his research into what makes people believe conspiracy theories: an inclination to believe in unseen forces and denialism, and the depth of group attachments such as partisanship. People rely on their existing predispositions, which lead them to either accept or deny conspiracy theories. Many people either are naturally suspicious of accepting information, while others subconsciously seek out their information to match their existing beliefs and discard what does not fit.

Uscinski found that large numbers of American, for instance, believe in both the "Deep State" conspiracy, that actors within the government trying to undermine the Trump presidency, as well as the conspiracy theory than that climate change is a hoax. Party elites, he said, encouraged these beliefs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, President Trump has called the virus a hoax and at times implied Dr. Fauci was part of the deep state. This led to like-minded media outlets repeating these messages and those deeply committed to the President's party to adopt those opinions.

The Mueller investigation and impeachment

With **Julia Azari**, professor of political science, Marquette University.

Professor Azari discussed how the Mueller investigation and impeachment of the President could affect the election. She outlined the history of past impeachments in the United States and discussed whether impeachment is a legal or political process. Robert Mueller, she said, concluded that that impeachment is a matter that should be left to Congress and therefore declined to make a recommendation about the matter.

Azari explained that impeachments are always political events, and usually provoke strong partisan reactions. This was the case with the impeachment of both Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton. She noted that the Watergate scandal was different in that there was bipartisan support to remove the president from office, but the impeachment never occurred because Nixon resigned, and that led to a series of bipartisan efforts to reign in presidential power in the aftermath of Watergate. She also noted that President Trump was impeached by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives, but not convicted by the Republican-controlled Senate in a vote almost entirely down party lines with Senate Republicans remaining very loyal to the President.

Politics in a pandemic

Featuring **Marc Hetherington**, professor of political science, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Professor Heatherington explained how the issues dividing the major political parties have changed over time. Using extensive survey data and psychological experiments, his research show that the partisan divide used to be based on disagreements over policy, but in recent decades it has increasingly been defined by social identities and worldviews, values he said, that are experienced in one's gut rather than the head.

Describing the differences between Democratic and Republican worldviews, he said Republicans tend to hold a 'fixed worldview', viewing the world as a dangerous place, which causes them to be more likely to embrace tradition, hierarchy, and vigilance. Democrats, on the other hand, are more likely to have a 'fluid worldview', the idea that the world is there to be explored, not feared, and that this leads them to be more likely to embrace social change, personal autonomy, and openness to new experiences.

2020 Election Event Series

Protests, race, and politics

With **Christopher Parker**, professor of political science, University of Washington.

Professor Parker discussed how the public was reacting to street protests over pandemic lockdown measures and over racial justice. Using polling data, he compared the views of the March on Washington during the civil rights movement to the modern-day Black Lives Matter movement, and showed that Americans feel more favorable towards the modern outcry for equality than they did in 1963.

He also discussed attitudes towards the Trump Administration's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, showing that Americans generally felt that the Trump Administration had not handled it well. Finally, he noted that poll data showed that Americans felt BLM protests were more justified to gather in groups than the anti-lockdown protests.

The Electoral College and electoral math

Featuring **Mathew Lebo**, professor of political science, University of Western Ontario.

Professor Lebo discussed the function and operation of the Electoral College, and how it shapes presidential campaigns. The quest to a majority of the 538 electors, he noted, warps which states become important to the campaign and which voters play an important role in electing the president. He also discussed so-called 'faithless electors', and the possibility that they could play a role in electing a president.

Much of Lebo's talk focused on election forecasting and the difference between traditional models, which take into account historical and long term political and economic forces, as opposed to poll-aggregators and modelers such as fivethirtyeight.com.

Lebo predicted that the election could be close due to the role of the Electoral College, the pandemic effect, and a handful of key battleground states.

Voting and election reform

With **Barry Burden**, professor of political science, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Professor Burden discussed the efforts by states to expand mail-in voting options as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He analyzed the different ways states have approached voting by mail, with some providing mail-in ballots to every registered voter, while others require an application in order to receive one. Furthermore, he noted that states with less experience conducting elections with mail-in ballots are likely to be delayed in vote count reporting, and this could cause political mischief on election night.

He provided reasons that mail-in ballots might be rejected and suggested Republican voters were more likely to vote in person compared to Democratic voters' utilization of mail-in ballots. Burden discussed potential solutions for reform that states could adopt to make vote by mail systems more secure and efficient, including making ballots postage paid, creating more voting locations, intelligent mail barcodes, and revising election night expectations, among others.

2020 Election Event Series

Predicting elections: polls, models, and voting

With **Charles Franklin**, professor of political science and law, Marquette University.

Professor Franklin discussed how the inaccurate polling from the 2016 presidential election might have happened, and how it affected public trust in polls. He noted that while some people believe that the 'shy Trump voter' was a significant factor in the polling problem, there has been no data to support the idea. Pollsters found that people were equally likely or unlikely to say they planned to vote for Trump.

Instead, he said the 2016 inaccuracy was based on the growing correlation between education level and vote choice, which pollsters did not accurately weight. Franklin stated that there has been a strong correlation between these variables and partisan preferences in recent elections, and pollster failed to capture this shift and thus underestimated support for Trump in 2016.

He concluded that despite what some think, polling is not "broken". Although some of the state polling was inaccurate, the national polls turned out to be very reliable.

Congressional campaigns

With **Costas Panagopoulos**, professor of political science, Northeastern University.

Professor Panagopoulos' talk focused on the state of congressional campaigns in 2020. He explained how congressional elections are increasingly shaped by an incumbency advantage and by the nationalization of campaigns. House elections which used to be run around local issues, have in particular become increasingly shaped by national issues and party loyalty. There are far fewer split-ticket voters than there used to be.

He noted that over the past 60 years, turnout among strong partisans has exceeded over 80 percent while pure independent turnout has dropped roughly 30 percent.

In 2020, the party in control of the House of Representatives does not directly predict the outcome of the presidential election. Panagopoulos concluded Democrats are likely to retain their majority in the House of Representatives, but it is unclear what will happen with the Senate.

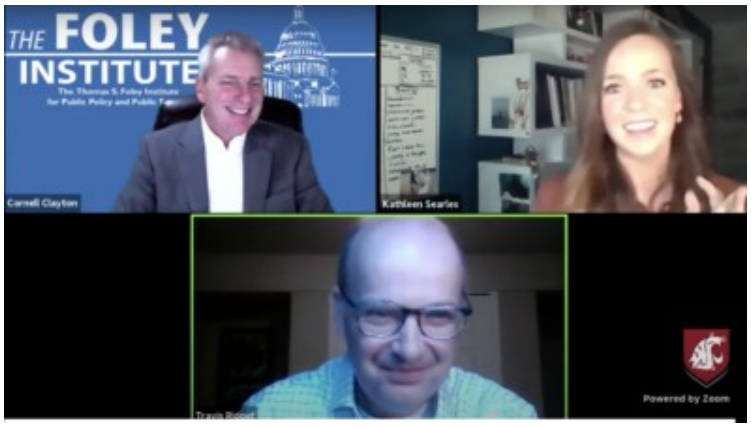
The Supreme Court, Judge Barrett, and the election

With **Amanda Hollis-Brusky**, professor of political science, Pomona College.

Professor Hollis-Brusky discussed how the nomination and confirmation process of Supreme Court justices has become increasingly polarized in recent decades, going back at least to the nomination of Robert Bork in 1987, and how Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation would add to that dynamic. She explained the politics around President Trump's other two recent appointments to the Court, Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation, she said would cement a 6-3 conservative -Republican majority on the Court, which could greatly heighten partisan tensions over the Court's role.

In order to prevent that, Hollis-Brusky said Justice Roberts will need to recruit at least another member of the Court to join him as a "swing vote". This is, she suggested, particularly important if Joe Biden becomes President and Democrats take control of the Senate, as there will be strong pressure from the progressive wing of his party to "pack" the Court by expanding its size and allowing Democrats to appoint additional justices.

2020 Election Event Series



The media

Featuring **Travis Ridout**, professor of political science, Washington State University, and **Kathleen Searles**, professor of political communications, Louisiana State University.

Professors Ridout and Searles examined the role of the media in the 2020 election. Ridout discussed how the media covered the 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Analyzing the number of nature of media stories about both candidates, he found there was disproportionate amount of negative coverage around Clinton's emails, and too much coverage of Donald Trump. The media, he said, held the candidates to different standards and allowed their coverage of the campaign to be hijacked by their quest for ratings.

Kathleen Searles discussed how the horserace framing of election coverage is an incorrect way of covering presidential elections. Searles also argued that too much of the media is driven by a need profits, which affects what type of coverage we as viewers receive. She argued that media outlets needed to do more to center their coverage of campaigns around voters and the issues that matter to them, and less on ratings.

Post-election analysis

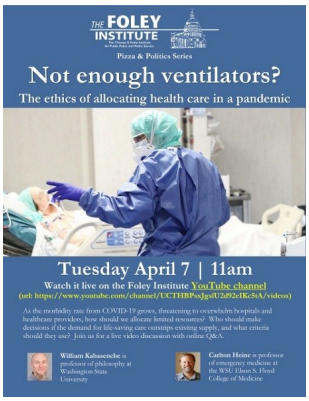
With **Keena Lipsitz**, professor of political science, City University of New York; **Alan Abramowitz**, Alben W. Barkley Professor of Political Science, Emory University; and **David Brady**, Bowen H. and Janice Arthur McCoy Professor of Political Science at Stanford University.

Dr. Lipsitz began the panel by discussing the litigation that was underway to challenge election outcomes in several swing states, noting that this is likely to be the most litigated election in American history. She attributed the Trump campaign's strategy to a misunderstanding of the role of courts, and said she thought much of the Trump campaign's purpose was to raise funds for debts accumulated during the campaign and to undermine the legitimacy of the Biden presidency.

Professor Abramowitz addressed how President-Elect Biden was able to achieve the 270 electoral votes necessary to win the presidency. Specifically, he focused on Biden's ability to flip the swing states that President Trump narrowly won in 2016. He also discussed the US House and Senate elections. He utilized public opinion polls to provide context for the results of the 2020 election and the increased political polarization that has come to characterize contemporary American politics.

Professor Brady argued that President-Elect Biden is perhaps the only candidate from the Democratic primary field that was capable of defeating President Trump, demonstrated by the near 50/50 split in public opinion polls within the consequential swing states that ultimately decided the winner of the 2020 presidential election.

Virtual programming: Politics in a pandemic



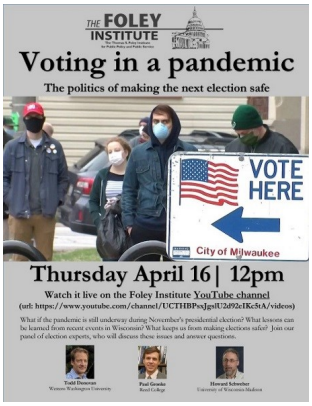
The politics of allocating healthcare in a pandemic

Our April 7 event featured **William Kabasenche**, professor of philosophy at WSU, and **Carl Heine**, clinical education director for emergency medicine at WSU's Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine .

Professor Heine noted that a shortage of medical supplies is only one of many factors that might prevent us from utilizing standard emergency responses during the COVID virus pandemic. Other issues include the complexity of the respiratory problems caused by the virus and the prolonged duration of the virus.

Professor Kabasenche compared the ethics of normal patient care to one during a public health crisis, the public health ethic, which shifts a patient-centric model to one that focuses on the health and interests of collective society, treating patients according to necessity and resources.

Voting in a pandemic



Our April 16 event featured **Todd Donovan**, professor of political science at Western Washington University, **Paul Gronke**, professor of political science at Reed College, and **Howard Schweber**, professor of political science, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Professor Donovan discussed the variety of voting processes used by different states and local governments, noting that many states do not have a "no-excuse" absentee voting system, and that in early 2020 only five states had all-mail elections. President Trump opposed mail-in balloting, and so it was not clear how states would institute or expand such procedures, and what the political fallout might be.

Professor Gronke addressed misconceptions around mail-in balloting. Voting by mail increases turnout, he said, but it does not necessarily change the partisan composition of the electorate or give an advantage to one or the other party, even if some people believe that it does.

Professor Schweber discussed Wisconsin's primary election experience that was held in-person, but which faced huge logistical challenges as many polling stations closed due to a lack of volunteers to staff them during a pandemic. He discussed some of the legal and constitutional issues surrounding efforts by state and local election officials to make it easier to vote during the pandemic, and said that unfortunately the pandemic would make it easier to suppress voting if political leaders were intent on doing so.

The pandemic, hoarding, and social connectedness

Our April 28 event featured **Hans Hacker**, political science professor at Arkansas State University, and **William Blake**, professor of political science at the University of Maryland.

Using game theory, Professor Hacker argued that people often misunderstand the type of "social game" that crises present. People try to "win the pandemic" by hoarding toilet paper because they think of the problem as a zero-sum competitive game rather than a cooperative game requiring social coordination. The problem, he argued, arises in part due to a sense of social disconnection, leading people without a community connection to act selfishly.

Professor Blake elaborated on the history of collective game dilemmas in political history, noting that the American independence struggle was a collective game, exemplified in Benjamin Franklin's famous words "we must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall hang separately".

Race and politics

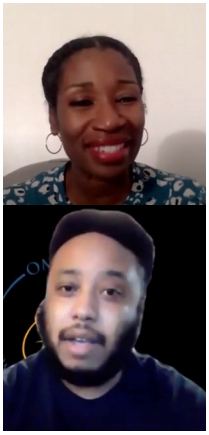
The institute cohosted a series of events on race the criminal justice system with numerous partners led by the Alpha Phi Sigma Criminal Justice Honors Society, which were moderated by Keilah Shaw, President of that society.

The impact of incarceration on Black families

On October 29, **Shenique Davis**, professor of criminal justice at City University of New York Manhattan Borough Community College, and **Bahiyyah Muhammad**, professor in the department of sociology and anthropology at Howard University, discussed the impact that incarceration has on Black families.

Professor Davis noted that Black people make up a disproportionate percentage of the 2.3 million Americans who are currently incarcerated, and although there has been a significant decrease in the number of Black people incarcerated, they remain five times as likely to face incarceration than whites.

Professor Muhammad discussed the impacts that a parent's incarceration has on children and their mental health and social connectedness. She has created an "Iron Kids" program, which aims to give these children strength and resilience in the face of such challenges.



Perspectives on race and justice

On November 17, educator and activist **Omari Amili**, and former Judge **Victoria Pratt** discussed the disparities in the criminal justice system in the second event in this cosponsored series.

Mr. Amili talked about his experiences being arrested and serving time in the criminal justice system. He focused on his perspectives as an African American man living in the predominantly white Pacific Northwest, and his sense that the justice system depending on skin color and class. He also discussed the consequences of not being able to vote or rent housing even once he was released.

Judge Pratt discussed the way judges are often put in a difficult position and find themselves unwillingly "preying upon" disadvantaged people such as those with mental health conditions or the homelessness by imposing fines they could never afford. She also said she understood why there is distrust of judges because of the way disadvantaged people and people of color are often treated in the criminal justice system.

Intellectual property in Indian Country

On December 10, **Trevor Reed**, Professor of Law, Arizona State University, and **Cora Tso**, member of the Navajo Nation and ASU law graduate, participated in a discussion cosponsored with WSU's Native American Programs, led by senior **Vincent Gonzalez** and sophomore **Jamie Kness**, who are both also tribal members.

Professor Reed discussed several examples of how Native American intellectual property had been appropriated and commercialized without compensation. Ms. Tso discussed how the fashion world has appropriated traditional Native American clothing, again without compensations.

Both speakers explained how copyright law added some protections, and they also referred to social media's intellectual property policies and their connection to copyright law.

Undergraduate internships

During the 2019/2020 academic year, numerous students availed themselves of internships in various state, local and federal offices and agencies.

Five students served in the Legislative Internship Program in Olympia during the spring 2020 legislative session. **Alexandra Donnici**, **Ian Harkins**, **Ivy Ndambuki**, **Nadia Orffer**, and **Edlawte Sentayehu** all gained experience of the day-to-day workings of state government as they interned in lawmakers' offices and for party caucuses.

Pictured L-R are: Ian Harkins, Edlawte Sentayehu, Nadia Orffer, and Alexandra Donnici

Several students interned on the WSU Pullman campus: Serving in the Associated Students of WSU were **Quinton Berkompas**, **Samantha Cruz**, and **George Harris III**, while pre-law students **Dylan Good**, **Michelle Lee** (pictured right), and **Michelle Sikora** interned at the Pre-Law Resource Center.

Elsewhere in the country, **Henry Kokkeler** spent a semester interning in Virginia for the Prince William County Republican Committee, **Tyler Corrin** interned for the Port of Portland, and **Dylan Good** undertook a second internship over the summer as a legal intern for law firm Barden & Barden in Spokane.

In Greece, **Makennah Little** interned on the island of Lesvos, working to help refugee arrivals in camps on the island with the Refugee Crisis Team for Help International.

The intern experience at the Washington State Legislature

Ivy Ndambuki, pictured left, describes her experience at the legislature as eye-opening. "The first day of the internship was daunting, and I couldn't sleep," she says, "but the energy in the legislature and in the office of Senator Das where I worked, was inspiring. It was such a privilege to be there."

In common with the other interns, Ivy had a broad range of areas in which she worked, including single family home zoning, children's nutrition, the 32 hour workweek proposal, and one bill that passed that she is proud of being part of, which prohibits the insurance industry in Washington from using a person's credit score to determine insurance rates. "This experience has helped me realize my goals and the huge capacity for positive change that I want to make in the world," she said, "and remembering that there are real people whose lives will be forever changed by your hard work is what keeps the system running."

Undergraduate internships

Thank you to the Foley interns

The institute was lucky to have **Nabil Ali**, **Caitlin Boss, Allie Figlin**, **Griffin Grubb**, **Melissa Hruska**, **Julia Iannielli**, **Connor Simmons**, and **Matthew Winchell** as interns this past year. Pictured left is one of the weekly Foley Intern team meetings held via Zoom.

Pictured above is **Julia Iannielli** presenting a poster at the annual meeting of the Pacific Northwest Political Science Association, which the institute hosts, in Boise, Idaho, in November 2019.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, the institute is able to offer scholarships to our interns, including the Lance LeLoup Congressional Scholarship for internships in the U.S. Congress. Please contact us or visit us online at foley.wsu.edu if you would like to know more and/or are interested in contributing to our scholarship funds.

Graduate fellowships

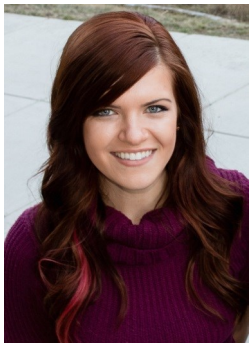
Each year the institute awards research fellowships to graduate students working on important public policy questions. These fellowships are available thanks to the generosity of **Scott** and **Betty Lukins**, **Alice O. Rice**, and the **Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Foundation.**

The awards are intended to fund students who are approaching the latter stages of their research.

Kamal Ahmmad's (marketing) research aims to understand consumers' perception of lab grown meat, an alternative meat product, often termed as "cell-cultured meat". The increased consumption of meat and the over-reliance on meat-related products have raised concerns related to environment and health. Global meat consumption is also expected increase significantly in the next ten years, suggesting a need for an environmentally friendly meat-alternative.

Laboratory-grown meat is clearly a novel food and convincing consumers to accept this product will be challenging for several reasons. Ahmmad examines the effectiveness of different types of product labeling of cell-cultured meat and the influence of emotions and consumers' behavioral orientations on purchase decisions.

Stephanie Gibbons' (communication) research highlights the traditional and emerging media representations of women and women of color in the 2020 election. With a surge of diverse candidates, the news media has relied on traditional stereotypes to describe candidates, while also generating new media frames.



Her research addresses three shortcomings of media representation research. First, scholarly work typically looks exclusively at either women or people of color. Second, research often observes the text or the image, when a synthesis of both has been shown to have greater influence on news consumers. Finally, either qualitative or quantitative research is usually selected as a method, but she instead employs a mixed methods approach in which both text and images from major U.S. newspapers are observed with regards to representations of women and women of color Presidential candidates.

Andrew Given's (nursing) research examines the use of policy as an interventional tool in healthcare organizations. Andrew specifically focuses on the incorporation of patient-centered care principles in policy development and how this approach can benefit patient outcomes at Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) in the Puget Sound region of Washington. Through partnership with a multi-clinic OTP, he is analyzing the impact of a progressive patient-centered policy that engages the issue of potentially lethal polysubstance misuse during treatment for Opioid Use Disorder. His research aims to support low barrier, high tolerance models of care through demonstrating the effectiveness of policy change in reducing adverse patient outcomes.

Foley fellowships are awarded annually to graduate students who fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- **Conduct research in the area of just and sustainable societies and policies,**
- **Seek to enhance their public policy research skills and pursue a research agenda focusing on major policy issues, and**
- **Conduct research in the area of political institutions and democracy.**

Graduate fellowships

Chase Riddle's (political science) research focuses on the role emotional connections or lack thereof to politically laden language can be used as a new explanatory framework in understanding political behavior. His approach uses new programming developments within audio analysis software to measure the level of emotional vocal pitch fluctuations in an individual's voice as they speak.

By using this new technology, Riddle examines whether emotional connections to the language correlates with certain behaviors. His main project currently using this audio analysis to study the role emotional language, specifically in reference to ethnic identities, correlates with ethnic/genocidal violence.

Sedef Topal (political science) conducts quantitative research on understanding the roots of historical enmities in the case of Turkish-Kurdish conflict using image theory in political psychology.
She plans to conduct online surveys with members of Kurdish and Turkish nationalist parties in order to explore how their images about the other side seem to be; whether they have a barbarian, rogue, or imperialist image of each other, and how focusing on these images can help solving this everlasting conflict in a peaceful way.

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Thank you!

Director's update (continued from page 2)

One overlooked effect of political polarization is that it leads to greater political engagement. This makes sense. When the parties agree on most issues it's easy to be apathetic about who wins, but when parties hold radically divergent visions about the country, passions run high. We should celebrate that so many Americans believed their votes mattered. Some stood in lines for hours to cast ballots during a pandemic. That faith in the power of voting is vital to our democracy.

The bad news is that the Nation remains deeply fractured. In defeat, President Trump received around 74 million votes and refused to concede. He claimed, without evidence, there was massive voter fraud. Both the courts and the Justice Department concluded those claims were unfounded. Still, millions of Mr. Trump's supporters were deeply disappointed, and many will no doubt harbor a belief that the election was unfair. In this, they are not unlike millions who voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, and felt she was unfairly treated.

The House of Representatives will continue to be in Democratic hands, and control of the Senate will be decided by two special run-off elections in Georgia next January (although the chamber will remain under Republican control unless Democrats can win both Georgia seats).

What is most striking about the 2020 election is how little changed over the past four years, or since 2000 for that matter. Throughout this period, election margins have remained razor thin, the red-blue map mostly unchanged, and the swing states remarkable similar. As in other recent elections, a relatively small number of votes across a handful of key states could have altered the outcome.

The country has experienced deep partisan divides in the past (including a Civil War in the 1860s, when Lincoln's election was met with southern succession). What's different this time is the protracted nature of these divisions. The only other time Americans remained divided for so long was during the Gilded Age from the late-1870s to early 1900s. That too was an era when the nation experienced divided government, alternating control of Congress, and closely contested presidential elections, including two in which the winner of the Electoral College lost the popular vote.

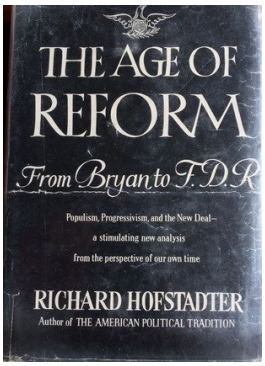
Social divisions then were remarkably like today's. Industrialization produced an unprecedented concentration of income and wealth at the top. Americans were divided along race and class lines over reconstruction in the South and later as millions of ethnic immigrants and working-class laborers migrated into large urban areas. There were religious divides over the acceptance of Catholics and Jews into American society, and gender divisions, as the women's temperance and suffragist movements both gathered steam.

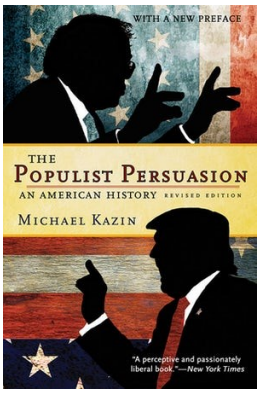
Partisan politics were also similar to today. Donald Trump's populism, his refusal to concede the election, and his embrace of conspiracies all have echoes from this period. In 1876, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes refused to concede to the Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, despite losing the popular vote by over 3 percent. The election was eventually resolved by the compromise of 1877, which gave Hayes the presidency in exchange for ending reconstruction in the South.

Director's update (continued from page 2)

Partisanship also became tribal during this period, as ethnic, class, race and religious divides came to define political parties. Populist demagogues like William Jennings Bryan claimed to represent the "silent majority" and practiced politics as if it were a moral crusade, demonizing those who opposed him. He came close to winning the presidency in 1896 and again in 1900, railing against corrupt elites and touting conspiracy theories like the Gold Conspiracy that insinuated a cabal of Jewish bankers controlled the world financial system.

Sound familiar? If you want historical perspective into today's politics, I encourage you to read more about this era. Richard Hofstader's Pulitzer Prize winning book, The Age of Reform, and Michael Kazin's The Populist Persuasion are both good places to start.





As was the case then, populism and partisan polarization are today symptoms of the real divisions over how to address important challenges. How should we confront the rising inequality created by globalization and a technology-driven economy? What should we do about a disappearing middle-class and the growing numbers of Americans unable to afford healthcare, housing, or college education for their children? How should we address the catastrophic consequences of climate change, the lingering legacy of racial discrimination, or think about immigration and the rapid change in demographics in the story of American citizenship?

These and other challenges are real. They are not partisan illusions or elite fabrications. The country lacks consensus over how they should be addressed, and any election will leave half of us disappointed in the outcome.

What we must avoided, however, is transforming these debates into contests over cultural identities. An implacable battle between Red and Blue America. Democracy requires people must see politics as a process of compromise and finding common ground, not an existential struggle between "us" and "them." Rather than the social and cultural group identities that divide us, political leaders must appeal to our common identity as Americans.

As conservative political commentator Michael Gerson writes: "A factual debate can be adjudicated. Policy differences can be compromised. Even an ideological conflict can be bridged or transcended. But if our differences are an expression of our identities, rural vs. urban, religious vs. secular, nationalist vs. cosmopolitan, then political loss threatens a whole way of life."

In the end, elections reflect who we are at a given moment, a mirror inviting us to consider whether we like what we see. 2020 will be one more in a long line of elections. By itself it will neither solve all our problems nor create irresolvable new ones. But it is an inflection point. One that could lead us toward a different style of politics if we chose.

Joe Biden ran a campaign committed to restoring the soul of America, healing divisions, and bringing a fractured country back together. Whether you supported him or supported President Trump we must all wish the president-elect success in his efforts to heal the nation. We need it.

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