

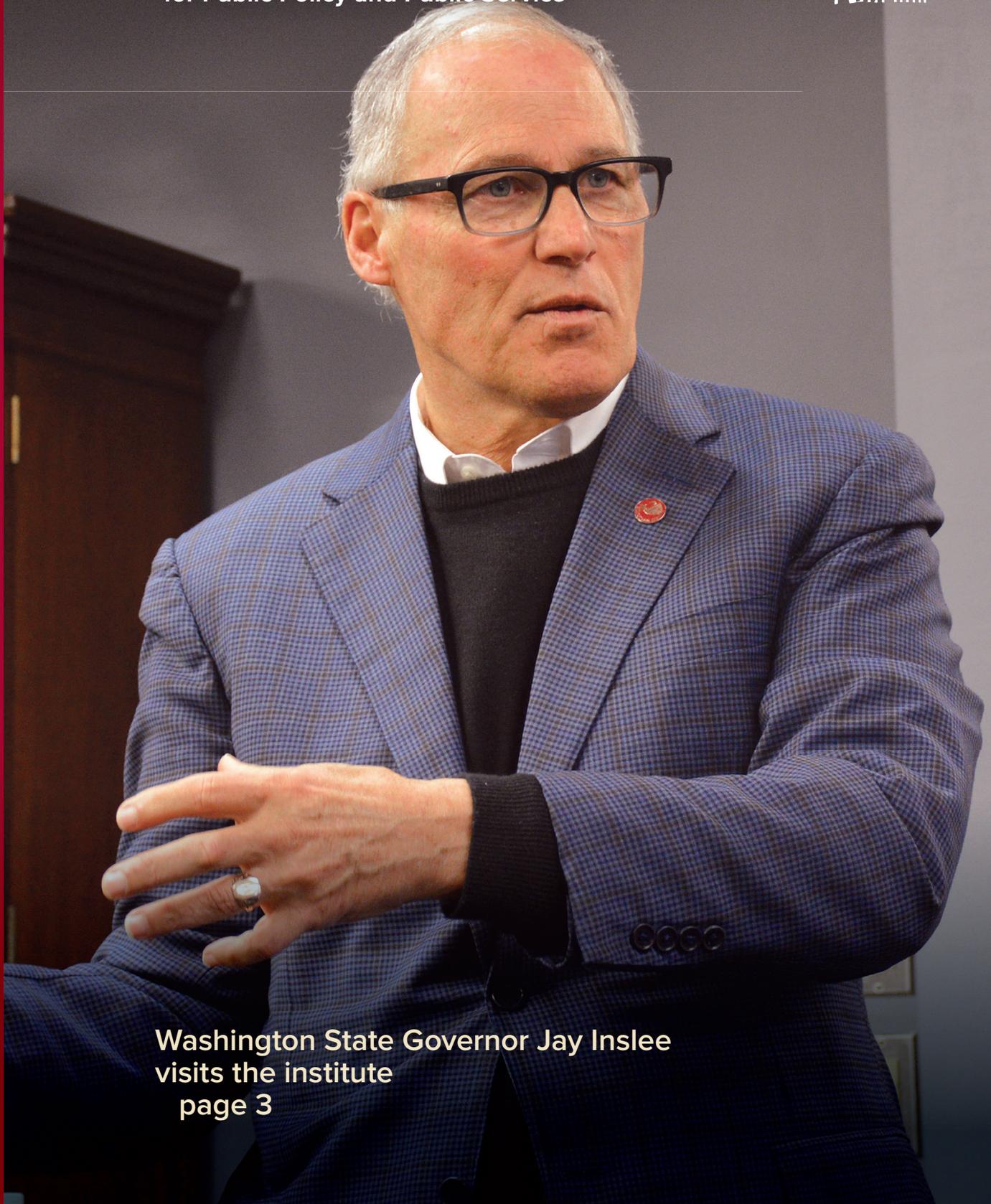
2023

THE FOLEY INSTITUTE

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



THE FOLEY REPORT



Washington State Governor Jay Inslee
visits the institute
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Director's Update



Cornell Clayton

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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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 Sam Reed Distinguished Professor,
 Civic Education and Public Civility
 Travis N. Ridout
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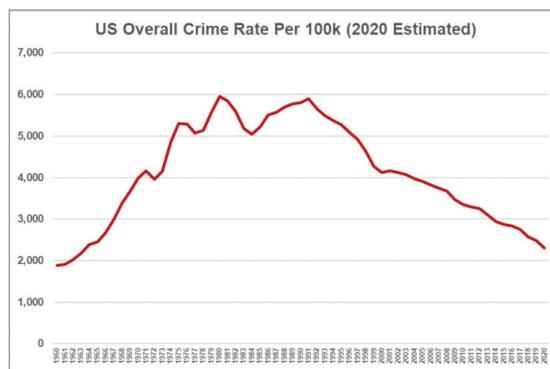
Richard Elgar,
 Associate Director
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Are things so bad?

Ask people today and you are likely to get an earful. Recent surveys indicate that as many as three-quarters of Americans think the nation is on the wrong track and that we are worse off than in the past.

What's puzzling is the complete lack of evidence for this pessimism. The U.S. economy grew at healthy 3.3% in final quarter of 2023, better than any other advanced economy in the world. Inflation dropped to 3.1% this year, stock markets hit all-time highs, unemployment 50-year lows, real wages are up, manufacturing is up, productivity is up. The U.S. tech sector dominates the world, and the country is producing more oil and gas than ever in history.

Other advanced nations are suffering population declines, while U.S. demographic trends, thanks to immigration, are healthy. America's soft power shapes culture around the world and foreign students flock to American universities. The U.S. military is more dominant than ever, and for the first time in decades, America is not itself at war.



Crime is down. According to the FBI, violent crime dropped 8.2% in 2023 over the previous year, including a 15.6% drop in murders. Overall, crime is substantially down since the 1970s, as is child mortality, deaths from virtually all major diseases, workplace injuries, high school dropout rates, pollution and environmental degradation, and college graduation rates are up. Income inequality is still high, but it, too, has been declining over the past decade.

Americans have more freedom than ever before. In 1960, a third of American states prohibited marrying a person of a different race, and no state permitted same sex marriages prior to 2003. There were still segregated schools in the 1960s, and people of color were denied the right to vote in many states. Sandra Day O'Connor, who graduated top of her class from Stanford Law in 1952, took a job as a legal secretary because no law firm would hire a woman. Things are still far from perfect, but today more Americans of all kinds are freer than ever.

None of this is to suggest that the country doesn't face problems—from climate change and fiscal debt to border security and housing affordability—but what country doesn't? In our lifetimes, American society has become dramatically richer, healthier, safer, and more equitable.

There has probably never been a better time to be an American. So why don't many of us feel that way?

Some of today's doom and gloom is stoked by cynical politicians and media outlets that benefit from it. They know that elections and media ratings turn more on feelings and emotions than on policies and data. Fear and anger are powerful forces for generating profits and motivating voters.

Continued on Page 14

Governor Jay Inslee

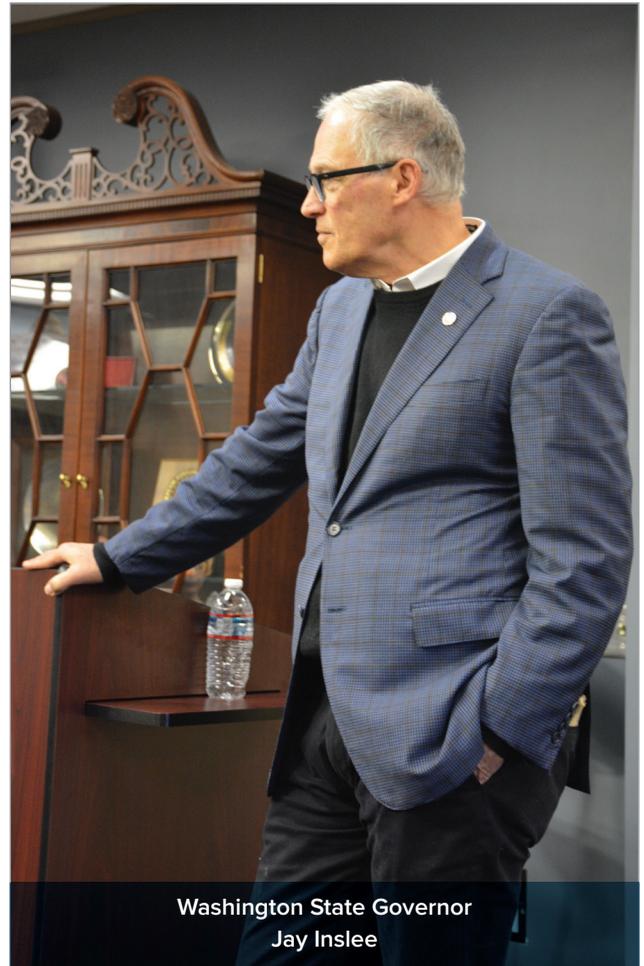
On February 17, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee led a conversation about the issues of housing and clean energy in Washington State.

Inslee discussed current efforts within Washington's legislature to deal with the housing crisis and homelessness as well as divestment strategies to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels. He acknowledged that 40% of the money resulting from the Climate Commitment Act needs to be directed toward low-income populations who are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

He noted the legislature is increasing the application of technology so that products are more affordable to such communities. Supporting this claim, he outlined electric cars are becoming equal in pricing to gas-powered cars. Further, he stressed the importance of making significant public investment to build low-income housing. He proposed a \$4 billion investment toward this cause.

Governor Inslee concluded his talk by hosting a Q&A with students. He addressed his efforts as governor toward a carbon neutral economy and talked about some of the local attempts that have been made in Pullman and the surrounding areas to create industries that contribute to cleaner and sustainable energy.

He made it clear he felt that climate issues in Washington are more relevant now because people are beginning to directly see the effects of climate on their lives, and he also stressed the importance of addressing negative impacts of climate legislation change upon low-income individuals in Washington by providing aid.



Washington State Governor
Jay Inslee

Visit by Judge Jack Nevin

On September 23, WSU alumnus, district court judge, and former Brigadier General and Chief Judge (IMA) of the US Army Court of Criminal Appeals and Commander and US Army Reserve Legal Command (Provisional), Jack Nevin spoke to a small group of pre-law students at the Foley Institute.

The group covered a wide range of subjects around the field of law, including as it related to the military.

You can find out more about the Pre-Law Resource Center, located within the Foley Institute, at:

<https://prelaw.wsu.edu/>



Judge Jack Nevin
with pre-law students

2023 Climate change lecture series

Environmental politics and climate change provided a focus for the institute's fall semester 2023, with speakers from WSU and beyond discussing the multiple ways in which these issues affected political decision-making in the U.S.

As with previous lecture series, a connected class was taught alongside the weekly events in the Foley Speaker's Room in Bryan Hall.

Turning panic into action? Climate change in the Pacific Northwest

The series was initiated by Jason Vogel, on August 31, interim director of the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington, who discussed how individuals can act to combat the effects of climate change.

Vogel highlighted the detrimental effects of climate change seen thus far in the Pacific Northwest. Wildfires, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and increased temperatures are direct results of the failure to address this dire issue.

Vogel emphasized that the planet is not yet beyond saving, suggesting that change begins with individuals speaking out to spread awareness among people who are uninformed of the factors that contribute to climate change. He also suggested ways that we can mitigate our individual impacts on the climate crisis. He included a variety of measures that went beyond simply recycling, such as limiting air travel, changing eating habits, and finding other ways to reduce our carbon footprint.

He concluded by reminding the audience that there is still time to act. He noted that it is up to us as individuals to preserve the future of humanity by keeping our planet hospitable and abundant for the next generation. The political parties, he said, may be growing more entrenched in their rhetoric and campaign styles, but the need for all parties to compromise and seek broad support for broad policies that address the looming crisis has not disappeared.

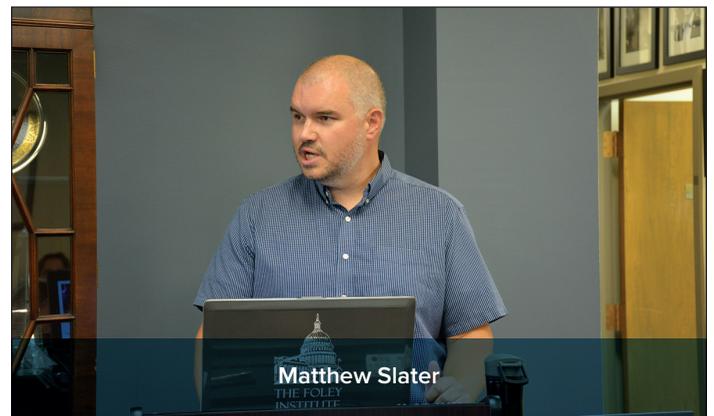


It's complicated: Talking about climate change

On September 7, the Foley Institute hosted Matthew Slater, the John Howard Harris Professor of Philosophy at Bucknell University, who talked about public perception of climate science.

Professor Slater began by discussing the concept of scientific consensus, especially around the finding that 97% of scientists agree that the overarching cause to climate change is human activity. He then introduced the concept of a "gateway belief," which can support or undermine other personally held beliefs about climate change. He emphasized the importance of viewing scientific culture as a public, collective enterprise, and warned against the common perception of science as an individualistic endeavor.

Slater concluded by discussing how we could have a more productive discussion about "the science" around climate change, and that the scientific community should embrace more open science practices and reforming educational approaches.



2023 Climate change lecture series

Beyond denial: How partisan polarization shapes climate policy in the U.S.

On September 12, the institute hosted WSU sociologist Dylan Bugden who spoke about his research on how partisan identities impact our view of climate science.

Professor Bugden spoke about fluctuations in beliefs within the parties over time on climate change and climate science, emphasizing that Democrats have altered their views about climate policy more than Republicans whose views have remained largely stable or unchanged. Moreover, Bugden said that despite the typical narrative regarding the relationship between Republicans and science, conservatives often trust and utilize science in regard to their own policies. The difference between partisans lies in when and how they choose to utilize science to advance their policies.

Bugden concluded by noting that it is unreasonable to expect the public to conduct their own research on



every policy issue. For this reason, partisans must rely heavily on party leaders to inform their opinions, and thus it is incumbent on leaders to explain which values inform their views about policy.

Climate activism: Does it change anything?

On September 21, Aseem Prakash and Nives Dolšak, from the University of Washington and founders of the Environmental Policy Network, discussed the issue of climate activism and effective protest initiatives.

Professors Dolšak and Prakash spoke about climate activism and new methods of protest. They focused on the efficacy of protests that engage in violence or damaged property and artworks, and the moral implications of endorsing such forms of protest. They noted that there had been a recent epidemic of artwork vandalism as climate activists seek to draw public attention and highlight the need for urgent action on climate policy.

Prakash and Dolšak argued that the lack of specificity in this form of protest is the reason that it usually proves ineffective in changing public attitudes or policies around climate change. To be effective in changing policy, they said, protest actions need directional measures and specific goals that add purpose to the protest. They concluded by discussing the negative impact that such protests have on public perception of climate justice and emphasized that nonviolent modes of protest are more likely to change minds and change policy



2023 Climate change lecture series

Faith and climate science

On September 28, the institute welcomed back Bob Inglis, a former member of Congress from South Carolina and founder of RepublicEn, a group that advances conservative policies to address climate issues, to talk about the connection between faith and climate science.

Inglis discussed his personal experience of how he came to realize the importance of taking action to combat climate change as a conservative Republican. After learning about the issue, Inglis said he realized how critical it was to convince members of his own party to act on climate issues, and so he founded the organization RepublicEN that is dedicated to utilizing capitalism and free enterprise to tackle climate change.

He emphasized the need to communicate more effectively with conservative religious groups and suggested that appealing to their relationship with God is one way to do that. This approach includes using biblical analogies and reminding individuals that by being endowed with free will, they are responsible for stewardship of the earth and its resources. Inglis did, however, acknowledge the difficulties of appealing to some apocalyptic, religious



Bob Inglis

groups that prophesize a fiery and desolate start to Parousia (the Second Coming).

Inglis said that keeping an open mind and listening to opposing views is critical in efforts to inform others and can lead to enlightening realizations for all involved. He urged the audience to not to let polarization stand in the way of progress on enacting effective climate policy, and that in his view, creating respectful dialogue around the issue of climate change is the key to expanding the movement and enacting change.

Climate, conflict, and migration in the West African Sahel

On October 3, El Hadj Djitteye of the Timbuktu Center for Strategic Studies on the Sahel was in conversation with Peter Chilson of WSU's English department about the environmental migration crisis in underdeveloped areas of the world such as the Sahel.

El Hadj Djitteye spoke about the impacts of climate change-induced drought on West Africa, its people, and authority within the region. Forced migration, he said, was often the result of ignoring the consequences of a changing climate, noting that it occurs when people have relocated due to violence or a lack of resources.

In West Africa, climate change-induced drought has resulted in around 3.2 million displaced people, and it has caused around 100,000 people a month to relocate across the Mediterranean Sea and into Europe in search of water and economic stability. This has resulted in hostility, as some neighboring states were unwilling to share their resources with refugees.

He concluded that this struggle for necessities is a grim look into the reality facing millions of people and that will only worsen in underdeveloped regions of the world if we fail to address the consequences of climate change.



El Hadj Djitteye and Peter Chilson

2023 Climate change lecture series



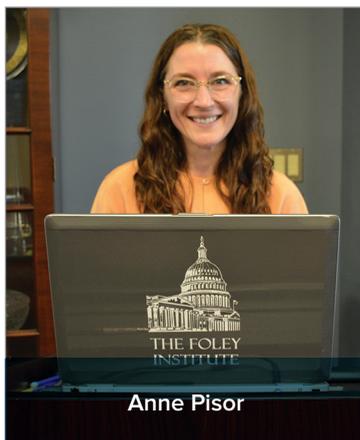
Addressing climate change one state at a time

On October 5, political scientist Mark Stephan of Washington State University discussed his research, which examines the variation and impacts of climate change policy at the sub-national levels of government.

Professor Stephan noted that while those in state or local governments often view climate change as an issue that is beyond their ability to address, local action can often be the most innovative and effective. State and local

governments, he said, can often move climate policy toward the federal level simply by starting the process of reducing their own carbon emissions. Stephan noted that policies addressing such emissions, like New Jersey's 2020 Environmental Justice Law, are effective ways for individual states to tackle the carbon emission crisis.

He discussed his own research on the factors that influence industrial emissions reduction across the states. Regional policy networks, such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the Northeast, and using diverse policy levers are two of the crucial factors that drive emission reductions among the states. Future climate policy shifts, he said, will also depend critically on how states take advantage of the federal Inflation Reduction Act passed by the Biden Administration and work with the federal government toward promoting local level programs to increase renewable energy.



The culture of climate adaptation

On October 19, the institute hosted WSU anthropologist Anne Pisor who discussed the adaptation and resilience of communities that are impacted by climate change.

Professor Pisor acknowledged the current struggles arising from climate change across the globe, such as rising sea levels, storm surge, heat domes, and landslides. Since the effects of climate

change are already present, she emphasized the need to think more seriously about policies affecting adaptation to, and not just mitigation of, climate change. It is critical, she said, that political leaders focus on resilience in the face of changes and on the strategies for gathering evidence, past and present, of how communities reduce risks associated with climate change to inform their policymaking.

Pisor said that existing data surrounding locally led solutions to mitigate risks in the face of a changing climate are not evenly retained and transmitted. She noted that more work should be done to support longitudinal, network-structured data gathering, which involves communities adapting to the risks caused by a changing climate.

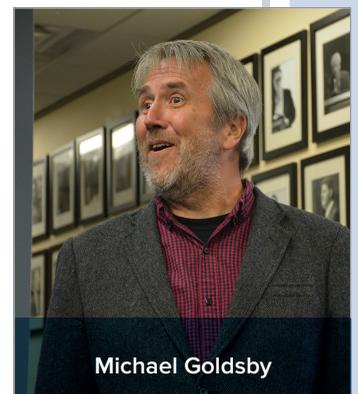
The lethal logic of climate denial

On October 26, WSU philosopher Michael Goldsby discussed some of the ways in which climate change deniers talk about climate change.

Professor Goldsby began his talk by defining both climate change and climate change denialism. He said climate change is the view that global temperatures are increasing due to human activity, and they will become detrimental without intervention. Conversely, he defined climate denialism as a rejection of the previous premise as not scientifically justified. He discussed the view that denialism comes from lack of information or sophistication on the part of individuals, the so-called Gap Model. That view is problematic both empirically

and normatively, he said. Climate deniers often have quite sophisticated understandings of climate science and marginalizing them as uninformed is counterproductive to changing public attitudes.

Goldsby concluded by providing tips for talking to climate deniers, such as avoiding casting the interlocutor as ignorant or a villain and instead asking them to make predictions based on their theories.



2023 Climate change lecture series

Fixing the climate crisis: Changing our lightbulbs and ourselves

The final lecture in the institute's climate change series was delivered on November 14, by **Brian Henning**, director and founder of the Gonzaga University Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment. Henning discussed our role in caring for the earth, arguing that humans are better viewed as stewards rather than owners of the planet. Stewardship, he said, implies a level of respect that is not associated with ownership.

Professor Henning emphasized that there is still the ability to repair the damage done to the climate. Policy, he argued, should focus on sustainability, which he defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In addition, we need to direct policy fixes to areas such as clean energy, pollution reduction, and policy change. Also, public perceptions about Earth need to be changed, and he emphasized how the role of popular culture, not only science, plays in shaping attitudes.



Henning concluded by asserting that climate change presents both a problem of sustainability and morality; wherein we must find a balance between the standard of modern living and protecting the earth that we inhabit and have temporary stewardship over.

Help an Undergraduate Scholar

Help the Foley Institute provide scholarships to support undergraduate internships.

Yes, I would like to support Foley public presentations, events, and student internships in public service:

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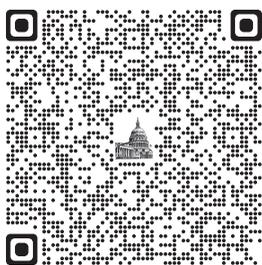
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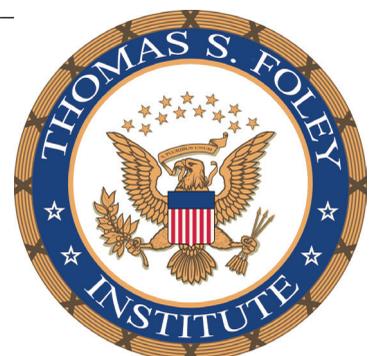
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Thank you!



Domestic Politics

The Indian boarding schools tragedy

On February 9, Teresa Sheldon, director of policy and advocacy at the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, spoke about the history and current situation of federal Indian boarding schools.

Ms. Sheldon began by discussing what the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition has done to address the damaging effects that federal Indian schooling policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have had on Native communities in the United States. It is estimated that as many as 80% of Native children were at one time taken from their homes and forced into boarding schools where they were subjected to “inculturation” programs and widespread atrocities, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, torture, and starvation.

She discussed the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report that was recently published by the Department of Interior. The report is significant, she said, because it is the first act of acknowledgement by the US government of the damage caused by federal Indian schools.

Sheldon then discussed legislation currently under consideration in Congress titled, “The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.” If created, this commission will investigate the impacts of



Indian Boarding School policies and will develop ways to protect current Native grave sites. She stressed how important this bill is, as it will document the horrors and atrocities that took place in boarding schools and suggest ways to address the on-going harm they created.

Sheldon concluded by emphasizing the importance of honestly acknowledging historical events and how necessary it is to address the consequences for Native Americans.

The land of open graves

On March 2, Jason De León, University of California Los Angeles, discussed migrant deaths on the United States’ southern border.

Professor De León began by showing footage of a migrant caravan stuck in Tijuana, in limbo between the United States and Mexico. He noted that the future will only see more waves of mass global migrations, with impacts reaching far beyond southern border states.

De León argued that official United States border policy of prevention through deterrence leads to unnecessary deaths associated with migrants crossing the border. Prevention through deterrence was initiated in the 1990s as border crossings increased and the federal immigration and border infrastructure and facilities were seen as inadequate to deal with the increasing flow of migrants. In response, the government deliberately added fencing to direct migrant flows into the Sonoran Desert, using Arizona’s inhospitable terrain to deter migrants.

Despite this change, migrants were not deterred, and border crossings continued to rise throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Consequently, those crossing



the border experienced sweltering summers, freezing winters, and spring flash floods, with many dying from exposure. De León documented over 3,000 deaths reported in Arizona alone due to this policy. Change, he argued, was needed to make U.S. border policy both more humane and more effective

Domestic Politics

Anti-Government extremist groups

On February 8, the institute hosted Sam Jackson, from the University at Albany, to discuss the Oath Keepers and other anti-government extremist groups.

Professor Jackson said that the Oath Keepers are different from many other extremist groups that are often focused on racial identity. By contrast, the Oath Keepers focus on an identity based in opposition to the federal government and on a patriotic duty to fight the federal government that unconstitutionally gained tyrannical power.

Founded in 2009, the group first received notoriety with its role in the 2014 Bundy Ranch standoff. From 2014 to 2016, the organization participated in a string of armed standoffs and occupations to fight the federal government. However, in 2016 the group also began to participate more in armed clashes against Antifa and left-wing organizations.

The Oath Keepers' most notorious action was its participation in the January 6 United States Capitol attack, where members intentionally planned to intimidate members of Congress to overturn the results of the 2020 election. For their participation in the insurrection, nine of their members, including group president Stewart Rhodes, were convicted of seditious conspiracy.

Jackson explained that Oath Keepers use selective elements from stories of crisis and conflict in American history to



justify its actions and to explain contemporary America. It pays special attention to the Revolutionary War, analogizing federal authority today to British rule then. It argues that liberty in modern America is endangered again today by federal power, and therefore violence is justified today, as then, to defend it from government and other Americans.

The express willingness to use violence and intimidation to advance its political views separates the Oath Keepers from other right-wing groups and breaks important American traditions of non-violence and political discourse.

Racial healing and politics

On January 18, Spokane NAACP President Kiantha Duncan led a conversation on racial healing and politics.

Ms. Duncan began by talking about her background and experiences as an African American growing up in a country with a racist history and which remains divided over race. She explained how her personal experiences informed her activism as well as her approach to thinking about social justice. She discussed the role of politics in determining who has jurisdiction over what racial healing is and when a society is "healed."

She used cancer as a metaphor to describe racism, arguing that racism in the south often looks more like a visible tumor, while racism in the northwest is not noticeable at first glance. She suggested that there is no definitive cure for racism just as there is no conclusive cure for cancer, but that healing, albeit a long and halting process, can occur.

Sober expectations, Duncan said, are important to that healing process. She stressed that neither she nor anyone else has all the answers necessary for racial healing, but that people of good will can find ways.



Undergraduate Internships

WSU students continue to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities to intern in Washington State, in Washington, D.C., and around the country and beyond!



From left clockwise: Hannah Wargo and Gus Waters, Richard Elgar, Grace Ande, Tiernyn Purcell, and Giulia Renner

Three WSU students participated in the Washington State Legislative Internship Program during the 2023 Legislative Session in Olympia: Sarah Gorrell, Constance Green, and Sebastian Sanders. Collin Bannister was the director for legislative affairs for the Associated Students of Washington State University (ASWSU), spending the semester advocating for WSU students to the legislature.

Savannah Eakin also interned with ASWSU as part of the Cougar Lobby Team.

Numerous students interned with Student Legal Services (SLS) at WSU, including Nadia Cole, Emma Heilman, Kathryn Lacambra, Sophie Mejia, Annika Peterson, Karina Rodriguez, and Dylan Smentek.

Interning at the WSU Pre-Law Resource Center were Grace Ande, Lucas Issler, Tiernyn Purcell, Giulia Renner, and Grace Van Zandt.

Students also found internships in Pullman: Collin Gammon had an internship with the Pullman Chamber of Commerce, and Katie Astruon interned with JMSB Law.

Other internships included TaNiesha Birdtail with the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Amaris Cupples with NWF Strategies in California, Shanaya Henderson with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Sheridan Robbins at the Colfax Superior Court, and Tara Sullivan at the Accountability Lab in Zimbabwe.

Finally, as always, we are grateful to the Foley Institute interns who worked at the center to organize events and keep the office running: Kendall Browder, Emily Frey, Hannah Wargo, and graduating senior Gus Waters.



Sarah Gorrell

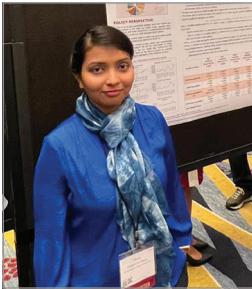


Full cohort of legislative interns 2023

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.*



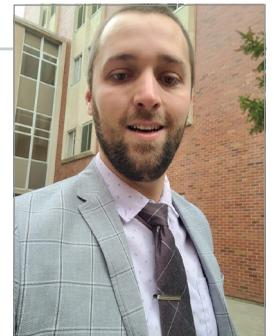
Dipanwita Barai

Dipanwita Barai (economic sciences) examines how COVID-19 impacted the global food system with shocks to demand, supply, and, consequently, international trade of meats and grains. Specifically, she is focusing on how the lockdown of businesses and other actions such as social distancing impacted the supply chain, food, and services systems as well as international trade of meat and grain.

Her investigation of the impact of COVID-19 on U.S. meat and grain industry uses a reduced form gravity model and counterfactual analysis to examine the new deaths and increased vaccinations in the United States contributed to levels of U.S. meat exports.

Jeffrey Deminchuk's (political science) research explores how social media has contributed to the trend of rising affective polarization. His related projects involve firstly a theoretical examination of how our evolved coalitional psychology interacts with the online social media environment in ways that exacerbates intergroup conflict.

The second part of the project involves experimentally testing how moral-emotive social media posts make group identities more salient and increase willingness to respond in a hostile manner either in defense of the in-group or by attacking the outgroup, corresponding with an increase in affective polarization. While there is compelling circumstantial and correlational evidence for social media's role in the rise of affective polarization, his study will help test for a causal relationship.



Jeffrey Deminchuk



William Favell

William Favell (political science) will use his fellowship to conduct a survey experiment to examine in-group and out-group norm comprehension along partisan lines in the United States and the interaction between this comprehension and social capital. Following the identification of group norms among the participants, a secondary test regarding how out-group members "ought" to act will be compared to the self-identified in-group norms to calculate out-group understanding. This will present a measure of out-group norm comprehension, which can be analyzed alongside the measures of social capital to test the relationship.

These funds will be utilized on the survey platform Prolific, which will enable the collection of a larger, cross-country sample to answer important questions about American political distrust and norms.

Achyut Paudel's (biological systems engineering) project is focused on precision nitrogen management in apple orchards. Although nitrogen is one of the important nutrients required by apple trees for their growth and fruit production, farmers can over-fertilize, which is detrimental both to the environment and the trees.

Working with farmers on this project, he used the funds to purchase a state-of-the-art depth sensor to obtain high quality images with depth information from trees. This is used to identify the exact nitrogen requirements of the tree to reduce the excessive amounts of fertilizers currently being used.



Achyut Paudel

Graduate Fellowships

Kate Shantry's (anthropology) study considers human use of a disturbed landscape to implement ecological management practices with social implications on the Northwest Coast of North America. In the case of the Osceola Mudflow in southern Puget Sound, the archaeological record suggests rapid human reoccupation following the abrupt Middle Holocene geological event.

The goals of her study are firstly to examine the strategies enacted by coastal foothill-dwelling hunter-fisher-gatherers to survive in the short and long-term, secondly to contextualize foothill settlement patterns through multiple analytical and historical data lines in the mid-Holocene, and finally to explore landscape management and renewal techniques used to thrive in the newly formed landscape, which may be used to inform future disaster planning.



Kate Shantry



Kathryn Sheridan Stiefel

Kathryn Sheridan Stiefel's (education) research project focuses on the lived experiences of young adults with intellectual disabilities across a range of educational settings to highlight their perceptions of belonging, inclusion, and exclusion in different educational spaces.

She utilizes retrospective interpretative phenomenological analysis to provide a space in which young adults with intellectual disabilities provide critical insight regarding how special education policy is implemented and experienced by students for whom these policies are designed.

Pacific Northwest Political Science Association

Pacific Northwest
Political Science Association



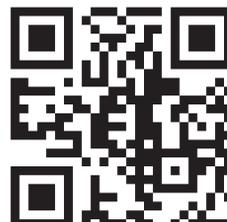
The Foley Institute provides the institutional home for the Pacific Northwest Political Science Association. An annual meeting is held in different locations in the region every year and provides opportunities for faculty and students from around the country to share their research.

Pictured here is Foley Intern and Honors College political science student Emily Frey, presenting her research poster at the 2023 meeting held in Vancouver, B.C.

The 2024 annual meeting will be held in Tacoma, WA.



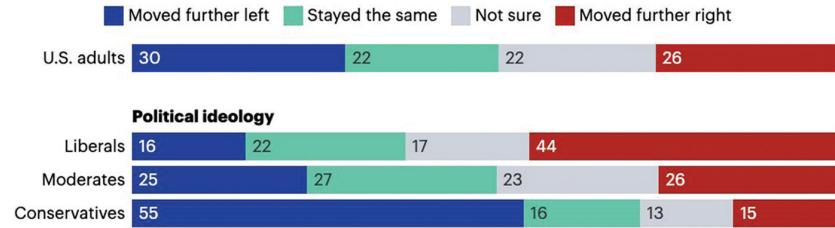
Emily Frey



Find out more at
<https://pnwpsa.org/>

Liberals see the U.S. as moving to the right while conservatives see it moving to the left

In the past 10 years, would you say that the politics of the U.S. as a whole have...? (%)



YouGov

Chart: David H. Montgomery • November 3 - 6, 2023

Fao, who study democracy. They found a significant generational decline in how Americans value democracy. While roughly 70% of Americans in the generation born before World War II consider democracy essential, only about 30% of those 40 or younger do so, and many of those point to major challenges like climate change and the national debt that political elites are failing to address.

American democracy will not survive if people feel that it consistently disregards their views, doesn't address their problems, or believe they are becoming worse off under it.

But some of the negativity stems from deeper anxieties created by the rapidity of the social and economic changes that the nation has experienced since the 1970s. The shift from an industrial economy to a globalized, information economy has upended traditional career expectations and employment.

The social and cultural shifts that came with empowering women, people of color, and other oppressed groups have been far-reaching. The sheer pace of these changes has left many disoriented, and, in the words of Sociologist Arlie Hochschild, feeling like "strangers in their own land."

The natural response to destabilizing change is a feeling of loss, a sense that things are out of control. That feeling is not limited to one side or the other.

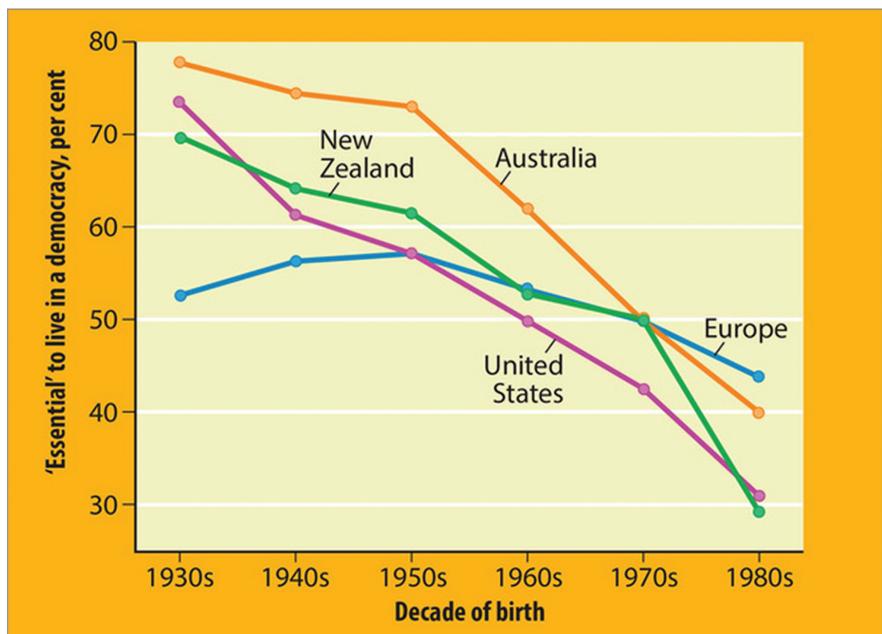
The polling group YouGov, for instance, asked Americans whether they thought the country had moved to the left or the right during the past decade. The responses were evenly split, but while most self-identified conservatives said the country had shifted to the left, most self-identified liberals claimed it had shifted to the right.

According to surveys by Pew and Gallup, people of color feel like the country is becoming less fair to them, while whites feel that they are now denied opportunities. Christians feel like they are discriminated against, while Muslims and Jews feel they are targeted. It seems everyone thinks the country is moving away from their political views and values, that they are losing "their America."

Of course, it can't be that everyone is losing. But this near universal feeling of loss, however, helps explain another recent set of bleak findings from political scientists Yascha Mounk and Roberto

So, how do we address this growing sense of disaffection, especially among younger Americans? First, we must recognize the peddlers of fear and doom as the opportunists that they are. They trade in fear to gain power. At the height of the Great Depression in 1933, when conditions were bad, Franklin Roosevelt delivered his first inaugural address rejecting the "nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror" spread by fear-mongers of his day, insisting that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." He was right.

The larger solution, however, involves education. And that is where the Foley Institute comes in. Those who don't know the past are more likely to embrace false nostalgia about it, imagining some mythical past when problems and inequalities did not exist. When was this? During the Civil War? The industrial revolution? The Great Depression in the 1930s? World War II? Perhaps during Jim Crow in the 1950s, or Vietnam and the political turmoil of the 1960s?



The truth is, that the past was far worse for most Americans, and progress toward greater freedom and prosperity, although halting at times, has been steady. Some of the institute's public events this past year reminded us just how brutal and unjust the past really was—the tragedy of Indian boarding schools (see p. 9) or the history of racial discrimination (see p. 10), for example. Others, such our event on the rise of extremist groups (see p. 10), brought home the danger of accepting false narratives about the past.

Beyond acknowledging historical progress, it is also important to not shy away from current problems: inequalities continue to exist; the national debt is too large; our immigration and border security systems are broken; the costs of housing, education, and healthcare must be addressed; climate change is real and accelerating. The institute regularly hosts events around all of these and other pressing policy issues. Last fall the institute ran a ten-part public lecture series (with an associated academic course) on the challenges presented by climate change (see pp. 4-8). Speakers addressed not only the science behind

our understanding of climate change but also discussed practical, politically feasible ways crisis can be mitigated or averted in the future.

The United States has overcome many great challenges in the past. It has the resources and the capacity to tackle its current challenges as well if it recovers a sense of perspective and regains confidence in its strengths. As Bill Clinton once said, "There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America." That remains true today, and the Foley Institute remains committed to that promise. Please support us in that mission today.

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