

Muhlenberg College

## DANA FORUM 2016



**Wednesday, April 20, 2016**

Great Room, Seegers Union

5:00 PM

**Thursday, April 21, 2016**

Great Room, Seegers Union

5:00 PM



## *About the Dana Scholars Program*

### **Mission Statement**

The Dana Program offers outstanding, intellectually versatile students an opportunity to belong to a community of scholars that fosters conversations across disciplines, rigorous academic inquiry, and promotes engaged citizenship and leadership. Each Dana scholar can major in any academic department or program. All Dana seniors engage in collaborative research projects on issues of public concern and interest.

**Director:** Dr. Mohsin Hashim  
**Forum Director, 2015 – 2016:** Dr. Jeff Pooley

**Faculty Advisory Committee:**  
Dr. Margo Hobbs, Dr. Joseph Keane  
Dr. Jeff Pooley, Dr. Cathy Marie Ouellette

**Student Advisory Committee:**

<b><i>Class of 2016</i></b>	<b><i>Class of 2017</i></b>
Jessica Wilson	Lara Roseto
Jillian Mauro	Alan Mendez
	Alexander Stavros

<b><i>Class of 2018</i></b>	<b><i>Class of 2019</i></b>
Jonathan Walker	Taj Singh
Genevieve Wall	Jamie Greenberg



## *Dana Forum*

The **Dana Forum** is designed as a senior year capstone experience to deepen a sense of community among Dana scholars and to enrich the intellectual climate on campus. Each year the Forum helps Dana seniors develop and execute collaborative research projects that are tied to the Center for Ethics' annual theme. In the Fall semester, under the supervision of the Director of the Dana Forum, students engage academic questions related to the annual theme chosen by the Center for Ethics. They also form working groups to research a topic of their choice and identify a faculty mentor for the project. The collaborative research component of the Dana Forum is completed during the spring semester of the Dana Scholar's senior year under the mentorship of a faculty member chosen by each group. The specific nature of each team's project depends on the students' background, interests, and goals. Because of the goals of the Dana program, projects that also serve the community are strongly encouraged.

**Dr. Jeff Pooley, Forum Director, 2015 - 2016**



## *Center for Ethics*

The Muhlenberg College Center for Ethics seeks to develop our capacities for ethical reflection, moral leadership, and responsible action by engaging community members in scholarly dialogue, intellectual analysis, and self-examination about contested ethical issues.

Through thematic lectures and events, the Center for Ethics serves the teaching and study of the liberal arts at Muhlenberg College by providing opportunities for intensive conversation and thinking about the ethical dimensions of contemporary philosophical, political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific issues. In service to its mission, the Center for Ethics hosts special events and programs, provides faculty development opportunities, provides support for student programming, and sponsors a Living & Learning Community coordinated by a Faculty Scholar-in-Residence. The Center and thematic programs are directed by full-time faculty members. Muhlenberg College gratefully acknowledges the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation's support of the Center for Ethics.

The 2015-2016 programs are entitled *Influence and Information: Whose Safety? Whose Security?* and *Influence and Information: Manipulation Nation*

**Dr. Chris Sistare, Director, Center for Ethics**



## Schedule of Events

### Wednesday, April 20

- 5:00 p.m.                      Hors d'oeuvres Served
- 5:15 p.m.                      Welcome and Opening Remarks  
Dr. Chris Sistare
- 5:30 p.m.                      *Who Says?: How College Students React to Source and Mes-  
sage in E-Cigarette Video Marketing*  
Caroline Berman, Jillian Mauro, Daniel McKenna,  
Megan Smith
- 6:00 p.m.                      *The Influence and Persistence of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the  
Wind"*  
Timothy DeRosa, Emily Michaels, Shaena Singer, Ka-  
tie Skwirut
- 6:30 p.m.                      *Sharknado 5: Characterizing the Saliency of Climate Change*  
Matt Dacher, Thomas Hoffman, Michael Hovan,  
Nicole Karsch
- 7:00 p.m.                      *Weeding Through the Law: Does College Cannabis Policy  
Evolve with the Will of the State?*  
Daniel Bigelow, Dana Brodsky, Jake Levine
- 7:30 p.m.                      Closing Remarks  
Dr. Jeff Pooley



## *Schedule of Events*

### **Thursday, April 21**

- 5:00 p.m.                      Hors d'oeuvres Served
- 5:15 p.m.                      Welcome and Opening Remarks  
Dr. Tad Robinson
- 5:30 p.m.                      *Iconicity, Narrative, and Perception: Images of School  
Shootings and the Power of Hidden Headlines*  
Emily Nguyen, Eric Quitter, Brittney Tuff, Jessica  
Wilson
- 6:00 p.m.                      *Contested Framing: The Struggle to Establish a Dominant  
Rhetoric in Public Opinion, Media Coverage, and Political  
Discourse Following the Planned Parenthood Video  
Controversy*  
Adam Elwood, Rachel Heist, Maxine Silver
- 6:30 p.m.                      *PC in the American Popular Imagination: A Study of its  
Utility in Collegiate and Electoral Environments*  
Jonathan Hauptfeld, Brendan Huffman, Richard  
Kormos
- 7:00 p.m.                      Closing Remarks  
Dr. Mohsin Hashim



## *Event Schedule*

**April 20  
5:30 P.M.**

### **Who Says?: How College Students React to Source and Message in E-Cigarette Video Marketing**

**Presenters**

Caroline Berman  
Jillian Mauro  
Daniel McKenna  
Megan Smith

**Mentor**

Prof. Chrysan Cronin

Electronic cigarettes are quickly becoming a powerful contender for America's money and attention, especially college students. According to a Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study, e-cigarettes are most popular with 18-24 year olds, with 22% of adults who tried e-cigarettes falling in that age group. On Muhlenberg's campus, cigarettes are banned in buildings and classrooms, but e-cigarettes are not. Unlike cigarette advertising, which has been banned on TV and radio since 1971, e-cigarettes have no restrictions on where or how they can be advertised. At the same time, very little scientific information about e-cigarettes is available to the public. This relatively new way to smoke is currently unregulated by the FDA, and few studies have been able to make conclusions about its relative safety to cigarettes, as well as new dangers the technology might pose. As such, much of the public information about e-cigarettes comes from advertisements and peer experience, rather than scientific data. In the context of this year's Center for Ethics themes, "Whose Safety, Whose Security?" and "Manipulation Nation," our group seeks to look at how these sources of information about e-cigarettes are perceived by college students, its number one users. To study this, we conducted focus groups with Muhlenberg College students which asked participants to watch three e-cigarette advertisements and respond both privately and publicly to various marketing tactics. We analyzed how students responded to the sources and claims in e-cigarette advertisements, and how that was affected by age, class year, gender, previous smoking experience, and other factors. We also looked at how students' answers changed when they answered in a private survey versus a public group discussion, and what that means about our community values and pressures. We hope to gain a better understanding of how this explosive new technology is perceived on a campus such as Muhlenberg's, and make hypotheses about the future of this developing technology.



## Event Schedule

**April 20  
6:00 P.M.**

**Presenters**  
Timothy DeRosa  
Emily Michaels  
Shaena Singer  
Katie Skwirut

**Mentor**  
Prof. Roberta Meek

### **The Influence and Persistence of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind"**

Historically, music has helped unify followers behind movements. Whether it was the propaganda music of the 40's used to gain support for WWII, the songs protesting the Vietnam War in the 60's, or the freedom songs of the Civil Rights Movement, music has served as a backbone for creating and sustaining support for a cause. Occasionally, one of these songs of persuasion comes to stand out above the rest; maybe for the way it became an anthem in its time or perhaps for its ability to transcend more than one movement. Using "Blowin' in the Wind" and Bob Dylan as a lens, we aim to discover what it is about certain songs that allow them to influence such wide ranges of people and grant them such lasting power. After examining research on music and its manipulative and persuasive abilities, we performed a historical case study on the song, looking at the contexts in which it arose, the ways in which it was adopted by and influenced protest movements around the time of its creation, and the ways in which it has been utilized more recently in more commercialized veins. We conclude that "Blowin' in the Wind" was uniquely positioned at a time when folk music and music with social messages were able to truly reach mass audiences. The deep philosophical nature of the song inspires the listener, while the lack of connection to a particular movement allows it to be adopted to fit almost any cause. In more recent times, it has come to serve as a representation of protest music and is often used to evoke nostalgia of memories associated with the song.





## *Event Schedule*

**April 20  
6:30 P.M.**

### **Sharknado 5: Characterizing the Saliency of Climate Change**

**Presenters**

Matt Dacher  
Thomas Hoffman  
Michael Hovan  
Nicole Karsch

**Mentor**

Dr. Chris Borick

The inspiration for our study comes from the paradox that is the pressing issue of climate change and the lack of saliency amongst Americans, especially amongst the population of educated youth on a college campus. The goal of our project is to determine the saliency of climate change as an issue to Muhlenberg students and investigate possible explanations for the results. If our generation stands a chance at addressing climate change, understanding the lack of saliency on the issue is a key obstacle to overcome in the process. To characterize saliency, we first held a focus group with ten students on the topic of climate change and issue saliency to better prepare the survey questions and direction. Throughout the semester we have collected data via a survey to students, distributed randomly through convenience sampling to maximize the number of participants. Our hypothesis is that climate change is not a salient issue amongst college students. We assume that this is mainly because the lack of immanency and agency regarding the issue. To expand, college students might not feel personally affected by the issue and/or they feel as if they lack agency to change its course. These factors may also act in conjunction with media bias and consumer culture which define the current paradigm of societal structure. Our analysis focuses on identifying the obstacles to saliency on campus and supplementing this insight with a comparison to national survey data collected by the University of Michigan. Understanding the nature of the saliency of an issue that will plague our future provides a valuable place from which to explore root causes and develop effective strategies to address climate change moving forward.



## *Event Schedule*

**April 20  
7:00 P.M.**

### **Weeding Through the Law: Does College Cannabis Policy Evolve with the Will of the State?**

**Presenters**

Daniel Bigelow  
Dana Brodsky  
Jake Levine

**Mentor**

Dr. Jeremy Teissere

Within the last five years, numerous states and districts have legalized cannabis, ushering in a new era of American drug law. The goal of our study was to investigate current college policies in Washington, Oregon, Colorado and the District of Columbia in connection with the allowance of cannabis usage and possession for students. We sent e-mails to the Deans of Students at 12 liberal arts colleges in these states, asking for their institutions' policies on cannabis as well as an explanation for why or why not a change was made. With an analysis of federal, state, and school laws and policies to substantiate the individual responses, we found that no institutions have changed their policies to reflect the new state laws over fear of losing federal funding. This project reveals an important relationship between federal and state law in the realm of higher education policy as well as the presence of a lingering stigma about cannabis usage. Our study calls into question who is protected by the federal laws prohibiting cannabis as well as the extent to which the colleges' decisions are protecting the students, the institutions, or both.



## *Event Schedule*

**April 21  
5:30 P.M.**

### **Iconicity, Narrative, and Perception: Images of School Shootings and the Power of Hidden Headlines**

**Presenters**

Emily Nguyen  
Eric Quitter  
Brittney Tuff  
Jessica Wilson

**Mentor**

Dr. Irene Chien

Despite a national commitment to high standards of learning and universal recognition of the importance of education, schools in America are not safe. School shootings are a startlingly frequent feature of modern life in the US—throughout the last ten years, these tragedies have occurred an average of once every two weeks. In the aftermath, news anchors, community leaders, and political figures alike use words and images as a means of storytelling, analysis, and healing. Images have the unique ability to cut through endless calls-to-action, condemnation, and consolation; they manage to speak to audiences in a more visceral way. Images seem to become symbols of the events themselves; the narrative quality, emotional power, and visual aesthetics of photographs allow them to function as independent mechanisms of contextualization and interpretation. By choosing to publish images of shooters, victims, or memorials, news organizations responsible for disseminating these photographs have the ability to consciously—or unconsciously—reinforce certain perspectives. The present study investigated this process of perceptual manipulation on a smaller scale, in order to elucidate and characterize the reciprocal relationship between image aesthetics, narrative attributes, emotional power, and event understanding. This work focused on shootings at two institutions: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (2007) and Sandy Hook Elementary School (2012). Researchers selected salient images of both events, which were then presented to focus groups of Muhlenberg College students. Participants identified narrative focuses and emotional qualities associated with particular images, and discussed which photographs of each shooting were most worthy of publication. Extended conversations with groups of subjects revealed that preferred images frequently reinforced or reproduced individuals' existing perceptions and emotions. These results suggest that people are drawn to images that support previously held viewpoints, thereby limiting the propagation and proliferation of novel perspectives.



## Event Schedule

April 21  
6:00 P.M.

### **Contested Framing: The Struggle to Establish a Dominant Rhetoric in Public Opinion, Media Coverage, and Political Discourse Following the Planned Parenthood Video Controversy**

**Presenters**

Adam Elwood  
Rachel Heist  
Maxine Silver

**Mentor**

Dr. Lanethea  
Mathews-Schultz

The public, the media, and political elites all influence each other and contribute to the decisions that ultimately influence the lives of American citizens. Following the release of the Center for Medical Progress videos, questioning the ethics and legality of fetal tissue collection by the Planned Parenthood organization, a contest emerged to establish the way in which this issue would be framed. Whichever group's chosen frame became the majority rhetoric could influence future policy changes. Some of the frames used included the protection of women, fetuses, or taxpayers. We sought to understand how framing appeared in media publications and political discourse, as well as which groups ascribed to those frames and how this impacted public opinion surrounding the issue. The groups that we analyzed using these frames were Republican elites, Democratic elites, journalists, Planned Parenthood representatives, and the Center for Medical Progress representatives. We studied the rhetoric and tone used in *New York Times* articles concerning Planned Parenthood's fetal tissue collection as well as the rhetoric used in the Congressional hearing that investigated the financial state of the Planned Parenthood organization. Finally, we compared public opinion polls regarding the controversy to understand how the public responded to the unfolding events. Between July 14, 2015 and October 16, 2015, the presentation by the media, the response of the public, and the statements made during the Congressional proceedings represented the vast discrepancies in language that highlighted the variety of frames utilized by different groups. The release of these controversial videos allowed political elites and media groups to compete for the dominant frame that would shape the national conversation around Planned Parenthood.



## Event Schedule

April 21  
6:30 P.M.

### **PC in the American Popular Imagination: A Study of its Utility in Collegiate and Electoral Environments**

#### **Presenters**

Jonathan Hauptfeld  
Brendan Huffman  
Richard Kormos

#### **Mentor**

Dr. Brian Mello

What are the nuances of PC in the social media age? How are they functioning on a local (college campus) and national (electoral politics) stage? How has PC in the American popular consciousness evolved since its emergence as a household term in the 90s? Political correctness is particularly timely as a research topic. Electoral politics, student protests, and other current events have renewed interest in political correctness on a national stage. In addition to its timeliness, political correctness is worthy of our attention as burgeoning academics and millennials. Political correctness is a pressing issue on college campuses nationwide and is deeply intertwined with imminent demographic and socio-cultural changes that our generation will have to contend with as the 21st century unfolds. We have collected and analyzed the rhetoric and content of two groups of documents. The first is a book written by Richard Bernstein and subsequent book reviews and responses to his work. Bernstein's work catapulted political correctness into public discourse, making it a household phrase. The second group of documents revolves around an article written by Jonathan Chait in January 2015. The article revived the topic of political correctness and provoked a litany of editorial responses which round out the rest of this latter group's documents. We have identified these two articles as "ground zeros" of sorts for the subsequent debates on political correctness they generated in the 1990s and the 2010s. The group of documents responding to Chait's editorial lent us insight into the contemporary landscape of social media and online journalism. Chait's article and its responses formed a more cohesive inter-referential dialogue, and because we were fascinated by the realities of online journalism we elected to focus on this literature in lieu of our original transhistorical approach. We have structured our findings in three sections: a historical background informed the Bernstein literature, an examination of PC on college campuses, and analysis of PC as a device in partisan politics. Social media plays a prominent role in the studies of all three subsections.



*Notes*



## *Notes*



## *DANA Scholars*

### *Class of 2016*

Caroline Berman  
Daniel Bigelow  
Dana Brodsky  
Matthew Dacher  
Timothy DeRosa  
Adam Elwood  
Jonathan Hauptfeld  
Rachel Heist  
Thomas Hoffmann  
Michael Hovan  
Brendan Huffman  
Nicole Karsch  
Richard Kormos  
Jake Levine  
Jillian Mauro  
Daniel McKenna  
Emily Michaels  
Emily Nguyen  
Eric Quitter  
Maxine Silver  
Shaena Singer  
Katie Skwirut  
Megan Smith  
Brittney Tuff  
Jessica Wilson