

Muhlenberg College

DANA FORUM 2018



Wednesday, April 25, 2018

Seegers Union 113

5:00 PM

Thursday, April 26, 2018

Seegers Union 113

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, 2017–2018: Dr. Thaddeus Robinson

Faculty Advisory Committee:

Dr. Keri Colabroy, Dr. Dawn Lonsinger
Dr. Matthew Moore, Dr. Cathy Ouellette

Student Advisory Committee:

Class of 2018

Weston Conner
Katerina Havlik

Class of 2019

James DeMatteo
Kelly Travitz

Class of 2020

Meray Faragalla
Nisha Godbole

Class of 2021

Hannah Betz
Kyra Hickey



Dana Forum

The Dana Forum is designed as a senior year capstone experience (0.5 credit each semester) to promote engaged citizenship and leadership to enrich the intellectual climate on campus. Each year the Forum oversees the development and execution of collaborative research projects as Dana seniors pursue rigorous academic inquiry on issues of public concern and interest tied to the Center for Ethics' annual theme. In the Fall semester, under the supervision of the Director of the Dana Forum, students engage with academic questions related to the annual theme chosen by the Center for Ethics and form working groups to research a topic of their choice. 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. Thaddeus Robinson, Forum Director, 2017–2018



Center for Ethics 2017—2018 Program

The 2017—2018 program is entitled *Troubling Truth*.

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.

The Center for Ethics will take up the most contested ethical issue of our contemporary moment: the “Truth.” In the age of media manipulations, alternative facts, conspiracy theories and security leaks, how do we reconcile debates surrounding the universality or relativity of truth?

We begin with an interrogation of “truth” and then raise a series of questions: How does history, experience and power craft the way conceptions of “truth” come to exist? How do we define truth, how does it circulate and what tools do we have to expose the shaky foundations of a taken-for-granted world? How do notions of what is “true” foreclose opportunities to expand the way we engage with, conceive of and imagine both our world and each other? How does the seemingly subjective nature of experience, memory and marginalization interact with the seemingly objective nature of facts, data and certainty?

Dr. Chris Sistare, Director, Center for Ethics

Program Directors: Dr. Maura Finkelstein and Dr. Lora Taub-Pervizpour



Schedule of Events

Wednesday, April 25

- 5:00—5:15 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres Served
- 5:15—5:25 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
Dr. Thaddeus Robinson, Dana Forum
Director
- 5:30—6:00 p.m. *Self-Diagnosis and Social Construction*
Katie Havlik, Brock Juliano, Sara Kass, and
Sarah Roussel
- 6:05—6:35 p.m. *Trigger Warnings in Academia*
Tom Herr, Gwen Kelly, Megan Leahy,
September McCarthy, and Jonathan Walker
- 6:40—7:10 p.m. *Reframing Failure: How We Measure Success
in Public Schools*
Weston Conner, Daniel Dobro, Genevieve
Wall, Tara Werner, and Katelyn Winter
- 7:10—7:40 p.m. Post-Presentation Conversations



Schedule of Events

Thursday, April 26

- 5:00—5:15 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres Served
- 5:15—5:25 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
Dr. Brian Mello, Incoming Director, Center for Ethics
- 5:30—6:00 p.m. *Social Media and the Self: An Analysis of Psychology on Instagram*
Anthony Carracino, Carly DeNigris, Lindsey Sharp, Johnny Tamburro
- 6:05—6:35 p.m. *Doctors, Medicine, and the Truth*
Laura Gleason, Michelle Haykin, Julia Leep-Lizar, and Katlyn Mayer
- 6:40—7:10 p.m. *An Exploration in Punditry: Whose Truth Is It?*
Julia Kotler, Stephanie Levine, Deanna Mayo, and Julia Tyson
- 7:10 p.m. Closing Remarks
Dr. Mohsin Hashim, Director, Dana Scholars Program
- 7:15—7:40 p.m. Post Presentation Conversations



Event Schedule

**April 25
5:30 P.M.**

Self-Diagnosis and Social Construction

Presenters

Katie Havlik
Brock Juliano
Sara Kass
Sarah Roussel

Mentor

Dr. Kate Richmond

This project assesses fundamental questions regarding pain: not simply what pain is, but who gets to name it and why, as well as how and when it is named. We “trouble” the truth of the inherent medicalization of such a subjective term and delve into practices of pain-naming via non-professional self-diagnosis, which we argue has become both more common and more controversial since the emergence of online medial information. We use case studies of personal blog posts on platforms such as Tumblr to examine non-professional beliefs about the legitimacy of self-diagnosis as a practice as well as individual self-diagnoses. Because we hypothesize that online medial information is a tool in most -diagnosing behavior, this projects is particularly relevant in the current digital era. This project has both political and social implications regarding identity, psychiatric and somatic medical practices and policies, and will trouble and complicate current understandings of truth in medicine, and what it means to name one’s own pain.



Event Schedule

**April 25
6:05 P.M.**

Trigger Warnings in Academia

Presenters

Tom Herr
Gwen Kelly
Megan Leahy
September McCarthy
Jonathan Walker

Mentor

Dr. David
Rosenwasser

In this project, we aim to explore how trigger warnings are perceived, understood, and used by professors in the classroom and during campus events. The two main sides of the debate we are navigating are “trigger warnings chill classroom debate” and “they are necessary for survivors of trauma.” We look to reconcile these opposing sides and find more nuanced views of trigger warnings in this study. To focus our research, we will limit our scope to the Muhlenberg campus. Through a series of in-depth interviews with Muhlenberg professors and a general campus-wide faculty survey, we hope to gather information on how professors at Muhlenberg approach trigger warnings. We will support our empirical research with a collection of academic articles, addressing the origin of trigger warnings, their psychological impacts, and other empirical studies measuring the prevalence of trigger warnings in other undergraduate institutions. As a result of our research, we hope to devise a list of best practices for professors and staff at Muhlenberg regarding the use of trigger warnings on campus. Our best practices document will ideally be representative not only of the current campus climate on trigger warnings, but provide a more nuanced understanding of the use of trigger warnings at Muhlenberg.



Event Schedule

**April 25
6:40 P.M.**

Reframing Failure: How We Measure Success in Public Schools

Presenters

Weston Conner
Daniel Dobro
Genevieve Wall
Tara Werner
Katelyn Winter

Mentor

Dr. Matt Moore

The national conversation around public education is going through a period of transition. In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced No Child Left Behind (2001). Both NCLB and ESSA seem mostly concerned with using annual test scores to track, measure, and define student achievement; however, the public discourse surrounding school evaluation has seen an increasing concern that test scores alone are an inadequate metric to measure a school's success. The very definitions of success and failure with regard to school performance seem to be increasingly tenuous, especially as schools transition from the standards of NCLB to those of ESSA. We seek to understand how the label of 'failing school' entered our public consciousness. When school performance is tied to funding, a school's "failing" can have sharp consequences for its student body. How do these metrics affect perceptions of nearby school districts as seen publicly in local media, and are they reliable measures of "success?" To what extent do established legislation and standards play into this concept and perhaps, in part, create its reality? Using data and information from federal and state legislation and standards, the federal census, and unofficial sources, this project seeks to understand what it means to be a "failing school."



Event Schedule

**April 26
5:30 P.M.**

Social Media and the Self: An Analysis of Psychology on Instagram

Presenters

Anthony Carracino
Carly DeNigris
Anne Kitz
Lindsey Sharp
Johnny Tamburro

Mentor

Dr. Jeff Pooley

As our society becomes further entrenched in the digital age, the effects of many digital constructs are beginning to manifest as very real physiological and psychological quirks. Social media, especially Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram, have generated some of the largest and most active user bases on the internet. Many people utilize social media to increase self esteem or present a more ideal version of themselves to followers who do not see what goes on behind the scenes. Through our study, we hope to come to a greater understanding as to how interaction with these social networks, specifically Instagram, impacts psychological health, as well as discern how and why people interact with these social networks. We will conduct a series of in-depth interviews and analysis of volunteers' social media accounts, tracking the performative content of their accounts along with real-life events to examine if social media usage has an immediately recognizable effect on one's mental well being. We are interested in a variety of demographics, including both men and women, as well as frequent and infrequent users of Instagram to gain a clearer understanding of how social media affects our society's mental health and well-being.



Event Schedule

**April 26
6:05 P.M.**

Doctors, Medicine, and the Truth

Presenters

Laura Gleason
Michelle Haykin
Julia Leep-Lizar
Katlyn Mayer

Mentor

Dr. Chrys Cronin

The dynamics of the relationship between a patient and a patient's healthcare provider can create obstacles and lead to the distortion of truth. Differences in education levels are a major barrier that impedes fully honest communication between patients and their respective healthcare providers. The ability of a patient and provider to communicate with one another is critical for positive health outcomes, including accurate diagnoses and providing the patient with the ability to understand their options in order to make their own treatment decisions. In the event that a significant gap exists between the education level of the patient and the provider, it may be difficult to communicate effectively, unintentionally putting the patient's health as well as their autonomy in jeopardy. This project aims to uncover why the education level of a patient is an integral part of healthcare communication, and seeks to suggest ways in which both patients and healthcare providers can attempt to mitigate the effects of educational differences in terms of communication and the resulting health outcomes. These goals will be achieved through a literature review that brings together ideas from multiple disciplines, including but not limited to public health, psychology, and philosophy and combined with brief interviews detailing doctor's first-hand experiences in communicating with patients of various education levels.



Event Schedule

**April 26
6:40 P.M.**

Exploration in Punditry: Whose Truth Is It?

Presenters

Julia Kotler
Stephanie Levine
Deanna Mayo
Julia Tyson

Mentor

Dr. Chris Borick

The presentation of ideas is a way by which pundits affect how information is disseminated to the public. The presentation of a news story can be skewed by the person or network sharing it, with personal biases and emotional connections intrinsically intertwined. Performance studies is a growing field which encompasses and examines the cultural and topical breadth of our daily performance of ourselves and interactions with others. With the daily deluge of information from news media, it is paramount to discover where the truth lies, especially where pundits are concerned. This paper will explore the performative aspects of pundits brought in by three major news networks, Fox News, MSNBC and CNN, over a two-week time period. Tucker Carlson, Chris Hayes, and Anderson Cooper share the prime time 9pm time slot and present diverse viewpoints on the spectrum of political perspectives, by nature of their parent network. Through thorough behavioral, quantitative and performative coding, the research will explore the difference in ways pundits are presented across the three network shows. Are the performances of these pundits contributing to truth? Are they skewing the information we receive? Perhaps we will discover a mode of navigating the waters of news media to determine the true facts.



Notes



Notes



Notes



DANA Scholars

Class of 2018

Anthony Carracino
Weston Conner
Carly DeNigris
Caroline Dickson
Daniel Dobro
Laura Gleason
Katerina Havlik
Thomas Herr
Brock Juliano
Sara Kass
Gwen Kelly
Anne Kitz
Julia Kotler
Megan Leahy
Julia Leep-Lazar
Stephanie Levine
Katlyn Mayer
Deanna Mayo
September McCarthy
Jacob Nelson
Kathryn Prozzo
Monica Ransegnola
Sarah Roussel
Lindsey Sharp
John Tamburro
Julia Tyson
Jonathan Walker
Genevieve Wall
Tara Werner
Katelyn Winter