



# Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025**

# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE CENTER .....	3
CENTER FELLOWS.....	4
OUTREACH & EVENTS .....	6
UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM .....	12
STUDENT & FACULTY GRANTS .....	14
BENSON CENTER IN NUMBERS .....	16
FACULTY, STAFF, & INTERNS.....	18

2024-2025

# ABOUT THE CENTER

The University of Colorado, Boulder, established the Center for Western Civilization in 2006 to promote the study of Western values and traditions. In 2013, the university launched the Visiting Scholar Conservative Thought and Policy to foster intellectual diversity on campus. These two initiatives were merged in 2014. In 2019, the Center was renamed the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization in honor of the University of Colorado System President Emeritus, in recognition for his leadership and support.

The Center's mission is twofold: to promote the study of Western Civilization and to foster intellectual and ideological diversity on campus and beyond. At the heart of this mission is a commitment to open dialogue about the fundamental values that support a free, prosperous, and just society. The Center serves as a forum for free inquiry and open debate, champions academic freedom and civic discourse, and encourages students, faculty, and the broader community to engage with the most pressing and controversial issues facing society.

The Center supports research grounded in the Western intellectual tradition, with particular emphasis on the ancient and modern worlds, the formation and history of the United States, and the distinctive contributions of the Mountain West and Colorado to the American experiment. It promotes balanced discourse, welcomes diverse viewpoints, and seeks a broad range of perspectives on philosophical, political, and economic questions. The Center is committed to intellectual rigor, while providing a venue for exploring the nation's intellectual, cultural, and political foundations. The focus on political and economic freedom, moral and legal equality, and individual liberty and responsibility offers students, scholars, and the residents of Colorado the opportunity to engage with and examine the heritage and history that have shaped the United States.

2024-2025

# CENTER FELLOWS

Fundamental to the Benson Center's mission is to bring a diversity of voices to the University of Colorado, Boulder campus. Toward this end, this year the Center hosted its thirteenth Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, two Sabbatical Fellows, eight CU Faculty Fellows and one Graduate Fellow. These scholars work in fields connected to the study of Western Civilization, participate in events and programming, teach courses, and support the undergraduate fellows program.



# VISITING SCHOLAR IN CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT AND POLICY

## Patrick Deneen

*Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame*



Patrick Deneen holds a B.A. in English Literature and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Rutgers University. He joined the faculty at the University of Notre Dame in the fall of 2012. His widely-discussed 2018 book, *Why Liberalism Failed*, has been translated into over twenty languages and was praised by former President Barack Obama. His published books include: *Regime Change: Toward a Postliberal Future* (Penguin, 2023), *Why Liberalism Failed* (Yale University Press, 2018), *Conserving America? Thoughts on Present Discontents* (St. Augustine Press, 2016), *Democratic Faith* (Princeton University Press, 2005), *The Odyssey of Political Theory* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), *Democracy's Literature* (ed.), (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), *The Democratic Soul* (ed.), (University Press of Kentucky, 2011), *Redeeming Democracy in America* (ed.), (University Press of Kansas, 2011).

## SABBATICAL FELLOWS

### Matthew G. Nagler

*Professor of Economics, The City College of New York*



"My Benson Center experience was stimulating and eye-opening. At brown bag seminars and other meetings with affiliated scholars and visitors, I was exposed to research and creative ideas that ranged across multiple disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Free-ranging discussion was not just tolerated but encouraged."

### James Strasburg

*Associate Professor of History, Hillsdale College*



"The Benson Center proved a most supportive and invigorating intellectual home for my sabbatical. The Center's fellows and staff offered invaluable insight and assistance on my research, and its commitment to principled dialogue on some of our era's most pressing civic themes shone through in the many scholars and lectures it hosted. In our polarized times, this kind of bridge building work is sorely needed."

## FACULTY FELLOWS

### Eric Alston

*Scholar in Residence in the Finance Division in the Leeds School of Business*

### Paul Diduch

*Associate Teaching Professor in the Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics and Society*

### Philip P. DiStefano

*Chancellor Emeritus*

### Iskra Fileva

*Associate Professor of Philosophy*

### Andrea Kowalchuk

*Associate Teaching Professor in the Herbst Program of Engineering, Ethics and Society*

### Michelangelo Landgrave

*Assistant Professor of Political Science*

### Joseph Porter

*Associate Teaching Professor at the Benson Center*

### Benjamin Teitelbaum

*Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and International Affairs*

2024-2025

# OUTREACH & EVENTS

Central to the Benson Center's mission is a commitment to fostering dialogue about fundamental values, asking controversial questions, and providing a forum for free inquiry and open debate. The Center promotes balanced discourse that engages diverse viewpoints to ensure a wide range of political, economic, and philosophical perspectives are represented at CU Boulder.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Center hosted several events, including a conference on the future of technological change featuring remarks from Colorado Governor Jared Polis, faculty workshops, undergraduate lunches and trivia nights, and public lectures. Events explored topics such as antisemitism and Western Civilization, the potential for capitalism and democracy to coexist, and American politics in the first half of 2025. More than 2,300 people participated either in-person or virtually, including nearly 900 students. Recordings of the events are available through the Center's YouTube channel and social media pages.



## PUBLIC EVENTS

### THE CONSERVATIVE ENVIRONMENTALIST

**Benji Backer** (*American Conservation Coalition*)  
October 9, 2024

### ONLY WHEN IT'S FUNNY: FREE SPEECH AND THE ARTS

**Jonathan Keeperman** (*Passage Press*)  
October 23, 2024

### THE GREAT AWOKENING: THE BIRTH OF IDENTITY POLITICS IN SPIRITUAL ANXIETY

**Joseph Bottum** (*Dakota State University*)  
November 6, 2024

### THE BOLDNESS OF BELIEF AND THE TIMIDITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**Matthew Crawford** (*Author of Why We Drive  
and Shop Class as Soulcraft*)  
November 11, 2024

### PROGRESSIVE MYTHS

**Michael Huemer** (*University of Colorado, Boulder*)  
November 13, 2024

### AMERICAN CATHOLIC REPUBLICANISM

**James Patterson** (*Ave Maria University*)  
December 9, 2024

### ANTI-SEMITISM AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION

**Kenneth L. Marcus** (*Louis D. Brandeis  
Center for Human Rights Under Law*)  
January 29, 2025

### CAN CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY COEXIST?

**John Wallis** (*University of Maryland, College Park*)  
March 19, 2025

### SHOULD TRANSGENDER ATHLETES BE ALLOWED TO COMPETE IN WOMEN'S SPORTS?

**Cosponsored with the Steamboat Institute**  
**Kevin Bolling** (*Secular Student Alliance*)  
**and Jennifer Sey** (*XX-XY Athletics*)  
April 9, 2025

### RENEGADE FUTURISM: TECH AND THE NEW POLITICAL COUNTERCULTURE

**Featuring:** Governor Jared Polis, Glen Weyl, Balaji Srinivasan, Geoff Shullenberger, Patrick Deneen, James Pogue, Julia Steinberg, Julie Fredrickson, Augustus Doricko, Josh Vandiver, Lynne Kiesling, Josie Zayner, Louise Liebeskind, Hadley Manning, and Benjamin Teitelbaum  
April 25 and 26, 2025

### AMERICAN POLITICS AND TRUMP 2.0

**Ross Douthat** (*New York Times*)  
April 30, 2025



# BENSON CENTER UNDERGRADUATE EVENTS

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Benson Center focused on hosting events tailored to the relaunched Undergraduate Fellows Program. The Benson Center hosted 14 student events ranging from a reading group contemplating how Plato can help us think more clearly about technology, to a film screening of *Undivide Us*.

## WESTERN CIVILIZATION SHOWDOWN TRIVIA

September 19, October 17, December 5, 2024;  
February 6, and March 18, 2025

**Organized by Benson Center Staff AJ Shively  
and Associate Teaching Professor Joseph Porter**

## HOW PLATO CAN HELP US THINK MORE CLEARLY ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

October 8, November 13 and December 4, 2024

**Organized by Benson Center Faculty Fellow Paul Diduch**

## UNDIVIDE US FILM SCREENING

October 29, 2025

**Organized by Benson Center Staff AJ Shively**

## WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS

January 29, February 12, March 12 and April 16, 2025

**Organized by Benson Center Faculty Fellow Paul Diduch**

## MACHINES OF LOVING GRACE?

### AI AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

April 7, 2025

**Organized by Benson Center Associate Teaching  
Professor Joseph Porter**





# FACULTY WORKSHOPS

Faculty workshops provided an opportunity for CU Boulder and visiting faculty to present research in progress. Faculty and graduate students from around CU Boulder are encouraged to participate.

## **ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE (NORTH) AMERICAN WEST**

**Maggie Jones** (*Emory University*)  
**and Bryan Leonard** (*University of Wyoming*)  
September 26, 2024

## **LATIN AMERICAN MIGRATIONS**

**José-Antonio Espín-Sánchez** (*Yale University*)  
**and Brian Marein** (*Wake Forest University*)  
October 10, 2024

## **DETERMINANTS OF SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATIVE PROFESSIONALISM: EVIDENCE FROM THE STATES**

**Michelangelo Landgrave**  
(*University of Colorado, Boulder*)  
February 5, 2025

## **ALTRUISTIC ARBITRAGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF CAP-AND-TRADE POLICIES**

**Matthew G. Nagler**  
(*The City College of New York*)  
February 12, 2025

## **AN ORGANIZATIONAL COASE THEOREM: CONSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS AS INCREASING IN EXIT COSTS**

**Eric Alston**  
(*University of Colorado, Boulder*)  
February 19, 2025

## **PURSUING SOCIAL PROGRESS: THE QUESTION OF ORIENTATION**

**Keith Hankins** (*Chapman University*)  
April 9, 2025

## **PUBLIC CHOICE AND ELITE THEORY: FRIENDS OR FOES?**

**Joseph Porter** (*University of Colorado, Boulder*)  
**and Alfredo Watkins** (*Duke University*)  
April 16, 2025

## **HETERODOX WORKSHOP**

The national Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy was held for the fifth time at the University of Colorado, Boulder, April 4–6, 2025. The workshop takes as its purpose to give sympathetic but not uncritical attention to work in progress from younger (primarily not yet tenured) philosophers who work on ideas at odds with the prevailing orthodoxies of the discipline. A group of senior philosophers open to heterodox viewpoints comment on the papers and serve as mentors. The Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy is made possible by a generous grant from the Tina Snider Foundation.



## THE FREE MIND PODCAST

Created and produced by the Benson Center, the Free Mind Podcast premiered September 14, 2021 and explores topics in Western philosophy, politics, literature, and history with an adventurous disregard for academic fashions and intellectual trends.

### EPISODES

<b>S9E1</b>	Heidi Ganahl	<i>"Choice and balance in education and media"</i>
<b>S9E2</b>	Martin Carcasson	<i>"Do moderates need to be more intolerant?"</i>
<b>S9E3</b>	Diego Reinero	<i>"Does academia really have a liberal bias?"</i>
<b>S9E4</b>	Jessi Streibl	<i>"Is it racist? Is it sexist?"</i>
<b>S10E1</b>	Lesley Smith	<i>"Reflections on a career in research, education, and politics"</i>
<b>S10E2</b>	Musa al-Gharbi	<i>"We have never been woke"</i>
<b>S10E3</b>	Lee Jussim	<i>"Surviving cancel culture while keeping your head"</i>
<b>S10E4</b>	Justin Tosi	<i>"Does censorship undermine its own goals?"</i>
<b>S10E5</b>	Daniel Jacobson	<i>"Where higher education is headed"</i>
<b>Special Episode</b>	Matthew Young, Paul Diduch, and host Joseph Porter	<i>"The Parable of the Good Samaritan and American Politics"</i>

The podcast is available on Apple Podcast, Spotify, SoundCloud, Amazon Music and YouTube. For more information, please visit [www.colorado.edu/center/benson/free-mind-podcast](http://www.colorado.edu/center/benson/free-mind-podcast).

# STUDENT QUOTES

“I am grateful that the Benson Center allows me to engage with ideas and individuals who are outside of my normal engineering realm.”

– **Jameson Barcelona**

“One can grow so much from a productive and meaningful conversation, especially with informed and driven individuals about relevant topics, and this will be just one way I can complete this expansion of my horizons...I know the Benson Center will help me achieve finding my own values and beliefs.”

– **Gabriel Bazan**

“I really enjoyed participating in the Benson Center undergraduate fellowship program during my freshman year. I found many of the events fascinating, even if I didn’t entirely agree with the speakers position.”

– **Bailey Briggs**

“Being the first person in my family to go to college has been my biggest dream, which is why I am honored to be selected for the Benson Center Undergraduate Fellows Program. This program provides me the opportunity to follow my dreams.”

– **Kelajanae Curry**

“I am honored to have been selected as a Benson Center fellow once again! I have thoroughly enjoyed the events and discussions I have had access to as a Center fellow throughout the last year. My perspective on politics, philosophy, and economics has broadened during the course of this last year, largely in thanks to the Benson Center.”

– **Lindsey Harriman**

“The Benson Center has provided me with great opportunities to learn, connect, and motivate in the past year. I appreciated the open doors, for any student, fellow or not, to enjoy the distinguished lectures and discussions hosted by the Benson Center.”

– **Victoria Kubacki**

“Being a Benson fellow would be huge privilege for me and give me the chance to serve others by being part of the good-faith dialogues for our community. The thing I am most looking forward to as a fellow is the chance to combine the skills I am learning as a journalism major at CU Boulder — which have a lot to do with exploring ideas, asking questions that help people share their views in an ethical way for the greater good — with contributing to the purpose of the Benson Center to help people connect with each other and find common ground or at least civil ways to explore economic, political, and moral questions today.”

– **Nicholas Merl**

2024-2025

# UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Undergraduate Fellowship Program aims to build an active and flourishing intellectual community of undergraduate students passionate about the great works of the Western tradition, exposure to a wide range of political and other perspectives, and critical reflection on the social, economic, and philosophical questions of our time. All CU Boulder students are welcome to apply regardless of class or major. Support is generously provided from the John J. Wehman Scholarship Fund and the Bill Freytag Conservative Fund.



# PARTICIPANTS

**Calvin Atkinson**, Junior – Majoring in Philosophy and German  
**Jamison Barcelona**, Senior – Majoring in Chemical Engineering  
**Gabriel Bazan**, Sophomore – Undeclared Business Major  
**Jonathan Bolz**, Freshman – Undeclared Major  
**Evangeline Brady**, Freshman – Majoring in Management and Entrepreneurship  
**Bailey Briggs**, Sophomore – Majoring in Political Science  
**Tiana Brown**, Freshman – Majoring in Biochemistry  
**James Buchjune**, Freshman – Majoring in Exploratory Studies  
**Alexei Byerly**, Senior – Majoring in Finance and Economics  
**Merelyn Chavez**, Sophomore – Majoring in Integrative Physiology  
**Kelajanea Curry**, Senior – Majoring in Journalism  
**Justin Dasher**, Senior – Majoring in Philosophy  
**Derek Boyd**, Sophomore – Majoring in Political Science  
**Xander Fagan**, Freshman – Majoring in Mechanical Engineering  
**Lucas Gauthier**, Senior – Majoring in Environmental Economics  
**Hailey Geva**, Freshman – Majoring in Biochemistry and Neuroscience  
**Graham Gleason**, Freshman – Majoring in the Leeds Honors Business Program  
**William Godsil**, Senior – Majoring in Finance  
**Charlotte Gorgemans**, Senior – Majoring in Computer Science  
**Taylor Grabowski**, Freshman – Majoring in Marketing  
**Trent Grueber**, Sophomore – Majoring in Philosophy  
**Madeline Hackstaff**, Freshman – Majoring in Business  
**Deborah Haddick**, Sophomore – Majoring in Linguistics  
**Lindsey Harriman**, Senior – Majoring in Philosophy and Classics  
**Sophia Hermann**, Freshman – Majoring in Exploratory Studies  
**Valentina Ishchenko**, Senior – Majoring in International Affairs  
**Lucas Jackson**, Freshman – Majoring in Aerospace Engineering  
**Kangmin Kim**, Senior – Majoring in Chemical Engineering  
**Rachel Kim**, Junior – Majoring in Psychology  
**Victoria Kubacki**, Senior – Majoring in Economics, Political Science, and Philosophy  
**Eyal Lahat**, Freshman – Majoring in Computer Science  
**Emily Madden**, Freshman – Majoring in Business  
**Nicholas Merl**, Freshman – Majoring in Journalism  
**Andrew O'Brien**, Junior – Majoring in Mechanical Engineering  
**Mark Olmscheid**, Post-Baccalaureate Program – Majoring in Applied Computer Science  
**Brooklyn Phillips**, Senior – Majoring in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences  
**Emma Reiner**, Freshman – Majoring in Aerospace Engineering Sciences  
**Abby Schaller**, Senior – Majoring in Political Science  
**Hudson Siglinger**, Freshman – Majoring in Computer Science  
**Emmett Spreitzer**, Junior – Majoring in Neuroscience  
**Jake Stone**, Junior – Majoring in Pre-Medicine  
**Declan Wittkamp**, Senior – Majoring in Economics and Political Science  
**Noah Zeremariam**, Freshman – Majoring in Real Estate

2024-2025

# STUDENT & FACULTY GRANTS

## STUDENT GRANTS

Each year, the Benson Center invites students to apply for grant funding to support activities and programs related to the mission of the Center.

**WILLIAM GODSIL** – Snider Internship Grant

**LINDSEY HARRIMAN** – Snider Internship Grant

**DANIEL WISNIEWSKI** – Snider Language Grant

**DYLAN MOUKA** – Snider Language Grant

**CASEY RINGER** – In support of the National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl.

**CONOR ROWAN** – June Harper Scholarship

# FACULTY GRANTS

The Benson Center supports research and educational initiatives by CU Boulder faculty in multiple disciplines that contribute to critical reflection on the development of Western Civilization. These include public lectures, innovative conferences, and community outreach.

## DAVID BOONIN

**Department:** Philosophy

*To support the ninth annual Colorado High School Ethics Bowl, featuring high schools from around the state.*

## MICHELANGELO LANDGRAVE

**Department:** Political Science

*To support speakers and graduate student research.*

## MITZI LEE

**Department:** Philosophy

*To support a conference on the ideas of justice and social justice in Ancient Greece.*

## ROBERT PASNAU

**Department:** Philosophy

*To support an event in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association at CU Boulder.*

## YVONA TRNKA-AMRHEIN

**Department:** Classics

*To support a conference on the discovery of the new papyrus from the 3rd century AD, which includes nearly 100 lines from two otherwise lost plays by the Athenian playwright Euripides.*

2024-2025

# THE BENSON CENTER IN NUMBERS

**8,171**

FOLLOWERS ACROSS  
ALL PLATFORMS

**880**

TOTAL STUDENT  
EVENT ATTENDANCE

**7,048**

YOUTUBE  
SUBSCRIBER COUNT

**2,339**

TOTAL EVENT ATTENDANCE

**1.47** MILLION

TOTAL YOUTUBE VIEWS

**246,796**

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS  
ACROSS ALL PLATFORMS

**2,244**

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS



# EXPENSES

BENSON CENTER EXPENSES	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
SALARY AND BENEFITS	\$1,026,479	\$919,082	\$885,896	\$1,324,267	<b>\$1,402,372</b>
STUDENT AID AND GRANTS	\$20,000	\$8,600	\$17,682	\$105,774	<b>\$138,836</b>
FACULTY GRANTS	\$5,000	\$4,500	\$34,215	\$12,907	<b>\$15,500</b>
OPERATING EXPENSES	\$228,574	\$217,726	\$195,032	\$280,473	<b>\$231,233</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,280,053</b>	<b>\$1,149,908</b>	<b>\$1,132,825</b>	<b>\$1,723,421</b>	<b>\$1,787,941</b>

# COURSES

## FALL

### CWCV 2010

#### THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY

**Instructor:** Patrick Deneen

*Examines significant works by five major modern political philosophers, all of whom discuss “the crisis of modernity.”*

### CWCV 2010

#### ENLIGHTENMENT TO MODERNITY: TOPICS IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

**Instructor:** Daniel Jacobson and Joseph Porter

*Explores fundamental social, ethical, and political questions through a survey of great works of the Western tradition.*

### PHIL 2200

#### MAJOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORIES

**Instructor:** Joseph Porter

*Explores fundamental questions concerning the nature and legitimacy of major social and political institutions.*

## SPRING

### CWCV 4000 / PSCI 4028

#### LIBERALISM AND CONSERVATISM

**Instructor:** Patrick Deneen

*Examines the intellectual origins and basic features of the dominant political beliefs in contemporary American politics: Liberalism and Conservatism.*

### PHIL 1100

#### ETHICS

**Instructor:** Joseph Porter

*Examines prominent moral theories and their application to a selection of real-world moral problems.*

2024-2025

# FACULTY & STAFF



**DANIEL JACOBSON**  
*Director*



**TAYLOR JAWORSKI**  
*Associate Faculty Director*



**ALEXANDRA ROBERTS**  
*Assistant Director*



**ALEXANDER (AJ) SHIVELY**  
*External Relations Manager*

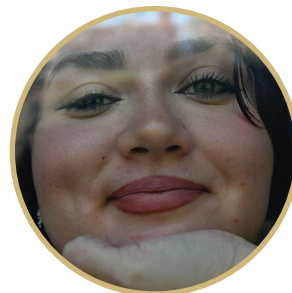


**JOSEPH PORTER**  
*Associate Teaching Professor*

# 2024-2025 INTERNS



**SOPHIE ALLAWAY**  
*Digital Marketing Intern*



**OLIVIA GEWANTER**  
*Social Media Intern*



**WILL GODSIL**  
*Project Management Intern*



**MICHAEL KAKKAR**  
*Operations Intern*



**REBECCA RODRIQUEZ**  
*Digital Marketing Intern*



**GEORGE WEBER**  
*Podcast Management Intern*



Since its founding, the Center has received philanthropic support from over 280 donors who share a passion for fostering research, debate and dialogue on the fundamental issues of our time. Your generosity allows us to attract world-class visiting faculty, host compelling speakers, provide project grants for faculty and students, and much more.

To learn how you can advance the Center's mission and accelerate its impact, please visit [\*\*www.colorado.edu/center/benson/giving\*\*](http://www.colorado.edu/center/benson/giving).