



# BENSON CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2022–23



Benson Center for the Study  
of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**







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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 created the Conservative Thought and Policy Visiting Scholar Program to promote intellectual diversity on campus. The two programs were merged in 2014. The center was renamed the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization in 2019, to honor the University of Colorado President Emeritus for his advocacy and support.

The Benson Center promotes study of the intellectual, artistic and political traditions that characterize Western civilization. Central to this mission is our commitment to fostering dialogue about fundamental values and controversial questions. The center provides a forum for free inquiry and open debate, and it promotes academic freedom and intellectual diversity on campus in a time of increasing political polarization and homogeneity.

The center supports research that explores the ideas emerging from historically Western traditions and traces their continued influence. It focuses particularly on their role in establishing the foundational ideals and institutions of the United States. The center promotes discourse that engages both liberal and conservative viewpoints across a wide range of political, economic and philosophical issues.

The center is committed to intellectual rigor and the highest academic standards. It seeks to provide a premier academic venue for the study of our nation’s political and cultural traditions. Its focus on the values of political and economic freedom, moral and legal equality, individual liberty and personal responsibility offers students, scholars, and residents of Colorado the opportunity to study ideals that have shaped fundamental aspects of the American intellectual heritage.

“Fostering cultural change at CU through the Benson Center has been one of my proudest accomplishments. To hear all points of view, to teach students how to think and not what to think — that’s what education is about.”

– University of Colorado President Emeritus  
Bruce D. Benson



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year saw a successful transition of the Benson Center staff, and I’m extremely happy with our new team. In addition, this was Taylor Jaworski’s first year as Associate Faculty Director of the center, replacing Shilo Brooks who left CU for the James Madison Program at Princeton. This year Taylor started implementing some of our new initiatives for undergraduate outreach, with the help of some of our faculty fellows. We plan on ramping up those initiatives in the coming year and have exciting plans for the near future.

First, I want to introduce everyone to our new staff members, as I’m excited about our team. Alexandra (Alex) Roberts just finished her first year as Assistant Director of the Benson Center. Alex brings energy and aplomb to the Center, and she has done great work organizing our finances and establishing bonds with staff in other departments. She also played a central role hiring our newest team member, Alexander (AJ) Shively, as External Relations Manager. You may already know AJ, as he was previously a student intern with the Center. AJ handles a lot of tech work behind the scenes, and his experience as a recent CU graduate has been valuable. Hiring new staff gave us the opportunity to define their roles in a more efficient way.

Taylor has already made significant contributions. He started a “Free Minds Outside the Classroom” series of events for undergraduates, featuring informal discussions with faculty on controversial topics without fear of being punished with a bad grade for expressing unpopular opinions. This year he partnered with Benson Center faculty fellow Paul Diduch (Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics and Society) for “What is higher education for?”; faculty fellow Matthew Burgess (Environmental Studies) and Pilar McQuillan for “How to have difficult conversations”; and Matt again for “What is longtermism?”

We’ve expanded the faculty fellowship program as part of our comprehensive strategy. Moving forward, we will be targeting our support at all levels, from undergraduate to faculty, toward those who share our commitment to the center’s values and ideals. This strategy will guide our approach to all programming.

Matt has done important scholarly work and outreach on issues surrounding political polarization and has organized and participated in several events at the Center and for the Chancellor’s initiatives on democracy. He has also taken over hosting the Benson Center’s The Free Mind podcast, which Shilo originated. Paul also organized and moderated an event featuring editor and podcaster Emmet Penney, “Industrial Conservation and the Energy Transition.” And Benson Center faculty fellow Benjamin Teitelbaum (Musicology) organized and moderated the first

of several planned events on media bias, an interview with journalist and novelist Lionel Shriver: “Abominations: Why hasn’t Lionel Shriver been canceled already?”

We’ve also expanded our sabbatical fellowship program. This year we hosted two remarkable fellows, Jennifer Smith (English, Pepperdine) and Katheryn (Katie) Davis (English, University of Dallas). Jennifer organized and moderated an event with William Kuskin of CU (English, Herbst) on “Fifteenth Century Text and Tech.” Katie, who will be back at the Center for the fall semester, gave a faculty seminar on her work on Jane Austen. Jennifer and Katie have helped us expand our reach into literary disciplines crucial to the study of Western Civilization.

Alan Kahan (Political History and Theory) finished his time as Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy last fall. Alan was a superb ambassador for the Benson Center at just the right time. This fall he organized a lecture by Richard Avramenko (Political Science), continuing his series on The Ethics of Capitalism. Alan was the keynote speaker at Chancellor DiStefano’s Conservative Scholar Lunch in Colorado Springs, where he spoke on liberalism — the meaning of the term and its history. Alan has just completed a book on the subject, Liberalism, An Incomplete History, which is forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

We’re always looking for new avenues to raise the profile of the Benson Center and attract a wider audience. This year we were able to host a preview screening of the documentary, The Coddling of the American Mind, by award-winning filmmakers Ted and Courtney Balaker. The film is based on the book of the same name by Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff. It offers a sometimes-humorous, often chilling look at the important topic of the cult of “safetyism” and its impact on higher education.

We also held the third Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy, the second to be hosted at CU. This workshop is designed to mentor junior philosophers working on politically unpopular topics and help increase their representation in the discipline. It is a unique program that is also one of the highlights of my academic year. We’re looking to expand the workshop in the coming years.



Daniel Jacobson



# 2022-23 CENTER FACULTY AND FELLOWS

Fundamental to the Benson Center's mission is bringing a diversity of voices to the University of Colorado Boulder campus. Toward this end, this year the Center hosted the tenth Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, two Visiting Sabbatical Fellows, and three CU faculty fellows. These scholars work in fields connected to the study of Western civilization, originate and participate in events and programming, teach courses, and contribute to a faculty research seminar series. Benson Center faculty and fellows demonstrate an enthusiasm for fostering intellectual diversity and dialogue, both on campus and in the broader community.

*"I appreciated the flexibility that fostered creativity. I read more, wrote more, and had more intellectual fun than I have had any point in my academic career."*  
— Jennifer Smith

## FALL 2022 VISITING SCHOLAR IN CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT AND POLICY

**Alan S. Kahan** served as the 2021-22 Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy. He returned to the post in fall 2023. Kahan, a historian, political theorist and author, is professor of British civilization at the Université de Paris-Saclay.

Kahan is the author of "Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville"; "Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Political Culture of Limited Suffrage"; "Alexis de Tocqueville"; "Mind vs. Money: The War Between Intellectuals and Capitalism"; and "Tocqueville, Democracy and Religion." He is the translator of Tocqueville's "The Old Regime and the Revolution" and Benjamin Constant's "Commentary on Filangieri's Works." Kahan has lived in France since 2007. Previously, he taught at Florida International University in Miami. He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago in 1987.

Kahan moderated Richard Avramenko's lecture entitled, "Tocqueville, Law, and the High Priests of Democracy." In the lecture, Avramenko invoked the great 19th century observer of American social and political life, Alexis de Tocqueville, to talk about the centrality of the study of law for tempering the harms of radical egalitarianism. Kahan served as the keynote speaker at Chancellor DiStefano's Conservative Scholar Lunch in Colorado Springs. Kahan completed his book on "Liberalism: An Incomplete History," from Princeton University Press.

Kahan was interviewed by the Denver Post about his time at the Center. In the article, published on October 9, 2022, Kahan reflected on the mission of the Center. "The Benson Center has not ever been intended to represent one particular party line. It's always been about intellectual freedom, diversity and heterodoxy. And it has a conservative label, but that's in part because it is conservatives who are the defenders of intellectual diversity."



*"[Professor Kahan's] scholarship and teaching, as well as the events he's organized, have added to the richness of the intellectual atmosphere at CU."*  
— Daniel Jacobson





JENNIFER SMITH, SABBATICAL FELLOW

J. A. T. Smith (PhD, UCLA) is an Associate Professor of English, Coordinator and founder of the Digital Humanities Minor, and the Associate Director of the Center for Faith and Learning at Pepperdine University. In her time there, she has received an award for excellence in teaching as well as a major grant to develop a Christian pedagogical app called The Vineyard. Her primary scholarly research focuses on the language and theology of late medieval English bishop, Reginald Pecock. She has published a translation of his last polemical volume, The Book of Faith (UCLA-CMRS, 2020), and is currently working on a major project which seeks to sequence and situate the entirety of his corpus. She also researches in the areas of digital pedagogy and rhetoric. She is currently serving as the Media Officer for the Medieval Association of the Pacific as well as the Convener for the Pepperdine Dialogue Dinners, a program to facilitate and further robust intellectual conversation between faculty.

During the year, Smith worked on a book called the Book of Reginald Pecock, which is a monograph about the lost writings of fifteenth century bishop, Reginald Pecock. The project seeks to describe, sequence, and situate Pecock’s writings by reconstructing the contents of his books on the basis of self-citations. Smith spent ten days in the UK researching manuscripts held in the special collections at Oxford (Weston Library), Cambridge (Wren Library, Trinity College Cambridge), and London (British Library). She wrote two articles in her secondary areas of research in the digital humanities. The first is a digital pedagogy piece called “Teaching the Embedded Index.” It is under review at the Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy and it is about the place of indexing as writing as a compositional practice. The second in the areas of digital rhetoric and philology is called “A Rhetorical Consideration of the { XE “embedded” } Index.” This one, nearly done, is about the index as a form of rhetorical invention considered along classical lines.

Smith participated in many events during her time at the Center; in particular, she hosted a conversation with William Kuskin, Professor in the English Department at CU Boulder, on “15th Century Text and Tech,” and an episode of the Free Mind podcast with host Matthew Burgess, titled “Cancellation in the Fifteenth Century.” She also held reading groups with other Benson Center faculty affiliates and attended the Chancellor’s Summit in Denver in the spring semester.

Smith says of her time at the Center, “This was the most enriching intellectual year of my academic career. The Center’s work is not just worthwhile but critical to the educational mission of CU Boulder. I hope that the Center continues to thrive, grow, and positively contribute to the intellectual diversity so desperately needed in public discourse today.”



*“The Center’s work is not just worthwhile but critical to the educational mission of CU Boulder.”*

– Jennifer Smith

KATHRYN E. DAVIS, ROUBOS SABBATICAL FELLOW

Kathryn E. Davis is the Roubos Sabbatical Fellow during the calendar year 2023. Davis is an associate professor of English and Co-Director of the Classical Education in Rome Summer Program at the University of Dallas. She received a Ph.D. in Literature from the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas, and her B.A. in History from the University of Kansas. She is a member of the editorial board for Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal, and several of her articles have been published in Persuasions and Persuasions On-Line. Her monograph, Liberty in Jane Austen’s Persuasion, was published by Lehigh University Press in 2017. She has a secondary area of interest in Dante studies; her recent article, “‘Stupor non meno’: What Virgil Saw” appears in Renascence. In the summertime she can often be found teaching high school, university, and graduate students on the UD Rome Campus.

During the spring semester of 2023, she worked on two projects. First being the process of reading and outlining for a book-length study exploring the relationship between narrative art and moral, political, and epistemological vision in the novels of Jane Austen. Davis decided to focus on the “Chawton novels” (Mansfield Park, Emma, and Persuasion), but the book project will require an introductory chapter engaging with each of Austen’s six complete novels and her juvenilia and late writings. This project bridges the gap in Austen criticism between formalist readings and theoretical and political readings of the novels. She also is working on an ongoing writing project on the ultimate significance of Dante’s engagement with classical sources, particularly Virgil’s Aeneid and Eclogues, in the Divine Comedy. She presented her research at a conference hosted by the Canadian Association of Italian Studies (CAIS) in May.

Her most memorable experiences from her first semester at the Center involved “the rich and challenging conversations that are at the heart of the Benson Center’s mission. From our weekly lunchtime Tocqueville reading group, to our biweekly Gerard reading group, to the seminar hosted by Jennifer Smith on medieval texts, to visiting speakers hosted by Taylor Jaworski and Paul Diduch, to the Chancellor’s Summit, to the debate on immigration hosted by the Steamboat Institute, I found the opportunity to engage with colleagues and members of the CU Boulder community invigorating.”



*“Rich and challenging conversations that are at the heart of the Benson Center’s mission... I found the opportunity to engage with colleagues and members of the CU Boulder community invigorating.”*

– Kathryn E. Davis



# FACULTY FELLOWS

**Matthew Burgess** is an assistant professor in the Environmental Studies Program, a faculty affiliate in Economics, and a fellow at the Cooperative Institute in Environmental Science (CIRES), where he directs the Center for Social and Environmental Futures.

Matthew Burgess holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and a B.Sc. from the University of Toronto. His research interests are economic growth futures and their environmental impacts, natural resource management and conservation, mathematical modeling of human-environment systems, and political polarization of environmental issues.

Burgess has worked extensively on promoting intellectual diversity and dialog on campus, including organizing the CU Reducing Polarization Dialog series, co-chairing CU Boulder's Heterodox Academy Campus Community, serving as a CU Boulder Faculty Fellow for Higher Education and Democracy, and developing a course (ENVS 3555) that centers these ideals in an environmental context. He received a 2020 Heterodox Academy Open Inquiry Award for teaching.

As a faculty fellow, Burgess hosts the Free Mind podcast and programs around reducing polarization of climate change and environmental issues. Burgess moderated a panel discussion titled, "Reducing polarization and fighting extremism in Colorado;" panelists consisted of community leaders and explored topics such as how polarization and extremism manifest in communities around Colorado, how the panelists' groups are addressing these issues, and what opportunities exist for students, faculty, and community members to get involved in these efforts. In addition, Burgess partnered with Taylor Jaworski to host two sessions of the Free Minds Outside the Classroom Series — "What is longtermism?" and "How to have difficult conversations?"

Burgess will return as a faculty fellow for the academic year 2023-24.



**Matthew Burgess**

*Assistant Professor,  
Environmental Studies Program*

**Paul Diduch** is a teaching associate professor in the Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics & Society. Diduch is the Director of the Engineering Leadership Program, as well as Director of the Culture Wars in Rome Global Seminar Abroad. Diduch's teaching interests include ancient philosophy, the history of science, contemporary issues in science and society, and Roman political history (ancient and modern).

Diduch published a review of Tim Burns new book on Leo Strauss in addition to commentary on Carl Mitcham's ideas for a political philosophy of technology ("Tractatus Politico-Philosophicus as Common Cause" Nanoethics 16, 2023). Diduch also made progress with his book on the problem of technology in Plato, parts of which he prepped for presentation for the Association of Core Texts and Courses. He also gave a talk to the Honors Program Conference at the University of Houston on the meaning of liberal education for STEM students.

Paul Diduch has a Ph.D. from the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas and an M.A. in Political Science/Political Theory from the University of Alberta.

During the academic year, Diduch partnered with Taylor Jaworski to host a lecture called "What is higher education for?" as part of the Free Minds Outside the Classroom series. Diduch moderated Emmet Penney's lecture titled, "Industrial Conservation and the Energy Transition," which put the energy transition into historical context, explored what it means for society, and looked to the American canon for how we ought to proceed. Diduch also held a reading group on Gunter Anders in the Benson Center suite, which helped introduce engineering students to the Center and its mission.

Diduch will return as a faculty fellow for the academic year 2023-24.



**Paul Diduch**

*Associate Professor, Herbst Program  
for Engineering, Ethics & Society*

**Benjamin Teitelbaum** earned his doctorate from Brown University with auxiliary studies at the Royal College of Music, Stockholm and Harvard University. Prior to coming to the College of Music, he was Instructor and Head of Nordic Studies, also at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Most of his research focuses on ideology and expressive culture in contemporary radical nationalist, populist and neofascist movements. He is author of two books: "Lions of the North: Sounds of the New Nordic Radical Nationalism" and the international bestseller "War for Eternity: The Return of Traditionalism and the Rise of the Populist Right" for which he received the 2023 BFA Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work Award.

Teitelbaum arranged a public event with novelist and columnist Lionel Shriver in fall 2022, which was one of the most-attended lectures of the year. Teitelbaum participated in other center events before going on sabbatical in the spring. He plans to return as a faculty fellow in spring 2024.



**Benjamin Teitelbaum**

*Associate Professor, Musicology  
and International Affairs*



# 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 both liberal and conservative viewpoints to provide access to a wide range of political, economic and philosophical perspectives at CU Boulder.

During the 2022-23 academic year, the center hosted 15 events including two panel discussions, three student focused conversations, a private film screening, and six guest lectures. Events explored a variety of topics such as public cancellation, moral grandstanding, fighting extremism in Colorado, police unions, and immigration. In total, 512 people participated either in-person or virtually, including 111 students. Recordings of the events continue to be posted on the Center's YouTube channel, which encourages outreach to expand beyond the CU and Colorado communities.





OTHER EVENTS AND OUTREACH

The center continued to host The Free Mind podcast, which engages with professors and public intellectuals to explore topics in Western philosophy, politics, literature, and history from diverse viewpoints, with one episode released each month. Benson Center faculty fellow Matthew Burgess took over hosting duties this year.

The Center launched the “Free Minds Outside the Classroom” series under the leadership of Taylor Jaworski. The series is student-focused, targeting undergraduate students interested in participating in good-faith dialogs about various timely topics. The series provides a forum for free inquiry, and supports academic freedom and intellectual diversity on campus in a time of increasing political polarization and homogeneity.

The Center’s Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, Alan Kahan, was the keynote speaker of the Chancellor’s Conservative Scholar Luncheon in the fall. The Conservative Scholar Luncheon is part of the University of Colorado’s commitment to supporting democracy through free speech and thoughtful discourse.

The national Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy was held for the second time at CU Boulder. The workshop invites senior philosophers to review work in progress from younger colleagues who work on ideas at odds with the prevailing orthodoxies of the discipline, and is the only one of its kind in the country.

The Center was invited to participate in the Chancellor’s Annual Summit at History Colorado in Denver in the spring. CU Boulder community members were invited to hear from faculty experts, including Benson Center Associate Faculty Director Taylor Jaworski, on the 2022-23 theme: democracy and social mobility in a pluralistic society. Speakers shared how their research and lived experiences informs our understanding of this current moment in American history — and how the diverse communities within our public universities can help to sustain and support a democracy that ensures liberty and justice for all.



Abominations: Why hasn’t Lionel Shriver been canceled already?

Aug. 31, 2022 | Attendance: 78 | YouTube views: 7,697

Controversial novelist and commentator Lionel Shriver in conversation with Benjamin Teitelbaum, discussed her first nonfiction book, the hot-off-the-presses “Abominations: Selected essays from a career of courting self-destruction.” Shriver was one of the earliest critics of identity politics, that constellation of prescriptive opinions we now call “woke.” She has been subjected to three concerted pile-ons, after which she has mysteriously got up, dusted herself off, and carried on saying the ostensibly unsayable. Shriver has even dared discouraging words about immigration, affirmative action, and — perhaps her most outrageous stance — punitive taxation of the well-off.

Featuring:

Lionel Shriver, journalist and novelist; Benjamin Teitelbaum, moderator



The Justice Argument Against Catholic Integralism

Oct. 6, 2022 | Attendance 28 | YouTube views: 231

Liberalism is taking a beating these days. But what do liberalism’s critics offer by way of alternatives? One class of alternatives are religious anti-liberalisms. These doctrines combine opposition to liberalism with the claim that society promotes the spiritual aims of one of the great world religions. Vallier’s talk examined these doctrines through the lens of the most prominent Roman Catholic anti-liberalism: Catholic integralism.

Featuring:

Kevin Vallier, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Bowling Green State University and Director of their program in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law; Daniel Jacobson, moderator

Tocqueville, Law, and the High Priests of Democracy

Oct. 19, 2022 | Attendance: 29 | YouTube views: 106

In this lecture, Richard Avramenko invoked the great 19th century observer of American social and political life, Alexis de Tocqueville, to talk about the centrality of the study of law for tempering the harms of radical egalitarianism.

Featuring:

Richard Avramenko, Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin, Director of the Center for the Study of Liberal Democracy, and Editor-in-Chief of the Political Science Reviewer; Alan Kahan, moderator



Moral Grandstanding: Why Status-Seeking Destroys Public Discourse and What We Can Do About It

Jan. 24, 2023 | Attendance 30 | YouTube views: 120

Why is so much public discourse unproductive and mean-spirited? One reason is that people grandstand: we use discussions about morality and politics for self-promotion. By understanding what grandstanding is, why we do it, and how it harms public discourse, we can see how to build a healthier public square.

Featuring:

Brandon Warmke, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Bowling Green State University, Warmke has written widely on forgiveness, moral responsibility, public discourse, and politics. He has written for CNN and MarketWatch, and his work has been featured by the Atlantic, New York Times Magazine, HuffPost, Scientific American, Forbes, Vox, Commentary Magazine, and the Guardian; Daniel Jacobson, moderator



Reducing polarization and fighting extremism in Colorado

Feb. 2, 2023 | Attendance: 127 | YouTube views: 128

Political polarization and extremism is a major challenge in today’s America. The panel consists of community leaders who are working to address these challenges in Colorado. The panel explored topics such as: How polarization and extremism manifest in communities around Colorado, what the panelists’ groups are doing to address these issues, and what opportunities exist for students and faculty to get involved in these efforts and understand CO communities better.

Featuring:

Laureen Boll, Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism, Bernie Buescher, Restore the Balance, Martin Carcasson, Director of Colorado State University’s Center for Public Deliberation, Leah Sprain, Director of CU’s Center for Communication and Democratic Engagement; Matthew Burgess, moderator







**The Rule of Law and Western Civilization: Origins, Influence, Impact**

Feb. 9, 2023 | Attendance 46 | YouTube views: 91

The concept of the rule of law is recognized as foundational to individual freedom and economic prosperity in the West. But this broad consensus obscures important debates over the meaning of the rule of law and the cultural and institutional preconditions for its emergence in the West and continued maintenance over time. As the concept of the rule of law has come under increasing attack, it is important to rediscover the meaning of the rule of law, the historical and institutional preconditions for its emergence in the West, and its continuing relevance to the maintenance of individual freedom and economic prosperity.

*Featuring:*

Todd J. Zywicki, George Mason University Foundation Professor of Law at Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University and a Research Fellow of the George Mason Law & Economics Center; Daniel Jacobson, moderator



**Interest Groups, Police Unions, and American Local Democracy**

Feb. 16, 2023 | Attendance: 21 | YouTube views: 51

Police unions have been part of the interest group landscape of American localities for decades. However, ever since George Floyd’s killing by police in Minneapolis in 2020, they have been the subject of national controversy. For some, they protect bad cops, encourage violence against civilians, block reforms that would improve police departments, and undermine public trust in the police. For others, they protect officers doing a tough job, improve police performance by giving officers a say about working conditions, and thereby enhance public trust in the police. This talk assessed our knowledge of the effects of police unionization on American local democracy and provided an analysis of their impact on public trust in the police.

*Featuring:*

Daniel Disalvo, Professor and chair of political science in the Colin Powell School at the City College of New York–CUNY and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute; Daniel Jacobson, moderator



**Fifteenth Century Text and Tech**

Mar. 7, 2023 | Attendance: 21 | YouTube views: N/A

Jennifer Smith, Visiting Sabbatical Research Fellow with the Benson Center, and William Kuskin, Associate Dean for Digital Education and Professor of English, hosted a conversation about reading, technology, and cultural change in the fifteenth century.

*Featuring:*

William Kuskin holds a joint appointment in English in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics & Society in the College of Engineering and Applied Science at CU Boulder; Jennifer Smith, Associate Professor of English and Associate Director of the Center for Faith and Learning at Pepperdine University; Benson Center Sabbatical Fellow

**Industrial Conservation and the Energy Transition**

March 16, 2023 | Attendance: 31 | YouTube views: 169

We are told that we must transition to a renewable energy economy that runs on wind and solar if we mean to stave off the end of the world and perhaps even human extinction. Climate science aside, where did this vision for the future come from? Is it realistic? What would its fulfillment mean for the infrastructure upon which daily life depends? This lecture put the “energy transition” into some historical context, walked through what it means for society, and looked to the American canon for how we ought to proceed.

*Featuring:*

Emmet Penney, editor-in-chief of Grid Brief, a contributing editor at Compact Magazine, and the host of the Nuclear Barbarians podcast; Paul Diduch, moderator



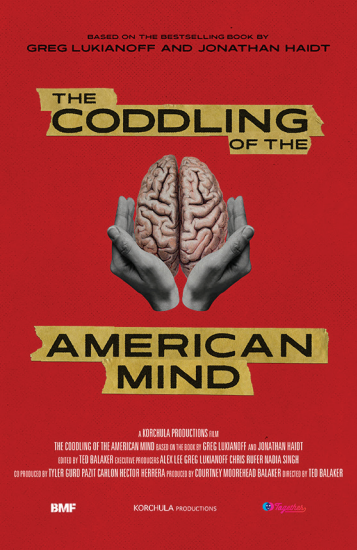
**The Coddling of the American Mind private screening**

Mar. 21, 2023 | Attendance: 37 | YouTube views: N/A

Based on The New York Times bestselling book—Kimi is a Ugandan immigrant. Lucy just left a locked psych ward. Both teenagers begin new lives as they enter college. They’re full of promise but quickly succumb to paranoia and misery. Kimi is on the brink of homelessness and Lucy is convinced people want to murder her simply because she’s autistic. The women are part of a global mental-health mystery that threatens an entire generation. Beginning in 2012, anxiety, depression, and suicide shot up among young people, and nobody knew why. The answers emerged from an unexpected source — a man named Greg and his own brush with suicide.

*Featuring:*

Ted Balaker, award-winning filmmaker, journalist, and founding partner of Korchula Productions, a film and new media production company devoted to making important ideas entertaining; Daniel Jacobson, moderator



**Steamboat Institute Campus Liberty Tour 2023**

April 14, 2022 | Attendance: 464 | YouTube views: 550

The Campus Liberty Tour returned to the CU Boulder campus with a compelling debate on immigration policy. Panelists addressed the following resolution: “Illegal crossings of the U.S.-Mexico border are increasing at record levels; the U.S. government must secure the border immediately.”

*Featuring:*

Julio Rosas, Senior Writer at Townhall; Michael Anton, Lecturer in Politics and Research Fellow at Hillsdale College; Dr. Benjamin Waddell, Associate Professor of Sociology at Fort Lewis College; and Jose Antonio Vargas, Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist, Acclaimed Filmmaker & Immigration Advocate; Hadley Heath Manning, moderator





# “Free Minds Outside the Classroom” Series

Benson Center Associate Faculty Director Taylor Jaworski launched the “Free Minds Outside the Classroom” series, which targeted undergraduate students interested in participating in good-faith dialogs about various timely topics. The goal was to provide students with a forum to express their point of view with peers and faculty, without fear of receiving a grade based on their opinions. Each topic was introduced by two faculty members affiliated with the Center and students were encouraged to engage in a conversational manner. Pizza and drinks were served. Support for the series was generously provided by the Snider Foundation.

## What is higher education for?

**Hosted by: Taylor Jaworski and Paul Diduch**

Sept. 29, 2023 | Attendance: 10

What is the value of a college degree? Higher education in the United States has changed dramatically over the last 100 years. At the beginning of the twentieth century college attendance was an elite activity and therefore rare in the population at large. Today, we live in a society in which levels of “skill” and economic success are delineated in terms of educational attainment. Indeed, higher levels of schooling are seen as integral to the “American Dream.” In this discussion, Taylor Jaworski (Economics) and Paul Diduch (Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics & Society) examine the role of education — college, more specifically — in American life drawing on their backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities, respectively. The conversation will consider the role of college in professional development and career success, whether education is necessary for being an informed citizen, and the future role of education in light of recent debates over student loan forgiveness, social mobility, and economic prosperity.



## How to have difficult conversations

**Hosted by: Taylor Jaworski, Matthew Burgess, and Pilar McQuillan**

Oct. 27, 2023 | Attendance: 7

Navigating relationships can be difficult. Whether you’re navigating life with a new roommate, have family members with different political beliefs, or feeling nervous to express your opinions in class, having difficult conversations is an essential part of life. If you are interested in learning how to navigate difficult conversations and better understand people that you may disagree with, this event is for you! Join us for an in-person dialog on these topics and more. This event was also part of Matt Burgess’ “Reducing Polarization Dialogs” series.

## What is longtermism?

**Hosted by: Taylor Jaworski and Matthew Burgess**

Nov. 11, 2023 | Student Attendance: 8

The overwhelming majority of humans that will exist throughout our lifespan as a species have probably not been born yet. What moral implications does this possibility have for our decisions today? How should this possibility affect how we think about policy issues, such as climate change, and personal decisions, such as how much to save and spend, and on what. In this discussion, Taylor Jaworski (Economics) and Matt Burgess (Environmental Studies) consider these issues in the context of “longtermism” as a new social movement. The conversation will touch on environmental issues, existential risk, and the implications of future economic growth, among other topics.

## WORKSHOP IN HETERODOX MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The national Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy was held for the second time at the University of Colorado Boulder under the auspices of the Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization from April 21-23, 2023. This is the fourth iteration of the workshop, which was founded and organized by Daniel Jacobson, Director of the Benson Center. The workshop takes 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 also comments on the papers and serves as mentors.

The invitation-only workshop is the only one of its kind in the country. In addition to providing feedback for works in progress, it also serves to establish a network of open-minded philosophers who support academic freedom and the open exchange of ideas on controversial topics. The workshop endorses no particular ideology, and civil disagreement is expected and encouraged.



Workshops have featured papers on such topics as immigration, moral grandstanding, abortion, the nature of conservatism, neoliberalism, how the notion of epistemic injustice can be applied to conservatives in academia, and other important topics on which professional philosophy imposes pressure to conform to a narrow range of views. The Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy is made possible by a generous grant from the Snider Foundation.

*“I am grateful to have been part of the Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy Workshop again this year. The workshop is always one of the highlights of my year. It is great to see old friends as well as meet new heterodox philosophers, including up-and-coming junior philosophers. Rarely does one find such an intellectually supportive and stimulating environment to discuss important moral and political issues. It is great to be engaged with a group of first-rate philosophers committed to intellectual diversity and open discourse. I always find myself challenged and my thinking improved as a result of participating in the workshop. The community that has been built up through the workshop is a source of real encouragement.”*

– Workshop participant





# the free mind

Created and produced by the Benson Center, The Free Mind Podcast premiered Sept. 14, 2021 and explores topics in Western philosophy, politics, literature, and history with adventurous disregard for academic fashions and intellectual trends. Shilo Brooks was the originator and host for season 1-4. Starting in season 5, Benson Center faculty fellow Matt Burgess took over hosting duties where he invites listeners to pull up a chair in an intellectual laboratory where great questions and great books are explored in the spirit of truth-seeking, and conversations are had in a candid style free of scholarly jargon. Support for the podcast is made possible by the David A. Pyle Operational Fund.

Among the offerings: a discussion of Plato’s Republic with Assistant Professor Alex Priou (HERBST Program for Engineering, Ethics, and Society at CU); why Tocqueville wrote Democracy in America, and what Tocqueville thought about race, religion, and the prospect of American decline, with Benson Center VSCTP, Alan Kahan; the challenges and opportunities facing moderates in politics with Colorado State Senator Kevin Priola; and the campus experience of a conservative student with President of the CU Boulder College Republicans Joey Freatino.

S1E0	Sept. 14, 2021	Shilo Brooks	<i>"Introduction to The Free Mind Podcast"</i>
S1E1	Sept. 14, 2021	Wayne Ambler	<i>"The Enduring Importance of Rome"</i>
S1E2	Sept. 14, 2021	Glenn Loury	<i>"Unspeakable Truths about Racial Inequality in America"</i>
S1E3	Sept. 14, 2021	Lucas Morel	<i>"The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass"</i>
S1E4	Sept. 14, 2021	Patricia Limerick	<i>"The Legacy of Conquest and the History of the American West"</i>
S1E5	Oct. 12, 2021	Jeff Black	<i>"The Great Books and Liberal Education"</i>
S1E6	Nov. 9, 2021	Joshua Katz	<i>"Cancel Culture and its Discontents"</i>
S1E7	Dec. 14, 2021	Colleen Sheehan	<i>"Jane Austen's Emma"</i>
S2E1	Jan. 11, 2022	Bradford Wilson	<i>"The Political Thought of Alexander Hamilton"</i>
S2E2	Feb. 8, 2022	Kevin Williamson	<i>"The Disciplinary Corporation"</i>
S2E3	March 8, 2022	Jeremy Fortier	<i>"Introduction to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche"</i>
S2E4	April 12, 2022	Robert Pasnau	<i>"The Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization"</i>
S3E1	May 10, 2022	Paul Ulrich	<i>"Allan Bloom and Higher Education"</i>
S3E2	June 14, 2022	Daniel Mahoney	<i>"From the Culture of Repudiation to the Cancel Culture"</i>
S4E1	Aug. 9, 2022	Shilo Brooks	<i>"A Farewell from Shilo, and a New Host!"</i>
S4E2	Aug. 9, 2022	Taylor Jaworski	<i>"American Economic History"</i>
S4E3	Sept. 13 2022	Deirdre McCloskey	<i>"How Capitalism Cultivates Virtue"</i>
S4E4	Oct. 11, 2022	Alex Priou	<i>"Introduction to Plato's Republic"</i>
S4E5	Nov. 8 2022	Alan Kahan	<i>"Tocqueville's Democracy in America"</i>
S4E6	Dec. 13, 2022	Matthew Burgess	<i>"Academic Freedom and Heterodox Thought"</i>
S5E1	Jan. 10, 2023	Alex Trembath	<i>"Ecomodernism and Nuclear Energy"</i>
S5E2	Feb. 14, 2023	Joey Fratino	<i>"The Conservative Student Experience"</i>
S5E3	March 4, 2023	Kevin Priola	<i>"Where can Moderates Fit into Today's Political Landscape?"</i>
S5E4	April 11, 2023	Lionel Shriver	<i>"Natalism and Low Birth Rates"</i>



# STUDENT & FACULTY GRANTS

## STUDENT GRANTS

The Benson Center supports students in the CU in D.C. program, which supports experiential learning via student internships in areas related to Western civilization such as law, government, public policy and education. During the 2022-23 academic year, the Benson Center awarded \$10,000 in internship grant funding to five CU Boulder undergraduate students. This year’s internship placements included two Colorado House members, a news and information organization, the Department of Justice, and the Peace Corps. Support for this program is provided by a generous grant from the Snider Foundation.

The Benson Center also offers financial resources to students interested in studying one of the many languages connected to the development of Western civilization; to undergraduate students who work in the areas of philosophy, politics and economics; and to Ph.D. students interested in conservative thought and the Western tradition.

Student Grantee	Grant Type
Alexander Fox	CU in D.C. internship — USAGM (US Agency for Global Media)
Kameron Kravitz	CU in D.C. internship — Office of Congressman Joe Neguse (CO-D)
Noah Durrance	CU in D.C. internship — Office of Congressman Ed Perlmutter (CO-D)
Sarah O’Neill	CU in D.C. internship — U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
Tate Randel	CU in D.C. internship — Peace Corps

“The ability to live and work in D.C. is one of great privilege, and I am incredibly honored that there were support networks that believed in my mission and purpose enough to help me overcome financial barriers. Education is an investment, and I am confident that I will be able to repay this kind investment with the future service to our nation that this opportunity has been able to provide. I once again express my gratitude for the financial assistance.”

– Noah Durrance, CU in D.C. internship scholarship recipient

“The United States Agency for Global Media is a federal news agency in which its mission is to spread freedom and democracy in countries in which these rights are not guaranteed. Working with the Office of Policy, I work to ensure that the operations in which many of our journalist work for are represented and that the company can continue smoothly. Through your scholarship, it gives me the opportunity to work somewhere in which actual impact in those countries in which democracy lacks, where freedom is considered not an unalienable right.”

– Alexander Fox, CU in D.C. internship scholarship recipient

## 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 by renowned experts, innovative conferences and academic endeavors, and community outreach. During the 2022-23 academic year, the Benson Center awarded five faculty grants totaling \$10,746.58. The CU Political Science Department hosted Samantha Frost, Professor of Political Science and Women and Gender Studies at the University of Illinois — Urbana-Champaign, who presented a chapter from her current book project, The Attentive Body. The CU Mediterranean Studies Group was awarded funding to support a robust weekend seminar that totaled 40 attendees, addressing the origins of the modern West. This was the 40th workshop organized by the Mediterranean Seminar since fall 2009, and the fourth held on the CU Boulder campus. The Center provided financial support for the Colorado High School Ethics Bowl Tournament, in which 16 teams of students from 11 schools, (more than 75 students in all) competed, with graduate students serving as judges. The event’s focus was the use of case studies to develop students’ ability to think critically and speak effectively about ethical issues. The Philosophy Department received funding for travel expenses for Professor Christopher Shields (UC San Diego Distinguished Professor, Henry E. Allison Endowed Chair in the History of Philosophy), one of the keynote speakers of the Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference, an annual graduate student conference run by CU Boulder graduate students.

Grantee	Amount	In support of	Date
Michaele Ferguson (CU Political Science Department)	\$1,378.58	Dr. Frost’s visit/lecture to Dept of Political Science and Women’s Studies Dept	Oct. 14, 2022
Brian Catlos (CU Mediterranean Studies Group)	\$5,000	Mediterranean Origins of the West	Oct. 21-22, 2022
David Boonin (CU Center for Values and Social Policy)	\$1,500	Colorado High School Ethics Bowl Tournament	Jan. 28, 2023
Mitzi Lee (CU Philosophy Department)	\$868	Speaker travel for Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference	Apr. 16-18, 2023
Celine Dauverd (CU History Department)	\$2,000	Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies (ASPHS) conference	May 19-21, 2023

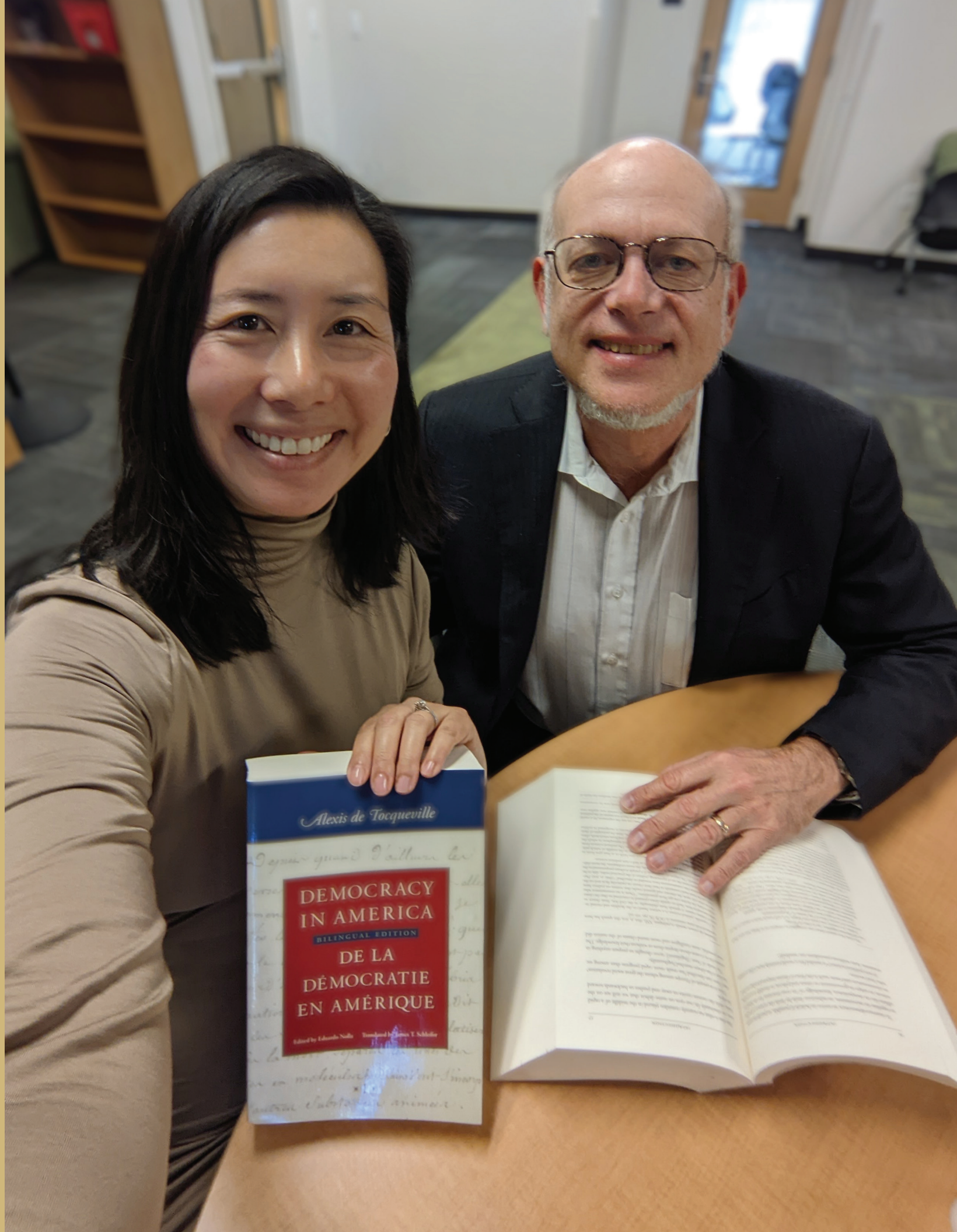
“The workshop saw the continuation of ongoing collaborations and the beginnings of new collaborations between CU and outside scholars. This was also an opportunity for CU junior scholars and graduate students to extend their professional networks and collaborate across fields and institutions. Once again, outside scholars were impressed by CU Boulder both in terms of its campus and its vibrant intellectual life.”

– Brian Catlos, professor, Director of CU Mediterranean Studies Group



# COURSE DATA & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

During the academic year, the six faculty affiliated with the Benson Center taught a range of diverse courses totaling 15, reaching a total of 432 students. Highlights include Benson Center's Director Daniel Jacobson's "PHIL 1100: Ethics," that had 64 undergraduate students enrolled, Benson Center's Associate Faculty Director Taylor Jaworski taught "ECON 4524: Economic History of the United States," with 40 students, and Faculty Fellow Ben Teitelbaum taught "MUSC 1802: Introduction to Musical Style/Idea," to 87 students.



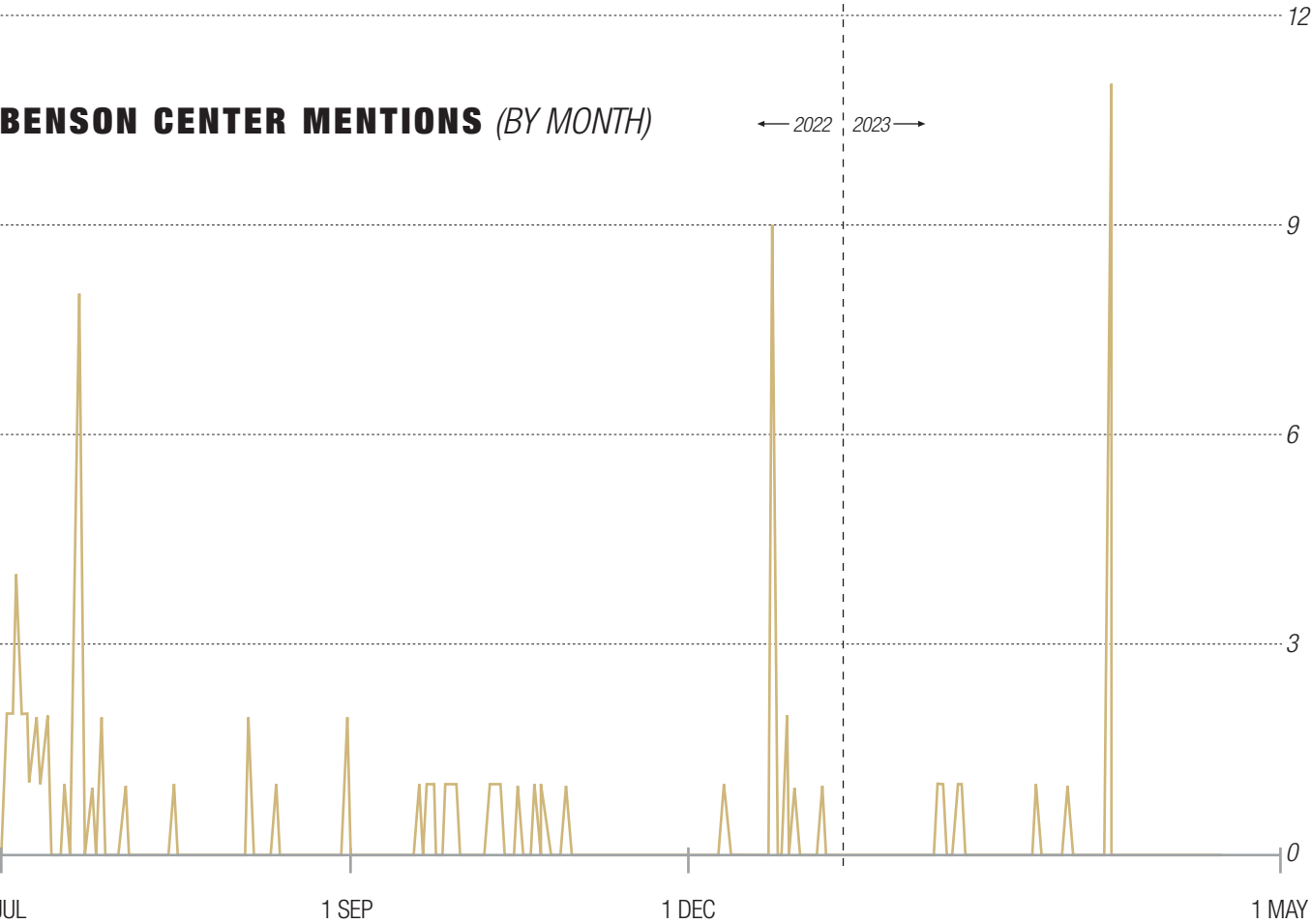


NEWS ANALYTICS

The Benson Center earned 85 total news mentions between July 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023. Fifteen outlets directly mentioned the Benson Center in their coverage, producing 27 mentions. Just over half of news mentions came from Colorado-based outlets (44 mentions). National mentions accounted for 15% of coverage, with stories from Washington Post, NBC News, HuffPost, Politico and Forbes, among others.

Coverage highlights:

- Both Daniel Jacobson and Alan Kahan spoke with the Denver Post about how they plan to change the perception of the visiting scholar program after Eastman’s dismissal.
- A Washington Post article mentioned a paper by Taylor Jaworski on highways and globalization.
- William B. Allen, the 2018-19 visiting scholar, joined a C-SPAN panel to discuss identity politics and how anti-racist ideologies have infected the presidential homes in Virginia.



SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

The Benson Center has a social media presence on five social media platforms: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Overall, the platforms have seen a steady increase in activity and viewership in the 2022-23 academic year over past years.

**YouTube:** Since October 22, 2022, The Benson Center posted **10** new videos of lectures, attracting **52,356** new views of all videos, **166** new subscribers, and **1,047,430** impressions.

As of April 6, 2023, the Center’s YouTube page has had more than **1,169,323** views across all videos and a subscriber base of more than **5,965** individuals.

Notably, the Center’s most-watched video, “Victor Davis Hanson: World War Two — Then and Now” (lecture date May 2, 2018) has received **529,472** all-time views to date. Jonathan Haidt’s Oct. 15, 2019 lecture, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” has received **348,149** views. Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s Jan. 31, 2020 lecture, “The Market for Victimhood,” has received **195,194** views.

**Facebook:** The number of followers is **360**. The Center made **54** posts from October 2022 to April 2023, generating **1,420** organic views.

**Twitter:** The Benson Center received a total of **5,972** impressions on **52** tweets. The Center’s Twitter page followers currently stands at **246**. The Center’s tweets averaged **1,194** impressions per month.

**Instagram:** The Center made **13** posts on its Instagram page, attracting **22** new followers

**LinkedIn:** The Benson Center LinkedIn page has **23** followers and received **277** impressions.

**Subscriber Base:** The Benson Center’s digital subscriber list has **2,174** members.

2022–23 EXPENSES

Grantee	2022–23 Expenses	2021–22 Expenses	2020–21 Expenses	2019–20 Expenses	2018–19 Expenses
Salary Expenses <i>(Wages + Benefits)</i>	\$885,574	\$1,050,879	\$1,026,469	\$918,595	\$773,496
Operating Costs Total	\$126,851	\$172,497	\$102,753	\$259,484	\$173,537
Operating Expenses	\$75,374	\$137,223	\$74,925	\$178,348	\$125,894
Travel	\$30,730	\$22,174	\$2,037	\$21,116	\$27,748
Faculty & Student Grants	\$20,747	\$13,100	\$25,479	\$60,020	\$19,895
Total Expense	\$1,139,275	\$1,223,376	\$1,129,222	\$1,178,079	\$947,033



# 2022–23 Faculty, Staff, and Interns



Daniel Jacobson, Director

**Prof. Daniel Jacobson** was appointed as the first endowed director of the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization in August 2020, following a national search. Jacobson came to CU Boulder from the University of Michigan, where he was professor of philosophy. In addition to serving as the Benson Center faculty director, Jacobson is the Bruce D. Benson Endowed Professor of Philosophy.

Jacobson, who earned a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and a B.A. from Yale University, works on a wide range of topics in ethics, moral psychology, aesthetics and the moral and political philosophy of John Stuart Mill. His book, *Rational Sentimentalism*, coauthored with Justin D’Arms, was recently published by Oxford University Press. He is currently working on another book project, which aims to reconcile Mill’s commitments to liberty and utility. Much of Jacobson’s work has focused on defending freedom of speech and academic freedom, and on increasing political diversity in academia.

Jacobson has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, American Council of Learned Societies, the John Templeton Foundation and the Princeton University Center for Human Values. He is a member of the Academic Freedom Alliance, a select group of nationally influential faculty dedicated to upholding open inquiry in pursuit of knowledge at institutions of higher learning.

## INTERNS



Jeffrey Steele



Matthew Ruiz Diaz



Alisa Johnson

Taylor Jaworski, Associate Faculty Director

**Taylor Jaworski** is an economist and economic historian. His research focuses on regional economic growth and structural change in the United States. He has written on the impact of World War II and transportation infrastructure on the development of the American economy. At CU, he teaches courses in economic history at the graduate and undergraduate level. In his work for the Benson Center, Professor Jaworski aims to increase the interaction between faculty, undergraduates at CU, and the broader community in Colorado, and to support the Center’s mission to promote a better understanding of the intellectual traditions within Western Civilization as well as greater ideological diversity at CU.



Alexandra Roberts, Assistant Director

**Alexandra Roberts** joined the Benson Center in April 2022. She is responsible for managing the Center’s operations, budget and finance, and faculty recruitment, including onboarding and academic scheduling. Alexandra serves as the primary liaison with the CU Foundation for donor stewardship and fundraising. A CU Boulder alum with a B.A. in International Affairs, she is particularly passionate about student engagement with the Center and its mission. Alexandra has been a staff member with the university since 2014, and her relationships across campus have helped raise the Center’s profile in the College of Arts and Sciences.



Alexander (AJ) Shively, External Relations Manager

**AJ Shively** joined the Benson Center in 2020 as a student intern. As a student intern he helped launch the Free Mind podcast, web design, and event management. Shively became the Center’s External Media Relations Manager in February 2023, where he is now responsible for event management, community partnerships and student engagement. Shively is a CU Boulder alum with a B.S. in Strategic Communication with a focus on strategic advertising.







*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).*