

BENSON CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2021–22



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 enhance the study of Western traditions and values. In 2013, the university created the Conservative Thought and Policy Visiting Scholar Program to promote intellectual diversity on campus, which was then merged with the center the following year. Most recently, in 2019, the Center for Western Civilization, Thought and Policy, as it had become known, was renamed the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization to honor the CU president emeritus for his long championship 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 balanced discourse that engages both liberal and conservative viewpoints, facilitating access to a wide range of political, economic and philosophical perspectives at CU Boulder.

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, and individual liberty 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 was a year of transition at the Benson Center. After being fully remote for the 2020–21 academic year, we shifted back to in-person programming while continuing to livestream events. Although we're still working on the technical challenges of livestreaming, we're excited about being able to fully integrate remote audiences into our events and allowing virtual audiences to participate in the Q&A sessions after our lectures.

This year our programming focused on two themes. The first theme was the ethics of capitalism. Professor Alan Kahan, the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, organized a speaker series titled "Capitalism and Ethics," which included a lecture by one of the world's leading economic historians, Deirdre McCloskey, as well as professors Oliver Zunz, Helena Rosenblatt, Gianna Englert and Alberto Mingardi.

The second theme focused on debating public policy around climate change and seeking bipartisan solutions. Our first major event on this topic was a partnership with the Steamboat Institute for a debate on whether America should rapidly eliminate fossil fuel use to prevent climate catastrophe. The second event, organized by Benson Center Fellow Matthew Burgess, explored bipartisan solutions to climate change and featured Reps. Joe Neguse (D-CO) and John Curtis (R-UT).

The center also hosted or partnered with several other scholars and scholarly societies to present lectures on topics such as identity politics, economic growth, civic education and groupthink in American universities.

*In addition to these lecture and debate series, the center pursued its mission in other ways. We were pleased to host our first sabbatical fellow, David McPherson of Creighton University, to work on his book project, *Spiritual Alienation and the Quest for God*. We also hosted Tristan Rogers as the Snider Scholar in Residence and supported his forthcoming book, *Conservatism Past and Present: A Philosophical Introduction*.*

In April, the center hosted its Workshop on Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy. Speaking for myself, this workshop is one of the most gratifying and enjoyable academic events of the year.

Shilo Brooks continued The Free Mind podcast, which has an impressive number of subscribers. The year also brought mixed emotions, as Shilo has been lured away by the James Madison Program at Princeton University, perhaps the most high-profile academic center for conservative thought in the world. It is an ideal post for Shilo, and we wish him the best at Princeton. We look forward to fruitful collaboration between the Benson Center and the Madison Program.

Shilo will be replaced as associate faculty director by Taylor Jaworski, associate professor of economics. Taylor has been a faculty fellow at the center, and we're excited to welcome him to a larger role. He has a number of exciting ideas for expanding our profile, especially with undergraduates at CU. Another faculty fellow, Matt Burgess, will be taking over The Free Mind podcast as well as continuing his work on decreasing political polarization.

We look forward to working with Ben Teitelbaum, associate professor of ethnomusicology, who is organizing a series on media bias that will kick off with a lecture by journalist Lionel Shriver. We are also planning another event with the National Association of Scholars on the growing tension between the ambitions of public health authorities and individual liberty.

We've also welcomed Alexandra Roberts as our new program manager. Alex comes to us from the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences department at CU Boulder. Associate Director Betty Kilsdonk has also left the center and CU — many thanks to Betty for her work and dedication. Taylor, Alex and I will collaborate on a search for her replacement.

I hope you enjoy reading more about our work during the past year in this report. Stay tuned for more exciting updates and progress to further the impact and reach of the Benson Center!

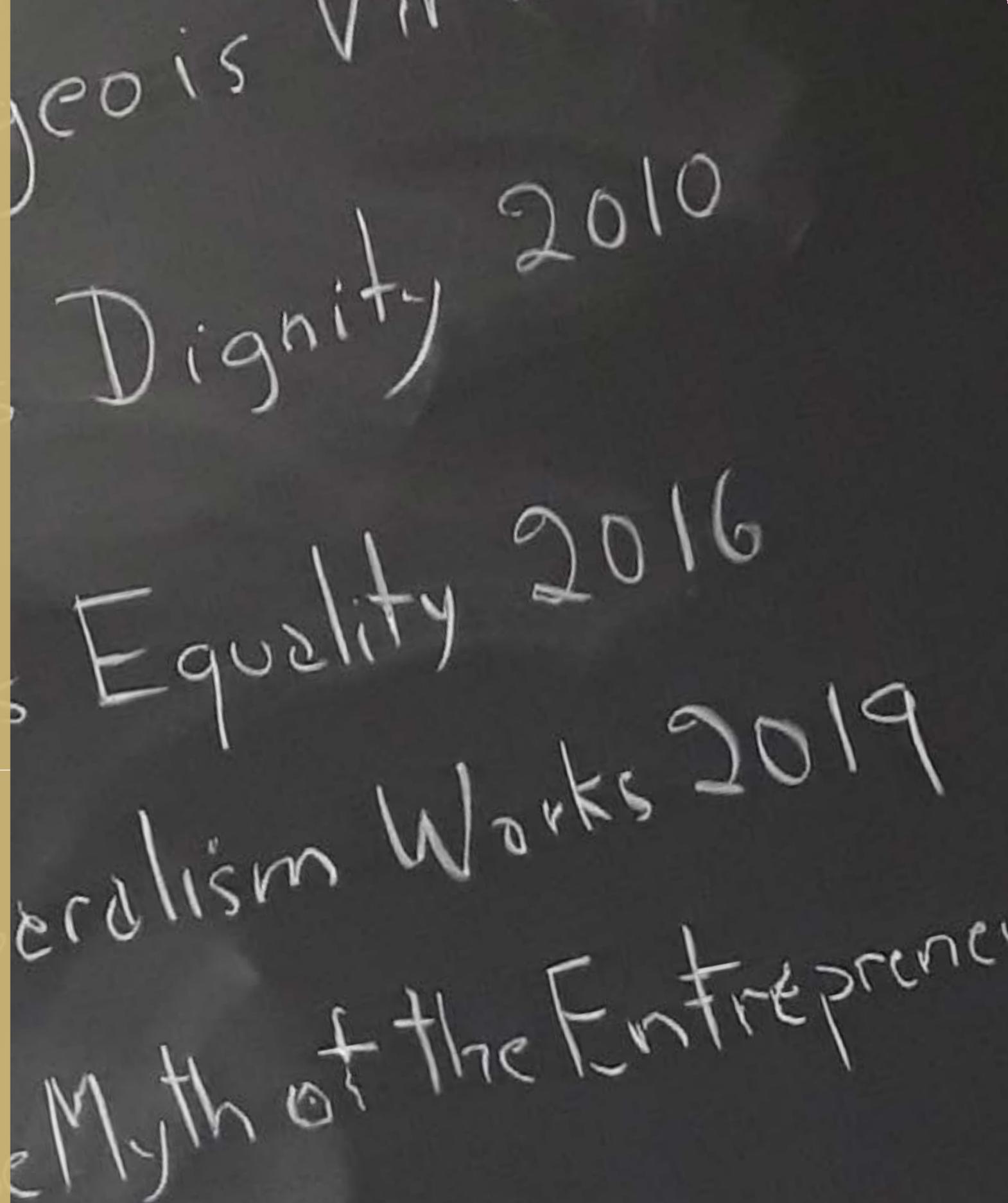


2021-22 CENTER FACULTY AND FELLOWS

Fundamental to the Benson Center's mission is bringing a diversity of voices to the University of Colorado Boulder campus. Toward this end, the center hosted its tenth Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, its first Visiting Research Professor, two junior scholars in residence 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. Additionally, a 15-member undergraduate fellows program supported students who desire to learn more about the moral, economic and political questions of our time. Benson Center faculty and fellows demonstrate an enthusiasm for fostering intellectual diversity and dialogue, both on campus and in the broader community.

"It has been a year that I won't soon forget, and I hope that one day I will be able to say that I made it count, and that my time here made a difference."

— Tristan Rogers, Snider Scholar in Residence





2021–22 VISITING SCHOLAR IN CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT AND POLICY

Alan S. Kahan was the 2021–22 Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy. Kahan, a historian, political theorist and author, is professor of British civilization at the Université de Paris-Saclay. Kahan will return to the post for the 2022–23 term.

Kahan is the author of several books, including *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*, *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 PhD in history from the University of Chicago in 1987.

"I have been very pleased with the success of the lecture series on capitalism and ethics that I organized this year, and which brought a diverse group of economists, historians and political theorists to campus," said Kahan. "I was even more pleased to have the opportunity to teach courses on the history of liberalism, from Smith and Montesquieu to the present, and on Tocqueville."

Benson Center Director Daniel Jacobson said he is delighted to see Kahan return: "Professor Kahan has been a great addition to the Benson Center and an ambassador for it."

The conservative thought and policy search committee includes five voting CU Boulder faculty from diverse disciplines and five external non-voting advisory members.



"[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

2021–22 VISITING RESEARCH PROFESSOR

David McPherson, an associate professor of philosophy at Creighton University, is the Benson Center's first visiting research professor. He received a PhD and MA in philosophy from Marquette University and a BA in philosophy, summa cum laude, from Bethel University. His research specializations are in ethics (especially virtue ethics), political philosophy, meaning in life and philosophy of religion. McPherson is the author of *Virtue and Meaning: A Neo-Aristotelian Perspective* and *The Virtues of Limits* and he is editor of *Spirituality and the Good Life: Philosophical Approaches*.

During the year, McPherson worked on a book, *Spiritual Alienation and the Quest for God*. McPherson describes the book as "concerned with a crucial part of our Western inheritance, namely, theistic religion." He added, "Since the Benson Center is a center for the study of Western civilization, I thought it was a perfect place for me to work on this project."

He also wrote two essays, one on the virtues of manhood for *Public Discourse* and the second, entitled "After Virtue and Conservatism," for a volume on MacIntyre's *After Virtue After 40*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

At the Benson Center, McPherson said that he particularly benefited from the faculty seminars — especially the opportunity for feedback on his book — and engaging with guest speakers. However, his most memorable experience was the center's inaugural Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy. He said, "It was very enriching to discuss moral and political issues freely and openly with other philosophers . . . [and] advocate for a more open and intellectually diverse academy, to help make it a place where conservative ideas can be properly represented alongside non-conservative ideas and where a healthy exchange of ideas occurs."



"I wanted to be at a place that values intellectual diversity, since it is in such an environment that the intellectual life flourishes as one engages in conversation across different viewpoints."

– David McPherson

SCHOLARS

IN RESIDENCE



Tristan J. Rogers
Snider Scholar

Tristan Rogers was the Benson Center Snider Scholar in Residence for the 2021–22 academic year. Rogers received his PhD at the University of Arizona and was previously a lecturer in philosophy at UC Davis and CSU, Sacramento. Rogers' research focus is on ethics, social and political philosophy, and ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. He is the author of *The Authority of Virtue: Institutions and Character in the Good Society*.

During the year, Rogers taught "History of Ancient Philosophy" and "Social and Political Philosophy," worked on his next book (*Conservatism Past and Present: A Philosophical Introduction*), prepared essays for publication and presented papers at conferences and workshops.

Reflecting on his year, Rogers commented, "This is the first academic job I have held since finishing my PhD in 2017 that hired me because of my research, not in spite of it. The minimal (but highly relevant) teaching load allowed me to focus on my research, and I often left the classroom invigorated rather than drained.

"Being back in a physical classroom was also important to me, along with the in-person events and experiences that make academic life more than sitting at a computer by myself. In short, it has been a year that I won't soon forget, and I hope that one day I will be able to say that I made it count, and that my time here made a difference."



Catherine Steidl

Catherine (Catie) Steidl returned as a Scholar in Residence for the 2021–22 academic year. Steidl received her PhD from Brown University's Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World in 2018. Her research focuses on the dynamics of community belonging and interaction in the first millennium BCE, particularly Mediterranean migration and the use of material culture to study identity and interaction.

During the year, Steidl taught "Modern Issues," "Ancient Times: Mediterranean Migrations" and "The Greeks Overseas." She also completed a chapter to an edited volume on rural communities in ancient Greece, contributed a piece on the feasibility of a global Mediterranean archaeology to *Archaeological Dialogues* and published several book reviews.

Steidl noted, "My time at CU has allowed me to continue developing my teaching repertoire and to make important progress on my personal research. I truly appreciate the support I've had from the Benson Center and the Department of Classics during what has been a difficult time for many, especially for junior scholars."

FACULTY FELLOWS



Mathew Burgess
*Departments of Environmental Studies,
Economics and Cooperative Institute in
Environmental Sciences (CIRES)*

Matthew Burgess holds a PhD from the University of Minnesota and a BSc 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.

As a faculty fellow, Burgess organized and co-moderated a discussion of bipartisan solutions to climate change with U.S. representatives Joe Neguse of Colorado and John Curtis of Utah. He also brought CU's popular "Reducing Polarization" dialogue series to the Benson Center's portfolio, presented a faculty research seminar ("Climate Change is an Opportunity to Reduce U.S. Political Polarization") and gave a public lecture ("What Should We Do About Slow Growth?").

Taylor Jaworski's research and teaching interests are in economic history and economic geography. Jaworski has been a regular participant in Benson Center faculty seminars and a host/panelist in several events, including "Hamilton: The Man Behind the Musical" and lectures by Jared Rubin and Noel Johnson. Jaworski received his PhD from the University of Arizona, MSc from the London School of Economics and BA from The George Washington University.

Jaworski is particularly interested in bringing scholars to CU "that can speak to researchers in a range of fields as well as engage with the public on the critical issues of our time," he said. This year he moderated the lectures "What Should We Do About Slow Growth?" and "Defending Economic Liberalism Against Popular Assault." He also presented research on the emergence of regional cultures in the U.S. at a faculty research seminar.



Taylor Jaworski
Department of Economics

Paul Diduch has a PhD from the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas and an MA in political science and political theory from the University of Alberta. He directs the Certificate in Engineering, Science and Society and the Herbst "Culture Wars in Rome" seminar. His teaching interests include ancient philosophy, the history of science and contemporary issues in science and society.

Diduch has published articles on Plato and co-edited *Socrates in the Cave: On the Philosopher's Motive in Plato*. As a faculty fellow, Diduch presented "Francis Bacon's Agreement and Disagreement with Plato and Aristotle on the Matter of Technological Innovation" at a faculty research seminar.

For Diduch, the center's public forums are particularly valuable: "I think it is especially important for students to see the virtues of liberal debate, intellectual charity and genuine freedom of thought," he said.



Paul Diduch
*Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics &
Society*

OUTREACH & EVENTS

Central to the Benson Center's mission is a commitment to fostering dialogue about fundamental values and 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 2021-22 academic year, the center hosted a six-part public lecture series on the theme of "Capitalism and Ethics," organized by Alan Kahan, which drew distinguished U.S. and international academics to share their scholarship.

A second programming theme was climate change public policy. The center jointly sponsored a discussion of bipartisan solutions to climate change that featured U.S. representatives Joe Neguse of Colorado and John Curtis of Utah with the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES). The center also partnered with the Steamboat Institute to debate fossil fuel use with General Wesley Clark and Alex Epstein.

With the National Association of Scholars, the center sponsored a panel on civic education, liberalism and the role of virtue. Seven additional lectures, six faculty research seminars, a new weekly dialogue series on reducing polarization, a new monthly podcast series and a new workshop in heterodox moral and political philosophy rounded out the center's offerings.

"This [bipartisan discussion on climate change] was immensely valuable. I hope we'll continue to host more of these events at CU Boulder."

— CU faculty member



“CAPITALISM & ETHICS” SERIES

A six-part hybrid series called “Capitalism and Ethics” explored the complex relationships between the two in American culture and Western civilization in general. Speakers discussed topics such as capitalism and virtue, the history of American philanthropy and the relationships between ethics and economics, capitalism and religion. The series was organized and moderated by Alan Kahan.

In all, the series attracted 268 in-person and remote attendees and over 1,270 subsequent views (as of August 2022) on the center’s YouTube channel.



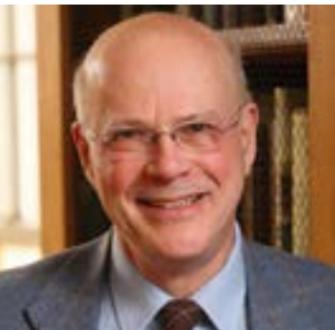
Capitalism Exhibits the Seven Primary Virtues

Oct. 5, 2021 | Attendance: 83 | YouTube views: 598

So-called modern capitalism — or “voluntary innovism” — uses and encourages the virtues of faith, hope, love, courage and temperance. Greed is not good, being the virtue of prudence absent the other six. Balanced virtues are what a person and an economy needs and runs on.

Featuring:

Deirdre Nansen McCloskey, distinguished professor of economics, history, English and communication at the University of Illinois at Chicago



Ethics and Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Philanthropy

Nov. 5, 2021 | Attendance: 32 | YouTube views: 116

Private gifts have had a large and cumulative impact on national affairs, and philanthropic commitments have enlarged American democracy. Not only a powerful means of expanding knowledge, promoting social movements and formulating public policy, they have also given Americans of diverse conditions a stronger voice in defining the common good.

Featuring:

Olivier Zunz, James Madison professor emeritus of history at the University of Virginia



The Banker Who Brought Down the Old Regime: The Political Economy of Jacques Necker (1732-1804)

Nov. 30, 2021 | Attendance: 46 | YouTube views: 203

Jacques Necker was finance minister to King Louis XVI of France. Necker raised the loans that caused the debt crisis, which in turn launched the French Revolution of 1789. Despite the fact that he was such an important figure, his ideas have been relatively neglected until now. Necker’s life and work shed light on the origins — and nature — of French liberalism.

Featuring:

Helena Rosenblatt, professor of history, political science and French at the Graduate Center, CUNY

Two French Liberals on Commerce and Citizenship: Benjamin Constant and Alexis de Tocqueville

March 7, 2022 | Attendance: 43 | YouTube views: 111

Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59) are recognized today as two of the central figures in the development of French liberalism and of liberalism generally. Both thinkers argued that changes in society and in the economy ought to alter the standards for who could vote and, just as importantly, who could not. Studying the two figures side-by-side illuminates contemporary questions regarding the intersection of capitalism and democratic politics.

Featuring:

Gianna Englert, assistant professor in the political science department at Southern Methodist University



Vilfredo Pareto, the Moralizer

April 7, 2022 | Attendance: 22 | YouTube views: 111

Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) is best remembered as a founding father of both modern sociology and contemporary, neoclassical economics. Yet in an eventful and rich life, he came to scholarship quite late — in his 40s — after having been a passionate advocate of free market and democratic reforms in Italy. Pareto’s experience with Italian politics and his outrage at Italy’s corruption and crony capitalism forged his political realism.

Featuring:

Alberto Mingardi, associate professor of the history of political thought at IULM University in Milan, presidential scholar in political theory at Chapman University and director general of the Italian free-market think tank Istituto Bruno Leoni



Mind vs. Money: The War Between Intellectuals and Capitalism

April 27, 2022 | Attendance: 42 | YouTube views: 132

For the past 150 years, Western intellectuals have trumpeted contempt for capitalism and capitalists. Dislike and contempt for the bourgeoisie, the middle classes, industry and commerce have been a prominent trait of leading Western writers and artists. It has been argued that the friction between mind and money is the great, unresolved conflict of modern society. To end it, we must first understand how and why so many intellectuals have opposed capitalism and how this opposition can be tempered.

Featuring:

Alan S. Kahan, professor of British civilization at the Université de Paris-Saclay and visiting scholar of conservative thought and policy at the University of Colorado Boulder



OTHER EVENTS AND OUTREACH

In addition to the “Capitalism and Ethics” lecture series, the Benson Center initiated or cosponsored 11 public lectures and panels of topical importance, such as identity politics and color-blind principles, preparing developed democracies for economic slowdowns, the proper role of civic education, political tribalism, freedom of speech and internet regulation, bipartisan climate solutions, fossil fuel use and the relation of philosophy to science.

The center embraced a weekly Zoom discussion series on “Reducing Polarization,” offered in collaboration with the CU Dialogues Program that gives faculty, staff, students and others an opportunity to build empathy and understanding across political and other divisions.

The center also launched *The Free Mind* podcast, which engages with professors and public intellectuals to explore topics in Western philosophy, politics, literature and history from diverse viewpoints.

CU Boulder also hosted its inaugural Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy — the only one of its kind in the country. The workshop invited senior philosophers to review work in progress from younger colleagues who work on ideas at odds with the prevailing orthodoxies of the discipline.

What Should We Do About Slow Growth?

Sept. 21, 2021 | Attendance: 52 | YouTube views: 293

Economic growth in the 19th and 20th centuries was much faster than in the past and coincided with the global proliferation of democracy. Forecasters have predicted slower economic growth in this century, due to aging populations, innovation slowdowns, debt, climate change and other reasons. How can developed democracies prepare for the fiscal and social stress of long-term economic slowdowns?

Matthew Burgess, assistant professor of environmental studies, Cooperative Institute in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) fellow, faculty affiliate in economics and Benson Center faculty fellow | Taylor Jaworski, moderator

Defending Economic Liberalism Against Populist Assault

Oct. 18, 2021 | Attendance: 42 | YouTube views: 118

Economic liberalism is under attack from the progressive left and the populist right. Both argue that free markets and limited government have been a disaster for typical workers and households — and for the nation as a whole. But the doomsaying is wrong. Capitalism isn’t broken; the game isn’t rigged. Moreover, economic liberalism inculcates virtue — in individual citizens and society as a whole — and is a necessary complement to individual liberty.

Michael R. Strain, director of economic policy studies and Arthur F. Burns Scholar in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) | Taylor Jaworski, moderator

Toward the Limits of the Possible: The Philosophic Ambition of a Technological Science

Nov. 5, 2021 | Attendance: 50 | YouTube views: N/A

Today science is publicly defended and justified on the promise

that it will yield useful knowledge and beneficial technologies. At the same time, individual scientists often conceive of and describe their activity as primarily and ultimately oriented towards the discovery of the truth about nature. This duality in the way science is conceived of and justified is part of Francis Bacon’s legacy. This event was the concluding lecture in the CU Engineering Leadership Program’s 2021–22 “The New STEM Enlightenment: Political Promises and Perils of Science and Technology” lecture series, co-sponsored by the Benson Center and the Jack Miller Center.

Tobin Craig, historian of political thought at James Madison College, Michigan State University | Shilo Brooks, moderator

How the Internet Made Freedom into Unfreedom

Nov. 11, 2021 | Attendance: 33 | YouTube views: 164

Privately held social media platforms and internet search engines exercise an increasing degree of control over free speech, associational life and privacy in a Constitutional democracy. Social media platforms and search engines are stepping up efforts to combat the perceived rise in disinformation, fake news and hate speech with content moderation and technological oversight in the form of algorithms, demonetization and the elimination of content and users. As anti-democratic methods are used to contain these anti-democratic tendencies, we should be conscious of the normative perspective we adopt, the ends we hope to achieve and the motivations behind these efforts, as well as contemplate the long-term future of the internet and the freedom that we thought it could achieve.

Lisa Nelson, associate professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs | Fellow, Philosophy of Science Center | Affiliated faculty member, University of Pittsburgh School of Law | Daniel Jacobson, moderator

Clowns to the Left, Jokers to the Right: The Challenge of Addressing “Live Rail” Moral Questions in an Age of Political Tribalism

Nov. 15, 2021 | Attendance: 49 | YouTube views: 182

Across the democratic West, politics have become deeply polarized and profoundly personal. Challenge someone’s political views and increasingly you challenge their very being. But do our political tribes even make sense? On the most important ethical issues of the age, the instinctive positions of both the political left and right are riven with contradictions. This lecture questioned the basic assumptions of our political groups and mounted a simple challenge: “Why should believing strongly about one topic mean the automatic adoption of so many others?”

James Mumford, author and former research fellow, University of Virginia | David McPherson, moderator

Baker v. Carr and the Power to Vote

Nov. 16, 2021 | Attendance: 23 | YouTube views: 88

Earl Warren called *Baker v. Carr* (1962) the most vital decision of his landmark, 16-year tenure as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court — more important than *Griswold v. Connecticut*, *Miranda v. Arizona* and even *Brown v. Board of Education*. Baker set the court on a glide path that led to the “one person, one vote” standard enunciated in *Reynolds v. Sims* two years later, in the process finding the composition of most state legislatures to be unconstitutional. As *Baker* nears its 60th anniversary, Bradley Smith discussed the history and circumstances that gave rise to the decisions in *Baker* and its progeny, what the court got right, what it got wrong and how it has changed the way Americans think about voting and self-governance.

Bradley Smith, Josiah H. Blackmore II/Shirley M. Nault Professor of Law, Capital University | Daniel Jacobson, moderator

Civic Education, Liberalism and the Role of Virtue

Nov. 17, 2021 | Attendance: 86 | YouTube views: N/A

Americans agree that civic education is an essential component of a well-functioning republic. Yet there is widespread disagreement about what that civic education should entail. Some believe it should focus on training students in the history of liberalism and of Western civilization, to provide them with the breadth and depth of knowledge necessary to be responsible members of our shared political life. Others believe the focus should be more forward-leaning, encouraging students to engage in democratic protests and to actively involve themselves in the political process. This event was co-sponsored by the Benson Center and the National Association of Scholars.

Tim Fuller, professor of political science and former dean of faculty and chair, Political Science Department, Colorado College | Wilfred McClay, Victor Davis Hanson chair in classical history and Western civilization, Hillsdale College | Lynn Uzzell, visiting assistant professor of politics, Washington and Lee University | David Randall, moderator

Identity Politics and Color-Blind Principles

Feb. 9, 2022 | Attendance: 56 | YouTube views: 247

One only need think about the African American civil rights movement and the gay rights movement to understand what’s distinctive about earlier expressions of identity politics: They were grounded in a positive conception of America and its animating principles. Both movements sought equal protection before the law for their respective communities, and for their individual members to be treated with dignity and respect. This lecture discussed the importance of a broad, integrative national identity grounded in color-blind principles in combating the excesses of identity politics today.

Andre Archie, associate professor of ancient Greek philosophy at Colorado State University | Daniel Jacobson, moderator

Should America Rapidly Eliminate Fossil Fuel Use to Prevent Climate Catastrophe?

March 2, 2022 | Attendance: 108 | YouTube views: 2,200

The Steamboat Institute’s Campus Liberty Tour returned to CU Boulder with a vital debate on energy and climate policy. Is urgent intervention needed to combat the climate change crisis, or will future technology mitigate its impacts? Are fossil fuels necessary for the world’s economy, or is clean energy the most promising path forward?

Wesley Clark, chairman and CEO of Wesley K. Clark & Associates and former Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO | Alex Epstein, president and founder of the Center for Industrial Progress | Amber Athey, moderator

Conformity in the Cathedral: Causes and Consequences of Groupthink in American Universities

April 11, 2022 | Attendance: 57 | YouTube views: 426

A presentation on where ideological conformity in academia comes from, which issues are especially sensitive and why it can be dangerous to enforce taboos around sensitive issues rather than encouraging different sides to openly debate them. How do academic taboos emerge, how are they sustained and how might they pervert the university’s core mission?

Jonathan Anomaly, author and former instructor, University of Pennsylvania, Duke University and other higher education institutions | Daniel Jacobson, moderator

Panel Discussion on Bipartisan Climate Solutions

April 14, 2022 | Attendance: 150 | YouTube views: N/A

With climate change increasingly harming human communities, both Republican and Democratic legislators understand the need to act. Two lawmakers discussed their motivations for working on climate change issues, where they see opportunities for building consensus on efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and thoughts on reducing political polarization. This event was co-sponsored by the Benson Center and the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences.

United States representatives Joe Neguse (D-CO) and John Curtis (R-UT) | Moderated by Matthew Burgess and Renae Marshall



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. Originator and host Shilo Brooks invites listeners (more than 4,100 during the first year alone) 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.

Among the podcast's offerings: a discussion of Rome's enduring importance with CU Associate Professor Emeritus Wayne Ambler; the impact of one of the most influential books on the American West, *The Legacy of Conquest*, with its author, Patricia Nelson Limerick; the Great Books and liberal education with St. John's College professor Jeff Black; and the political thought of Alexander Hamilton with Princeton University's Bradford Wilson.

S1E0	Sept. 14, 2021	Shilo Brooks	"Introduction to The Free Mind Podcast"
S1E1	Sept. 14, 2021	Wayne Ambler	"The Enduring Importance of Rome"
S1E2	Sept. 14, 2021	Glenn Loury	"Unspeakable Truths about Racial Inequality in America"
S1E3	Sept. 14, 2021	Lucas Morel	"The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass"
S1E4	Sept. 14, 2021	Patricia Limerick	"The Legacy of Conquest and the History of the American West"
S1E5	Oct. 12, 2021	Jeff Black	"The Great Books and Liberal Education"
S1E6	Nov. 9, 2021	Joshua Katz	"Cancel Culture and its Discontents"
S1E7	Dec. 14, 2021	Colleen Sheehan	"Jane Austen's Emma"
S2E1	Jan. 11, 2022	Bradford Wilson	"The Political Thought of Alexander Hamilton"
S2E2	Feb. 8, 2022	Kevin Williamson	"The Disciplinary Corporation"
S2E3	March 8, 2022	Jeremy Fortier	"Introduction to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche"
S2E4	April 12, 2022	Robert Pasnau	"The Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization"
S3E1	May 10, 2022	Paul Ulrich	"Allan Bloom and Higher Education"
S3E2	June 14, 2022	Daniel Mahoney	"From the Culture of Repudiation to the Cancel Culture"
S3E3	July 12, 2022	Alexander Duff	"Introduction to the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger"

BENSON CENTER LIBRARY

The Benson Center was chosen to participate in a book placement program by the Liberty Fund, a private educational foundation established to foster thought and encourage discussion of enduring issues pertaining to liberty. The center was awarded the Liberty Fund's entire catalog — 428 volumes and DVDs — and will continue to receive new additions to the catalog.

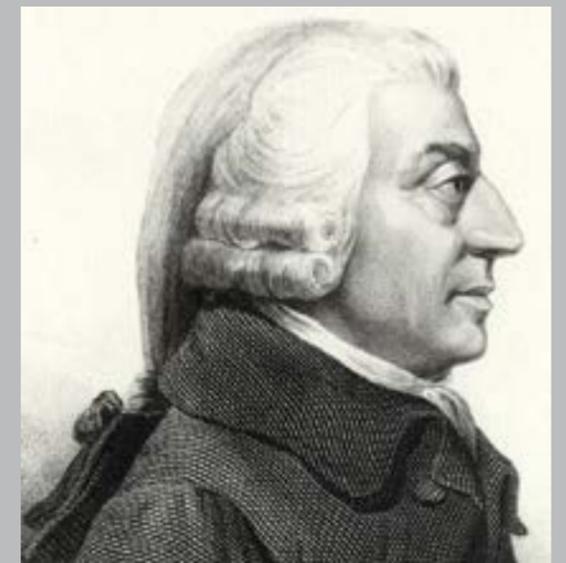
Available for students, faculty and staff, this curated collection of scholarly works engages with vital questions of liberty across many disciplines, including economics, political thought, history and law. Through this rich collection, readers can explore and consider the ideas of John Milton, John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville, Alexander Hamilton, Mercy Otis Warren, Adam Smith and many others. The Liberty Fund volumes are augmented by titles in the Benson Center's own collection, which contains works by visiting scholars and guest speakers. At the Benson Center, the new library resides in a dedicated reading area, where it is accessible to the entire campus community.



WORKSHOP IN HETERODOX MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In the spring of 2022, CU Boulder and the Benson Center hosted the first-ever national Workshop in Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy. This is the third iteration of the workshop format, which was founded and organized by Daniel Jacobson, and is the only one of its kind in the country.

The workshop's purpose is to give sympathetic but critical 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. Research paper topics included political psychology, a libertarian defense of the filibuster, a classically liberal investigation into social pressure on campus, and an attempt to give a sympathetic construal of conservatives as a political point of view. A group of senior philosophers commented on the papers and served as mentors. The workshop was made possible by a generous grant from the Snider Foundation.



STUDENT & FACULTY GRANTS

STUDENT GRANTS

The Benson Center partners with the CU in D.C. program to support experiential learning via student internships in areas related to Western civilization such as law, government, public policy and education. During the 2021–22 academic year, the Benson Center awarded \$3,600 in internship grant funding to three CU Boulder undergraduate students. This year’s internship placements included an education-based nonprofit, a non-partisan advocacy organization and a national law firm with Denver roots working at the crossroads of law, business and policy. 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 PhD students interested in conservative thought and the Western tradition.

Student Grantee	Grant Type
Amber Lashbaugh	CU in D.C. internship: Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP (law firm and legal services)
Sara Hagos	CU in D.C. internship: Foreign Policy for America (non-partisan advocacy organization)
Genasee Worman	CU in D.C. internship: 826DC (arts education nonprofit)

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 2021–22 academic year, public health and safety regulations, uncertainty and fatigue related to the COVID-19 pandemic limited the activities normally supported by Benson Center faculty grants. The Benson Center awarded four faculty grants totaling \$9,500.

The Center for Values and Social Policy, a campus-wide resource for research, teaching and outreach, received two grants. Ten teams of students from six schools, more than 65 in all, competed remotely in the Colorado High School Ethics Bowl Tournament, with graduate students serving as judges. The event’s focus was the use of case studies to develop the ability to think critically and speak effectively about ethical issues.

Colorado’s Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (RoME), an international four-day conference, was held in hybrid format for about 150 attendees, including more than 50 students.

The CU Mediterranean Studies Group was awarded funding to support a robust and varied schedule of collaborative events across departments and programs. The seminar’s membership now counts almost 2,000 associates across 45 countries.

The Department of Philosophy received support for a doctoral student to help complete the final volume of the prestigious *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Professor of Distinction Robert Pasnau. This annual journal, published by Oxford University Press, is one of the most-read publications in the field of medieval philosophy.

Grantee	Amount	In support of	Date
CU Center for Values and Social Policy	\$750	Colorado High School Ethics Bowl Tournament	Feb. 12, 2021
CU Center for Values and Social Policy	\$2,750	Fourteenth Annual Rocky Mountain Ethics (RoME) Congress	Aug. 12–15, 2021
CU Mediterranean Studies Group	\$5,000	Diverse set of multidisciplinary programs	2021–22 academic year
CU Department of Philosophy	\$1,000	Doctoral student editorial assistance to complete the final volume of <i>Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy</i> , Robert Pasnau, editor	2021–22 academic year

“Thank you for the opportunity to pursue my career in D.C. as an intern at my first-choice government relations firm. Coming from a low-income background, I was always told to be more realistic about my aspirations, but I could never accept that advice. Today, I am so grateful to the generous people ... [who] encourage students like me to do the opposite of what I was told, because now the dreams I once had are no longer just dreams.”

– Amber Lashbaugh, CU in D.C. internship scholarship recipient

“The internship I have acquired is at an education-based nonprofit called 826DC, where I will be working with children ages 6 to 18. I will be using my Spanish language skills and working with diverse and marginalized populations throughout this experience. ... This award will give me the support I need to fulfill a dream I have had for years; it will help me forge my own path as I prepare to enter the professional world.”

– Genasee Worman, CU in D.C. internship scholarship recipient

“RoME is widely recognized as one of the most important ethics conferences in the English-speaking world, and the Center [for Values and Social Policy] is particularly pleased that RoME has developed a reputation not only for academic excellence but for providing a distinctively welcoming environment.”

– Benjamin Slater Hale, associate professor, environmental studies



During the 2021–22 academic year, 283 students were enrolled in 12 Benson Center-offered courses taught by the center’s faculty director, associate faculty director and three visiting scholars. Courses ranged from “Mediterranean Migrations” to “Mind vs. Money.” An additional 25 students were enrolled in summer classes.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “hardly ever” and 5 being “almost always,” on average students gave Benson Center instructors top marks in demonstrating respect for diverse students/points of view (4.78), providing opportunities to ask questions/initiate discussion (4.76) and being able to answer questions or provide assistance (4.70). They gave the courses top marks in encouraging them to consider diverse perspectives during class or in assignments (4.67), to evaluate arguments, evidence, assumptions and conclusions (4.77) and to reflect on what they were learning (4.69).

By offering courses in multiple disciplines including art history, philosophy, leadership and classics, and under its own Foundations of Western Civilization listing, the Benson Center reached a broad range of CU Boulder students. Notably, three courses were taught at full capacity: “History of Ancient Philosophy,” “Leadership, Fame and Failure” and “The Empire of Modern Science.”



“This [Social and Political Philosophy] course has been the highlight of my teaching career thus far, and I think many of the students appreciated hearing a different perspective, even or perhaps especially those with different ideological commitments. The class discussions were also genuinely thought-provoking and insightful for me.”

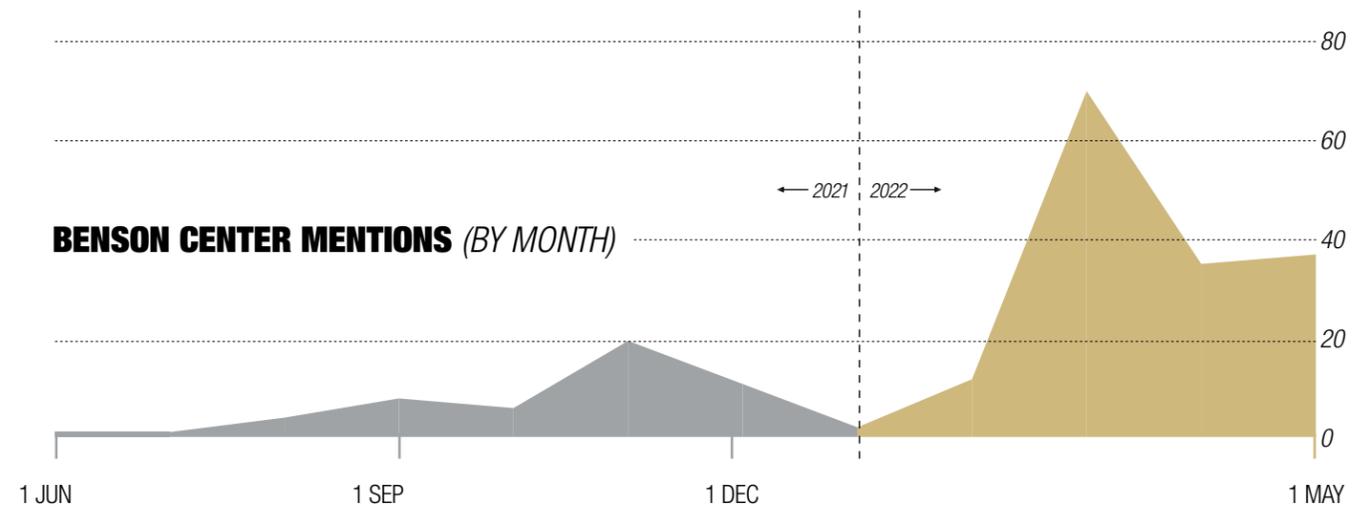
– Scholar in Residence Tristan Rogers

COURSE DATA & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

NEWS ANALYTICS

The Benson Center earned 202 total news mentions between July 1, 2021, and May 12, 2022. This year's coverage is on pace to match the number of mentions from academic year 2021, which was 522% more coverage than academic year 2020.

National mentions accounted for 24% of coverage. Just over half of news mentions were within Colorado. Many high-profile national mentions occurred in outlets such as MSNBC, *Forbes*, *Politico*, *The Washington Post* and *The Atlantic*, among others. The large increase in coverage is due to continued impacts of the 2020 election and related matters.



The Benson Center runs five social media platforms: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Overall, the platforms have seen a steady increase in activity and viewership in the 2021–22 academic year over prior years.

YouTube: The Benson Center posted 13 public videos of hybrid lectures and linked to one video of a co-sponsored lecture, attracting 251,673 new views of all videos and 1,061 new subscribers.

As of April 20, 2022, the center's YouTube page has had more than 1,050,987 views across all videos and a subscriber base of more than 5,550 individuals.

Notably, the center's most-watched video, "Victor Davis Hanson: World War Two—Then and Now" (lecture date May 2, 2018) has received 478,790 all-time views. Jonathan Haidt's lecture from Oct. 15, 2019 ("The Coddling of the American Mind"), has received 314,100 views. Ayaan Hirsi Ali's lecture from Jan. 31, 2020 ("The Market for Victimhood"), has received 185,031 views.

Facebook: The Benson Center Facebook page generated a total reach of 4,374 impressions during the 2021–22 academic year. The center posted 130 times in the academic year, generating 10,921 organic and paid views.

Twitter: The Benson Center received a total of 28,373 impressions on 107 tweets. The center's Twitter page followers increased by 10% to 230. The Center's tweets averaged 1,081 impressions per month.

Instagram: The center made 16 posts on its Instagram page, attracting 160 followers.

LinkedIn: The Benson Center's LinkedIn page had 93 visits, gained nine new followers and received 282 impressions.

Subscriber Base: The Benson Center's digital subscriber list has 2,167 members.

2021–22 EXPENSES

Grantee	Amount				
Salary Expenses (Wages + Benefits)	\$1,050,879	\$1,026,469	\$918,595	\$773,496	\$521,453
Operating Expenses	\$137,223	\$74,925	\$178,348	\$125,894	\$94,546
Transfers Out (Faculty & Student Grants)	\$22,174	\$2,037	\$21,116	\$27,748	\$40,124
Total Expense	\$13,100	\$25,479	\$60,020	\$19,895	\$56,594
Total Expense	\$1,223,376	\$1,129,222	\$1,178,079	\$947,033	\$712,717

2021–22 Faculty, Staff and Interns

Daniel Jacobson, Director

Daniel Jacobson began work 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 a 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 PhD from the University of Michigan and a BA from Yale University, works on a range of topics in ethics, moral psychology, aesthetics and the moral and political philosophy of John Stuart Mill. His paper "Utilitarianism Without Consequentialism: The Case of John Stuart Mill" was selected by *The Philosopher's Annual* as one of the 10 best papers published in 2008. At the University of Michigan, he founded and headed the Freedom and Flourishing Project, which is dedicated to exploring the classical liberal tradition, defending freedom of speech and 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.



Shilo Brooks, Associate Faculty Director

Shilo Brooks, whose scholarship explores the relationship between politics, leadership and liberal education, became the Benson Center's associate faculty director in 2020. He is teaching associate professor and faculty director of the Engineering Leadership Program in CU Boulder's College of Engineering and Applied Science. The program puts science and technology in conversation with the liberal arts to cultivate STEM leaders of curiosity and character.

Brooks supports the academic work of the Benson Center and helps further the establishment of the center's intellectual community, with a particular focus on Western civilization and its broadly humanistic study. He hosts the Center's *The Free Mind podcast*, develops and moderates lecture series, and engages in outreach activities.



Betty Kilsdonk, Associate Director

Betty Kilsdonk joined the Benson Center in 2019 following a career in municipal government administration. As the center's associate director, Betty oversees outward-looking operations: strategic partnerships, events management, community relations, student and public engagement, and outreach. Kilsdonk received her MA in public historical studies from the University of California-Santa Barbara and her BA in history and English, magna cum laude, from Carroll University.



Alexandra Roberts, Program Manager

Program manager **Alex Roberts** joined the Benson Center in 2022. She oversees all internal-facing projects, programs and operations, budget and finance, and faculty recruitment, onboarding and course placements. She is the primary liaison with the CU Foundation for donor stewardship and fundraising. A CU Boulder alum with a BA in international affairs, Alex was formerly the graduate program manager in the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences department.



INTERNS



AJ Shively



Jeffrey Steele



Alisa Johnson



Jordan Harrison





Since its founding, the Benson 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 colorado.edu/center/benson/giving.