

UMW Presidential Inauguration Week – Academic Programs – Panel Discussion

Subcommittee: Andrew Dolby (Chair), Andrea Cordray, Beverly Epps, Miranda Lovett (student representative), Ken Machande, Jeff McClurken, Angela Pitts

Thursday, April 20, 7:00-8:30PM Dodd Auditorium (Reception follows in Dodd Foyer)

Panel Discussion Description

Higher Education in the *Disinformation* Age: Can America’s public liberal arts universities restore critical thinking and civility in public discourse? The American political system has entered a dangerous era of disinformation, misinformation, and coarse dialogue among conflicting social and political camps. Electronic communication and ratings-driven mass media are both mitigating and exacerbating this threat. Join a panel of three prominent scholars, along with moderator Dr. Stephen Farnsworth, UMW’s own distinguished political scientist, for a discussion on the historical context and current challenges of today’s political communication. Major hot-button discussion points will touch on social justice and civil rights, climate change, and the use and abuse of electronic media. Most importantly, how can the University of Mary Washington and other public liberal arts universities facilitate civil, productive national discourse and help future generations navigate an increasingly complex and often confusing information landscape?

Panelist Bios and Photos

Steve Farnsworth (Moderator) – Professor of Political Science and International Affairs; Director of the Center for Leadership and Media Studies. University of Mary Washington.



Stephen J. Farnsworth, Ph.D., is professor of political science and international affairs at the University of Mary Washington, where he directs the university’s Center for Leadership and Media Studies. Dr. Farnsworth is the author or co-author of five books and dozens of articles on the mass media, the presidency, and US and Virginia politics. Dr. Farnsworth was a Canada-U.S. Fulbright Research Scholar at McGill University in Montreal and is a former president of the Political Communication Section of the American Political Science Association. During more than a dozen years at the University of Mary Washington, Dr. Farnsworth has won three campus-wide teaching awards. He has lectured on the news media and elections and led reporter training seminars in India, the Philippines, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia and Estonia on programs funded by the U.S. government. Most recently, Dr. Farnsworth was recognized with an Outstanding Faculty Award by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

Sara Cobb - Director, Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution in the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. George Mason University.



Sara Cobb, Director, Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution @ School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. She conducts research on conflict narratives in the context of studies of ethnic conflict, counterterrorism, and democratization. She has conducted conflict assessments in Guatemala, Somalia, and Israel; and at present, she is currently studying the climate science conflict in the US. As a faculty member, she teaches courses in narrative research methods and systemic intervention design. Through her research she has specialized in the analysis of conflict narrative and has contributed to the critique of “neutrality” in conflict resolution processes. Dr. Cobb has also consulted to a variety of organizations, within the United States, as well as in Europe and Latin America. Her consulting practice includes work on organizational change processes in family businesses; she also provides training for corporations in negotiation and conflict resolution processes. She has published widely in a number of journals on topics related to the transformation of meaning in conflict processes.

Julian Hayter – Assistant Prof. Leadership Studies. University of Richmond.



Dr. Julian Hayter is a historian at the University of Richmond’s Jepson School of Leadership Studies. His research focuses on modern U.S. history, American political development during the mid-20th century, modern African American history, and the American civil rights movement. Hayter’s work has been published in the *Journal of Policy History* and *Richmond Journal of Law and Public Interest*. His book, *The Dream is Lost: Voting Rights and the Politics of Race in Richmond, Virginia*, will be published by the University Press of Kentucky in June of 2017. He also contributes to several local media outlets.

Audrey Watters – Freelance Writer



Audrey Watters Audrey Watters is a writer who focuses on education technology. She has worked in the education field for almost twenty years: as a graduate student, college instructor, and program manager for an ed-tech non-profit. Although she was two chapters into her Comparative Literature dissertation, she decided to abandon academia, and she now happily fulfills the one job recommended to her by a junior high aptitude test: freelance writer. She has written for The Atlantic, Edutopia, Hybrid Pedagogy, MindShift, Inside Higher Ed, The School Library Journal, The Huffington Post, and elsewhere across the Web, in addition to her own website Hack Education. She is the author of several books, including *The Monsters of Education Technology*, *The Revenge of the Monsters of Education Technology*, and *Claim Your Domain*.