

# FORUM

EXPLORING IDEAS + INSTITUTIONS THAT SUSTAIN A FREE SOCIETY

Edmund Phelps,  
Nobel laureate,  
at the Civitas  
Institute's inaugural  
Austin Symposium



# Inside



STUDENTS VISIT AT ARTHUR BROOKS'S TALK (Page 20)



<b>DEAN'S NOTE</b>	4
<b>DIRECTOR'S NOTE</b>	5
<b>FEATURES</b>	
UT announces Justin Dyer and Ryan Streeter	6
The School of Civic Leadership	7
Austin Symposium on Economic Dynamism	8
<b>SPEAKER EVENTS</b>	
Civil Discord	12
Eugene Rivers on Forgiveness in Politics	16
Stephen Brock on St. Thomas Aquinas	16
Augustinian Liberalism with James K.A. Smith	17
The Association for the History of Political Thought	18
The U.K.'s Constitutional History in Two Volumes	18
The "Pursuit of Happiness" with Jeffrey Rosen	19
Arthur Brooks on the Art + Science of Getting Happier	20
Haidt and Rauch on Creating Knowledge in a Fragmented Age	21
Love, Sex, and Liberalism with Christine Emba	21
Samuel Gregg on the Humane Economy	22
An Interview with Samuel Gregg	23
Melissa Kearney's <i>The Two Parent Privilege</i>	24
America's Missing Baby Boom with Tim Carney	24
Casey Mulligan on the State of the Economy	25
<b>CIVITAS COMMUNITY EVENTS</b>	
FREE Events	26
Braver Angels Debate	26
ISI-Civitas Debate on Ukraine	27
Nathaniel Hawthorne with Christopher Scalia	27
<b>STUDENT VOICES</b>	
Society of Fellows Spring Recap	29
Society of Fellows Study in Madrid	30
Society of Fellows	34
Graduate Fellows	35
<b>BACK COVER</b>	
Upcoming Events	

Cover photo: Thomas Meredith



## DEAN'S NOTE

Justin Dyer

**James** Wilson is one America's forgotten Founders. One of only six men to sign both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, George Washington appointed him to the first U.S. Supreme Court. In 1790, the trustees of the College of Philadelphia then appointed Wilson as their first professor of law.

In his inaugural lecture—attended by George and Martha Washington, John Adams, both houses of Congress, and both houses of the Pennsylvania legislature—Wilson made two claims that remain relevant to us today. First, he said that “Law and liberty cannot become the objects of our love, unless they first become the objects of our knowledge.” Second, he insisted that these subjects “should, in some measure, and in some degree, be the study of every free citizen, and every free man.” “Every free citizen,” Wilson observed, “has duties to perform and rights to claim. Unless, in some measure, and in some degree, he knows those duties and those rights, he can never act a just and independent part.”

It would not be until 1885 that Henry Randall Waite coined the term “civics” to describe the study of the rights and duties of citizenship, but the connection between civics, self-government, and public higher education has been part of the American experiment from the beginning. “In a republic,” George Washington asked in his Inaugural Address, “what species of knowledge can be equally important and what duty more pressing on its legislature than to patronize a plan for communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the country?”

This spirit animates The University of Texas at Austin, where our motto is *Disciplina Praesidium Civitatis*—study is the guardian of the city. It is a loose translation of a line from Mirabeau Lamar's First Message to the Texas Congress in 1838: “that cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy.” Echoing Washington's Inaugural Address, Lamar went on to ask: “How shall we protect our rights if we do not comprehend them? And how can we comprehend them unless we acquire a knowledge of the past and present condition of things, and practice the habit of enlightened reflection?”

William Battle—a scholar of classical languages who served as UT Austin's sixth president—designed the University's seal, putting the Latin motto against a blue background to emphasize the importance of sincerity and truth-seeking in the academic enterprise. An open book in the top field of its heraldic shield symbolizes the study of mankind's accumulated wisdom as the discipline necessary to sustain free and flourishing societies in the future. The wreath and seal mirror the seal of Texas, the political community for which the University exists.

After designing the seal, Battle said the motto was “at once a justification of the University's existence and the ideal of its future.” So it is, and so it remains. UT Austin's new School of Civic Leadership builds on this tradition, providing unique opportunities for future civic leaders to study the principles of ordered liberty.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Ryan Streeter

**One** hundred years ago, Harvard humanist and literary critic, Irving Babbitt, wrote that America's materialistic culture and self-interested political leadership portend “the end of our constitutional liberties and the rise of decadent imperialism.” America, like Rome before it, was in decline.

Babbitt's sentiments were widespread in the 1920s. Amidst the trauma of a catastrophic world war, a global pandemic, and the vagaries of growing self-indulgent materialism, many Americans concluded that the liberal tradition of liberty, limited government, and civil society had ended. Illiberal, centralized political power was the inevitable tool required to confront the day's challenges. To observers such as Babbitt, social sciences imported from Europe had undermined classical liberalism in our universities and paved the way for the collectivism that was gaining support throughout the West. All the trends seemed to be going the wrong direction.

It would have been nearly impossible in 1924 to predict how the world would look thirty years later. Thankfully, capitulation was not an option for the brave and creative souls who, amidst economic depression and another world war, dug in and recovered what was best in the liberal tradition as they stared down daunting challenges. From the creation of Great Books programs, to the Mont Pelerin Society, to literary and popular culture works recovering notions of classical virtue, to Chicago School economics, the decades that followed the 1920s ushered in a new era of freedom, growth, and imagination that still benefit us today.

Yet as recent events in our politics and on our campuses have shown, threats to a free, prosperous, and pluralistic society surround us. Many commentators in the 2020s sound like those in the 1920s.

The Civitas Institute exists to keep the spirit of recovery and imagination alive. We have hosted and co-hosted over twenty public gatherings and events during the 2024 spring semester alone to debate how illiberalism manifests itself today, how the tradition of ordered liberty helps us confront worrisome trends, and how we understand human flourishing in the 21st century.

Jonathan Haidt and Jonathan Rauch discussed the precarious situation of free inquiry on campuses. Arthur Brooks and Jeffrey Rosen unearthed important truths about what “the pursuit of happiness” means for today's culture and politics. Nobel laureate Edmund Phelps, economic historian Deirdre McCloskey, and economist Ed Glaeser presented alongside other renowned scholars on the underpinnings and future prospects of a free and vibrant economy. Tim Carney, Christine Emba, and Melissa Kearney challenged conventional wisdom on issues related to families, marriage, and relationships.

As the Civitas Institute continues to grow, our research, written, and digital products will reflect this spirit of recovering the best of Western civilization as we confront today's biggest challenges to liberty and prosperity. Wherever they come from, today's challenges will grow smaller and more manageable when the spirit of free inquiry can flourish in the free society we are all working to preserve.





The University of Texas at Austin has named Justin Dyer as the inaugural dean of the School of Civic Leadership. Dyer, who has served as interim dean since the new school launched last year, is a professor of government in the College of Liberal Arts and served as the founding director of the University's Civitas Institute.

"The School of Civic Leadership is building on UT's longstanding tradition of educating future leaders in Texas and beyond," said President Jay Hartzell. "The school takes an interdisciplinary approach that encourages students to access the unique learning opportunities available here at one of the world's great research universities."

As dean, Dyer will continue to build the University's newest school and advance its mission to develop interdisciplinary programs and educate, develop, and prepare the next generation of America's civic leaders.

Dyer joined UT in July 2022 after serving as a professor of political science and the founding director of the University of Missouri's Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy. Dyer writes and teaches in the fields of American political thought, jurisprudence, and constitutionalism. He is the author or editor of eight books and numerous journal articles, essays, and book reviews.

"Through his work in the Civitas Institute and School of Civic Leadership, Justin has already established himself as a strong academic leader with an extraordinary ability to bring people together in the exchange of different ideas, perspectives, and experiences," said Sharon L. Wood, executive vice president and provost. "I am thrilled to continue working with him as we build the new School of Civic Leadership into a world-class institution with the top faculty, students, and researchers in the field."

The University of Texas at Austin has appointed Ryan Streeter executive director of the Civitas Institute, a nonpartisan center that supports independent scholarship and analysis to advance the principles of a free society, including individual liberty, constitutionalism, and private enterprise.

"For decades, Ryan has continued to have a meaningful impact on national policy as a scholar and public servant. His vast experiences, honed from working at the highest levels of policy research, will play an important role in enriching UT Austin's world-class academic programs, driving national thought leadership, and offering expanded opportunities for students," said Justin Dyer, dean of the new School of Civic Leadership and former executive director of the Civitas Institute.

Streeter will direct the work of Civitas scholars, who conduct peer-reviewed research and publish white papers, short-form commentary, books, and digital products. The Institute is also a home for postdoctoral scholars, and it continues to grow its programming and fellowships for undergraduate and graduate students.

Streeter spent years with the American Enterprise Institute and the Hudson Institute, and he served in numerous policy advisory roles in federal and state government. He has also served as a senior fellow at the Legatum Institute and as the executive director of UT's Center for Politics and Governance. He is the author of three books, numerous articles, and is a frequent guest on television and radio. He received a Ph.D. in philosophy from Emory University.



## The School of Civic Leadership

Liberty depends on an education that enables citizens to understand the ideas and practices that have made prosperous, free societies possible. Building on its tradition of civic education, the University of Texas at Austin has launched a new School of Civic Leadership (SCL). "Civic education matters. It's always mattered," said UT Austin President Jay Hartzell. "But arguably now, in a time where it feels like society has gotten polarized and things are pulling us apart, there's a chance for the University to provide a different kind of academic experience for our students." This semester, the SCL welcomed its inaugural dean, recruited faculty, and proposed the Civics Honors Program.

After conducting a national search, UT Austin named Justin Dyer as the inaugural dean of the School of Civic Leadership (see opposite page). "Public higher education was originally about training civic leaders," Dyer said. "It's a core part of what we should be doing. The School of Civic Leadership allows us to get back to that core mission."

Dyer forged a national profile for the University of Missouri's Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy, where he brought together students and scholars from a wide range of backgrounds. Dyer sees an opportunity in Austin: "It's the perfect moment to create a new school at UT. Our students, whatever they go on to do when they leave UT, should know something about Western civilization and the tradition that safeguards their own freedoms."

This spring, the School of Civic Leadership recruited new faculty. Scott Carrell, SCL's interim associate dean of faculty said, "I couldn't be more pleased with our faculty recruiting efforts this year. We had an overwhelmingly positive response, with more than 420 applicants across the fields of economics, philosophy and government. Though still in progress, the inaugural group of faculty that we have recruited is of exceptionally high quality in terms of research, teaching, and the overall fit with the new school's mission to educate students for a free society."

The SCL's curriculum committee proposed a Civics Honors Program, which includes options for a B.A. with a major in civics honors or a minor in civics. The Civics Honors Program introduces students to Western civilization's intellectual inheritance and to the American constitutional tradition. Students develop competence across three major areas of coursework: constitutionalism, Western civilization, and civic leadership. From intellectual foundations through a capstone thesis and internship, students gain experience that will inform purposeful study. In cooperation with the college of Liberal Arts, the SCL will also offer a minor in philosophy, politics, and economics. Fall 2025 admissions to the School of Civic Leadership opens August 1, 2024.

"When students come to the School of Civic Leadership, they can expect to study the great questions of Western civilization and the American constitutional tradition," said Sarah Beth Kitch, the SCL's director of academic programs. "The students we're attracting are curious about life, they're curious about big questions, and they have a sense of service."

*It's the perfect moment to create a new school at UT. Our students, whatever they go on to do when they leave UT, should know something about Western civilization and the tradition that safeguards their own freedoms.*







**AUSTIN  
SYMPOSIUM**



**Deirdre McCloskey**

**Deirdre McCloskey**, a renowned economic historian, kicked off the symposium with a lecture on how ideas produced the dynamism that in turn created an explosion in real wealth over the last few hundred years. McCloskey described the miraculous “hockey stick” phenomenon, whereby millennia passed with little to no accumulated generational wealth—a line parallel to the X axis on a graph—only to skyrocket upwards the past few centuries. Prosperity by any definition is at levels unimaginable to even the wealthiest people in 18th century Europe or America.

For McCloskey, dynamism consists not in new technology or capital accumulation but in the ideas that have placed a premium on building, making, and creating new ways of improving ourselves and society. The best way to promote dynamism is through equality of permission; the more that people are free to invent and maximize their potential, the more dynamic companies, places, and people you’ll have.



**Cass Sunstein**

What are the practical steps we can take to promote economic dynamism in America? In his presentation, “Sludge, Stagnation, and Dynamism,” **Cass Sunstein** explained how the massive time burdens regulatory “sludge” imposes on individuals and corporations impede dynamism. The U.S. government, for example, imposes nearly eleven billion hours of paperwork on its citizens every year. Some regulations, such as building safety permits or reasonable environmental protections, are helpful but others burden economic actors with undue costs. Sunstein offered several solutions ranging from a planned executive order, state and local “paperwork reduction acts,” and creative measures such as TSA’s Pre-Check and Global Entry Programs.



**Ryan Decker**

**Ryan Decker’s** presentation illustrated how the COVID-19 crisis provided an opportunity to better understand the current state of the U.S. economy. More specifically, his recent data findings reveal how the circumstances of COVID-19 led to a surge in new business formation between 2020-2022, reversing a decades-long decline in startups. Decker noted that commercial dynamism usually plummets during recessions, making the pandemic-induced recession an intriguing exception. His findings raise the question of whether the surge in commercial dynamism was an anomaly or a turning point for the U.S. economy. Either way, as economists and analysts assess new firm formation in the coming years, scholars will need to dig further into the unique economic characteristics of the pandemic to understand why and how a stagnating trend reversed itself seemingly overnight.







## Dan Shoag

In his presentation “The Housing and Migration Challenge,” Dan Shoag illustrated the costs of regulatory sludge in American housing markets. The home price to income ratio has reached a record high, while building permits per capita are nearly at a historic low. Costly regulation has caused much of this imbalance. Shoag demonstrated the ways that building regulations, especially in expensive cities like New York and San Francisco, have caused skyrocketing construction costs. Such problems are still widespread in the U.S., but cities such as Austin and Minneapolis have begun to reverse these trends through reforms that include reduced lot sizes.



## Ed Glaeser

In his lecture, “Dynamism and Stagnation: An Outlook,” Ed Glaeser argued that dynamism is especially important today given the nature of massive external shocks, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise of China as an economic and political competitor. Glaeser argued that successfully navigating those shocks has required the kind of resilience that characterizes dynamic places. As a case study, he discussed how

improved road quality in specific U.S. states has resulted from reducing regulations in a way that encourages policy solutions oriented toward greater mobility, productivity, and dynamism. His lecture concluded the symposium with a common thread running through the presentations—namely, that the enemies of dynamism are typically policies, often well-intentioned, that discourage the very creativity, inventiveness, and resilience on which our future prosperity depends.



## Edmund Phelps

Nobel laureate economist Edmund Phelps delivered the Austin Symposium’s keynote lunch lecture, titled “Reflections on Mass Flourishing, 10 Years Later.” In his address, he challenged the view that commercial dynamism and innovation originate from outside the economy and its businesses or from exceptional geniuses. Rather, widespread innovation historically emerged from the imagination and creativity of ordinary workers within large and small businesses. He argued that the economy’s supply of innovation depends on individuals’ capacity to express their creativity at the workplace. Phelps emphasized three core values that fueled commercial dynamism in the United States until recent years: individualism, or a desire for independence; vitalism, or the notion that human beings feel alive when they act upon the world; and self-expression, or the gratification individuals experience when given the opportunity to make practical use of their imaginative and creative faculties at the workplace. Phelps soberly attributes American innovation and productivity’s steep decline in the United States since the 1960s to the gradual erosion of these core values. He concluded with a clarion call to restore a commercial culture anchored by a spirit of individualism, vitalism and self-expression—commercial dynamism’s historical drivers in flourishing economies like the United States.



## The University of Texas at Austin School of Civic Leadership

### Apply to UT Austin’s Civics Honors Program\*

Major in Civics Honors | Minor in Civics | Minor in PPE



Fall 2025 admissions to the School of Civic Leadership opens August 1, 2024.

The new School of Civic Leadership is home to a community of scholars on a mission to find out what it means and what it takes to be free and to live well.

The SCL prepares students for lives of significance and for successful careers in education, government, business, the arts, medicine, culture, law, diplomacy, and the military, among other fields.

The proposed Civics Honors Program introduces students to the intellectual inheritance of Western Civilization and to the American constitutional tradition. Students develop competence across three major areas of coursework: Constitutionalism, western civilization, and civic leadership. From the first intellectual foundations through a capstone thesis and internship, students gain experience that will inform a life of service.

\*While approval is pending for the proposed Civics Honors Program, students can apply to the School of Civic Leadership as undeclared majors. We anticipate that the Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Civics Honors will have final approval prior to the 2025-2026 academic year.

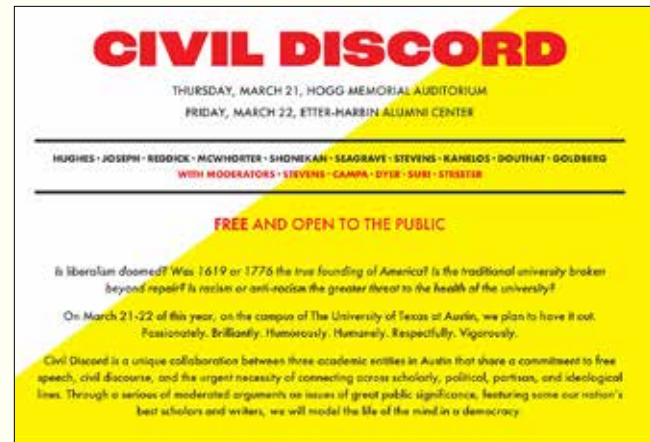


An Education for Life. For Liberty. For Good.



For more info, contact Sarah Beth V. Kitch at [sb.kitch@utexas.edu](mailto:sb.kitch@utexas.edu) or visit [civicleadership.utexas.edu](http://civicleadership.utexas.edu)

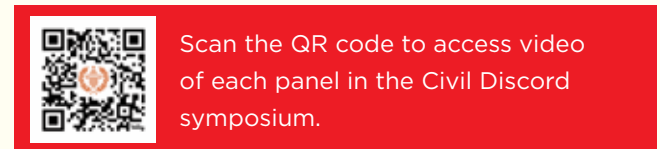
# Civil Discord



UT Austin’s Civitas Institute collaborated with UT Austin’s College of Liberal Arts and the University of Austin to host the inaugural Civil Discord symposium on March 21-22. The symposium gathered some of America’s premiere scholars and public intellectuals to debate several of our most contentious social issues. In a national environment characterized by polarization and tribal consensus, the symposium fostered conversation across ideological lines. Civil Discord offered a model of civic conversation where speakers debated real differences of opinion with respect and curiosity.

Civil Discord’s panelists addressed some of our nation’s most pressing social and political issues. Race was one important theme. **Coleman Hughes** and Peniel Joseph discussed “colorblindness,” while **Richard Reddick** and **John McWhorter** debated antiracism in the American university with moderator **Naomi Campa**. **Jeremi Suri** chaired a debate over the future of higher education between **Ann Huff Stevens** and **Pano Kanelos**. Other conversations addressed America’s nature and future, including the panel with **Stephanie Shonekan**, **Adam Seagrave**, and **Justin Dyer** about whether America was founded in 1619 or 1776. The concluding panel, moderated by Ryan Streeter, saw lively disagreement between *New York Times* columnists **Ross Douthat** and **Michelle Goldberg** over the future of liberalism in the United States and around the world.

In America’s polarized public sphere, Civil Discord provided a refreshing model of how we can disagree while still engaging in good-faith debate.



## Hughes and Joseph

Whether or not America should strive to be colorblind was the topic of the keynote panel of the Civitas Institute’s inaugural Civil Discord series. Ann Huff Stevens, dean of the college of liberal arts, moderated a conversation between prominent cultural commentator Coleman Hughes and Peniel Joseph, a UT professor of history.

The core of Hughes’s position was that despite racism having been and remaining a perennial problem, Americans should strive to disregard race when relating with others. Economic class should replace race as the category that determines one’s level of disadvantage. Joseph disagreed and argued that moving the emphasis to class cannot overcoming racial inequality’s entrenchment. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, he argued, uses colorblind language that when taken out of context, misrepresents King as a moderate. King advocated for reparations and believed that the original sin of slavery has led to the systemic racism that persists today. Hughes noted that he too admired King and positively cited his proposal for a Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged that would have been a broad anti-poverty program benefitting all races. Both Hughes and Joseph agreed the pursuit of equality is not finished. Their disagreement on the means to approach that end did not derail their productive and respectful conversation.

The thoughtful audience response during the Q&A raised fair questions that brought depth to the panelists’ positions. One topic that arose was the panelists’ stark disagreement in their respective interpretations of American exceptionalism and slavery’s place in the American story. Hughes reminded the audience that many of world history’s countries and empires practiced slavery. America, however, is *unique*. It is open to immigration from all of the world’s people, who move here, become citizens, and have upwardly mobile children.

Joseph argued that nuance is needed in the presentation of America’s story. Politicians who advocate taking slavery out of public school curriculum threaten this nuance, according to Joseph. He sees the officially sanctioned American story as filled with falsehoods that Americans are taught to believe. He argued that we need to confront the false belief that America is always the story’s heroic figure.

Most audience members—academics and community members alike—almost certainly entered the auditorium with strongly held opinions about America’s racial inequality. What’s less certain is that they’ve been given the opportunity to see opposing positions presented as clearly as Hughes and Joseph

presented them. The example they set proves that demonizing those with whom you disagree is not a necessary component of a productive argument. Their example is a useful model for classroom conduct on controversial subjects.

## McWhorter and Reddick

In the first dialogue, John McWhorter and Richard Reddick discussed the question “Is Racism or Antiracism the Great Threat to the Health of the University?”

McWhorter argued that by making D.E.I. their missions’ central focus, American universities have cheapened the students’ overall learning experience. He cited multiple examples of aggressive D.E.I. policies feeding a campus culture that teaches vulnerable undergraduates to focus on themselves as victims rather than as individuals whose agency empowers them to grapple with the world’s imperfections.

Reddick disagreed, noting that graduates leave the university feeling more empowered after learning about America’s structural inequities. He argued that many students’ enthusiasm for social justice issues stems from their personal experiences of racial inequities rather than from D.E.I. policies. Reddick disagreed with McWhorter’s view that antiracism now lies at the core of university missions. Nonetheless, he agreed that diminishing the university’s focus on racism was an important goal but argued that accomplishing it required confronting racism aggressively and directly.

The panelists’ discussion and the rest of the panels in the Civil Discord series encouraged the UT Austin community to consider carefully what the conditions for a civil, open, and thriving university culture might require. McWhorter and Reddick demonstrated that finding ways to engage in debate with civility and a commitment to good-faith openness is an important part of achieving that culture.

## Shonekan and Seagrave

Was America founded in 1619 or 1776? University of Maryland’s Professor Stephanie Shonekan and University of Arizona’s Professor Adam Seagrave discussed this question in the second dialogue of the Civitas Institute’s Civil Discord series. Shonekan and Seagrave are friends and were colleagues at the University of Missouri. Their debate was a model for how to have a civil conversation over a topic that inspires impassioned disagreement.

Their argument centered on unalienable rights and equality. Shonekan, who took the position that America’s founding year was 1619, noted that understanding America requires understanding

that this country was unique in its institution of race-based chattel slavery. To assess America truthfully requires including race in the conversation. Slavery might have been global, Shonekan argued, but America was unique in its use of race. Even Thomas Jefferson, who wrote “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence, viewed Black people as inferior to white. The radically dissimilar lived experiences different groups encounter, she argued, negates the claim that there is one truth and proves that there are many. Black Americans’ struggle to overcome slavery and segregation is their truth.

Seagrave conceded many of the injustices Black people face in America but offered the principles of 1776 as the remedy. He argued that rather than focusing on the founding documents’ individual authors one should see the ideals they contain as true, and as true they transcend time and place. Seagrave agreed with Shonekan that Black people have brought out what is best in America. He cited W. E. B. Du Bois’s claim that there have been no truer exponents of the Declaration of Independence than Black people. The problem today, according to Seagrave, is that 1619 is considered the Black account of the nation’s origins, and 1776 as the white account—an account that ignores racial justice. Seagrave argued that we should not accept this narrative uncritically but instead synthesize 1619 and 1776. The 1619 narrative focused on slavery and racism’s injustice is compatible with the ideals of equality and unalienable rights elevated in 1776. Seagrave advocated for a reflective patriotism that esteems America but is tempered by acknowledgment of its faults.

Shonekan and Seagrave’s clear disagreement on this topic did not derail their willingness to engage in an open dialogue. In their co-authored book, *Race and the American Story*, they explain their intention to demonstrate to students a model on how to have engaged, sustainable conversations on race. Their example in this debate fulfilled that task admirably.

## Kanelos and Stevens

The traditional university is not broken beyond repair. Problems? Challenges? Yes. But not completely broken. At least this was the conclusion Pano Kanelos, founding president of the University of Austin, and Ann Stevens, dean of UT Austin’s college of liberal arts, drew in the third dialogue of Civitas’s Civil Discord series. Coming from the president of a newly founded university and the dean of a long-standing one, their answer was not entirely unexpected.

But if it’s not broken, what is the university *for*? And if it is broken, what is it supposed to do if it were fixed? Kanelos argued that a university should be a place for the discovery, transmission,



and preservation of knowledge. The university should facilitate students' entry into that search and thereby prepare them to enter the contemporary knowledge economy. Stevens replied that the multiplicity of universities serve different purposes. But she agreed with Kanelos on the university's three basic purposes adding that university education is not only about gaining knowledge, but also about learning to think through complex issues and questions.

After these brief introductory comments about a university's goal, moderator Jeremi Suri asked both panelists their opinion on the university's current state. Stevens replied that she thought we were "headed in the right direction," although there is more to do. But she believed that students in good schools were, in general, getting a decent "return on investment" (R.O.I.).

Kanelos replied that different institutions had different "returns on investment." At hyper-elite institutions, the R.O.I. was not necessarily wealth, but power. At the vast majority of schools, the goal is "upward mobility." In a small group of schools in a third category, however, the R.O.I. for the students would be quality of life increases, a love of learning, and greater human flourishing. Human beings are "truth-seeking creatures," argued Kanelos, and we should not measure "upward mobility" by income exclusively, but also on the life of the mind and greater appreciation for things like art, music, and culture.

Difference arose, however, around the question of whether students at modern universities were in fact flourishing. Kanelos argued that universities have not successfully provided opportunities to express different viewpoints. Students are not learning to have conversations on difficult topics. Stevens agreed there were difficulties, but reminded the audience that, although "some goes wrong" in the university, "so much more goes right." One thing that seems to have "gone right" was this conversation's thoughtful character. Kanelos and Stevens's lively debate on this difficult topic was charitable.

## Douthat and Goldberg

In Civil Discord's fourth dialogue, *New York Times* opinion columnists Ross Douthat and Michelle Goldberg debated the future of American liberalism. Their audience seemed to fear threats to the liberal order coming from both ideological sides. Responding to questions from moderator Ryan Streeter, around 80 percent of the crowd agreed that "illiberalism is a problem in American universities" and "illiberalism is a problem on the American right."

Douthat and Goldberg explained illiberalism's rise by suggesting that the liberal system produces discontent. Both


panelists argued that since liberalism presents no single vision of human purpose, it leaves citizens free to choose their own views about "the good life." But this choice, both panelists agreed, also atomizes and isolates people. In effect, liberalism can produce a paradox of choice. As people are forced to navigate an endless chain of decisions about ultimate meaning, they begin to desire simpler, more totalizing ideologies. Left-wing radicalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and religious fundamentalism all offer alternative options, and the panelists identified each of these movements as threats to liberalism.

The panelists shared this broad scale agreement but disagreed throughout the remaining conversation. Goldberg was more pessimistic about the future of American liberalism than Douthat, who was more concerned that about threats to global liberalism than those to American liberalism. They also disagreed about what causes universities' illiberalism. Goldberg argued that illiberalism on college campuses derived from a leftward swing in student views, while Douthat countered that mandatory diversity statements in faculty hiring were a sign of "functionally McCarthyite" institutional progressive bias.

The panelists disagreed about whether presidential candidate Donald Trump poses an existential threat to the liberal order. Goldberg expressed fears over explicitly illiberal policies which the former president might pursue in a second term: election rigging, attempting to control media outlets, or even using the National Guard to deport undocumented migrants. Douthat agreed that such policies would be concerning but countered that illiberal policies do not necessarily mean liberalism's end. America has pursued illiberal policies before, he argued, such as the child separation border policy under President Trump, but such actions did not spell the end of liberalism.

One interesting disagreement arose around the question of illiberalism in state politics. Goldberg argued that recent red state legislation, including Florida's D.E.I. ban and abortion restrictions, were signs of an illiberalism that conservative legislators are legally codifying at the state level. Douthat disagreed, arguing that such measures are just part of normal democratic politics. He turned again to the example of abortion, arguing that a democratic society should be able to work out conflicts between female bodily autonomy and fetal rights to life.

Despite deep disagreements on liberalism's future in America, both panelists expressed a common hope that it might be able to emerge victorious over alternatives. Liberalism's biggest advantage, they claimed, was its lack of proven alternatives. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, liberalism is the worst form of government, except for all the rest.



**SUMMER INSTITUTE**  
for  
**HIGH SCHOOL**  
**TEACHERS**  
June 17-19, 2024

This summer, the **School of Civic Leadership** at the University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with the **Jack Miller Center**, will host a three-day symposium (June 17-19) on the **American Political Tradition**, for middle and high school history and civics teachers.

Participants will have the opportunity to read, interpret, and discuss primary sources that center on the American founding, the Civil War, and the problems and prospects of democratic culture.

**Justin Dyer** of UT Austin will lead seminars on the Declaration of Independence and the *Federalist Papers*.


**David Upham** of the University of Dallas will lead seminars on Lincoln.


**Antonio Sosa** of UT Austin will lead seminars on Tocqueville.

Participants will receive a \$200 stipend and a certificate of completion after the conclusion of the symposium.

The program does not cover overnight accommodations or travel costs, but educators who receive professional development funds from their respective schools are welcome to use these to pay for travel and lodging in Austin.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided. Parking vouchers will also be provided.


 The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Civic Leadership

 **JACK MILLER**  
**CENTER**  
*For Teaching America's Founding Principles & History*

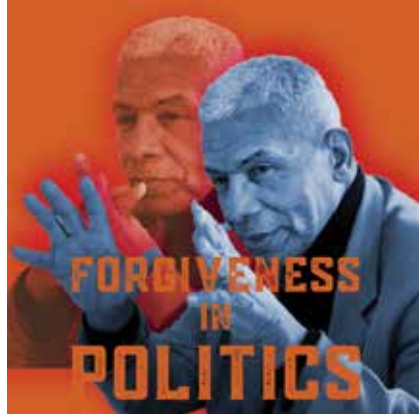
[civicleadership.utexas.edu](http://civicleadership.utexas.edu)

Please address inquiries to:  
**Antonio Sosa**  
Associate Director  
Civitas Institute  
University of Texas at Austin  
Email:  
[antonio.sosa@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:antonio.sosa@austin.utexas.edu)

Apply here



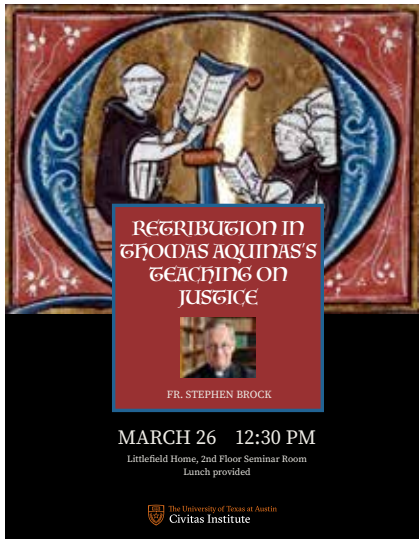
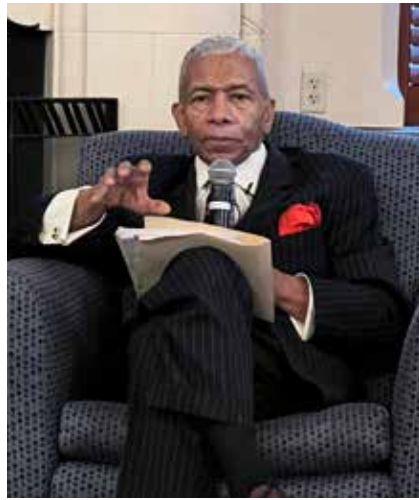




## Forgiveness in Politics

Eugene Rivers

In an election year likely to be marked by bitter divisions and fraught politics, UT Austin faculty, students, and community members considered the idea that forgiveness and politics can and should co-exist. In his January 26 talk, Reverend **Eugene Rivers** shared experiences from his many years as a community organizer. He offered a combination of mutual understanding, unity, and forgiveness as a formula to renew our political dialogue. Rivers has put reconciliation into practice throughout his career and helped bitterly divided people find common cause. His respected voice in American politics can help us overcome the political hostilities we take for granted. By carrying on Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s spirit, Rivers inspires the next generation to do the same.



## Is Punitive Retribution Just?

Stephen Brock

Father **Stephen Brock**, visiting professor at the University of Chicago and professor of medieval philosophy at Rome's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, challenged members of the UT Austin community to reexamine their views of justice, specifically their views of punitive retribution. Medieval philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas argues that punitive retribution is a virtuous and just act. In his March 26 talk, Brock approached that claim by asking a series of questions, including: what kind of justice is retribution? How exactly is retribution that kind of justice? Who is given their due through retribution? Is retribution obligatory? Brock closed his remarks by reminding his audience that divine retribution is also just. Students enjoyed lively discussion on the argument's theological ramifications during the questions and answer period.

## Augustinian Liberalism

James K. A. Smith

The Civitas Institute and Hill House co-hosted Dr. **James K.A. Smith** for a March 20 discussion of the two-part question: "Is Christianity a threat to a liberal society? Is liberal democracy a threat to Christianity?". Smith argued that Christianity's emphasis on a form of political realism that is not necessarily immoral actually supports liberal democracy. His presentation unearthed a theory of political moderation from Saint Augustine's thought to demonstrate how Christianity reinforces the principles that define a free and flourishing society: political compromise, humility, charity, patience, representation, respect for individual rights, and toleration.

Smith argued that political moderation is not an ideological position, nor does it encourage moral compromise. It is a temperament that we develop only when we're reconciled with our place in the *seculum*, that is, the arc of history that connects Christ's Resurrection with the *eschaton*, God's eventual reign on Earth. St. Augustine cautions those who attempt to accelerate the *eschaton* by imposing their visions of the good onto others. The *eschaton* should instead act as an inspirational beacon for the political imagination even as it fosters a wholesale commitment to politics as the art of persuasion. To reconcile ourselves with arc of history (the *seculum*) means to recognize that political compromise and an unwavering commitment to the Good are complementary principles.

How then is political compromise possible in a large pluralistic society where citizens subscribe to diverse and contradictory moral truths? If America is to inch toward political harmony, the political left and right must give moral standing to those within and across party lines who hold opposing views. But how can we expect that?

Smith addressed this question by evoking St. Augustine's concept of the earthly city and the heavenly city, which represent two dispositions based on what we choose to love. Our dispositions are shaped by an admixture of our love of earth and of heaven. His analysis recalled to mind 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." No one can be in full possession of the truth; no one is immune from the "loves" (the passions



and attachments) that drive the earthly city. It is incumbent upon us to exercise intellectual humility when promulgating our moral truth claims and engage with our fellow citizens in a spirit of empathy and forgiveness.

In a thoroughly polarized political ecosystem, Smith's judicious account of liberalism's genealogy not only has ramifications for intellectual history but adds to the ideas available for restoring America's liberal foundations on more solid ground.





## The Association for the History of Political Thought Inaugural Conference

The Civitas Institute co-sponsored the Association for the History of Political Thought's inaugural conference on March 1 to 2. Leading scholars from around the world drew on some of the Western tradition's greatest thinkers to discuss "Democracy and its Pathologies." Speakers reflected on best cases for and against democracy, the meaningful differences between modern and classical democracy, and the political disorders to which democracies are most susceptible.

The conference opened with a discussion on classical Greek accounts of democracy and its ills, and then the panels progressed chronologically to Nietzsche. The conference's broad range of viewpoints yielded insight into democracy's transhistorical and transcultural features. Panelists also highlighted the competing concerns for freedom and equality that animate democratic politics and the materialism that often characterizes the democratic way of life. The discussions also illuminated some of liberal democracy's specific features including constitutionalism and shortcomings including the dangers modern individualism poses to the constitutional order.



## The United Kingdom's Constitutional History in Two New Volumes

Harshan Kumarasingham

**Harshan Kumarasingham**, reader in politics and history at the University of Edinburgh, spoke to Civitas's audience about his recently published two-volume book project, *The Cambridge Constitutional History of the United Kingdom*. The co-edited volumes include forty-two chapters and feature scholars from the fields of history, politics, and law.

Kumarasingham's April 11 talk examined his project's primary goal: resurrecting a U.K. constitutional studies field that has suffered a collapse in research and teaching. He observed that despite the constitution's centrality to understanding how power is "created, allocated, exercised and controlled" in Britain, this is the first book-length treatment of the topic in over half a century. The project is also innovative because it encompasses constitutionalism in the entire United Kingdom as well as in the empire and Commonwealth, thereby expanding beyond the traditional focus on England.

The event organizer **David Leal**, professor of government and faculty fellow of the Civitas Institute introduced the speakers. The discussants were Sanford Levinson, the W. St. John Garwood and W. St. John Garwood, Jr. Centennial Chair in Law, and Rhonda Evans, senior lecturer in the department of government and director of the Edward A. Clark Center for Australia and New Zealand Studies.

## "The Pursuit of Happiness" in the Age of the Founders

Jeffrey Rosen

**Jeffrey Rosen**, president and C.E.O. of the Natural Constitution Center and professor of law at the George Washington Law School delighted Civitas's audience with his stirring talk on the Founders' understanding of the Declaration of Independence's phrase "the pursuit of happiness." Men such as Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams, Rosen argued, did not intend for it to be interpreted as license to individuals to do whatever they might wish, but as a commitment more in line with Aristotle and Cicero's notion of a virtuous life.

*The Founders worried that if citizens lacked the virtues of personal self-restraint and civic mindedness America's experiment in democratic governance would fail. The consequence would be anarchy, at which point the mob would likely succumb to demagogues' pandering.*

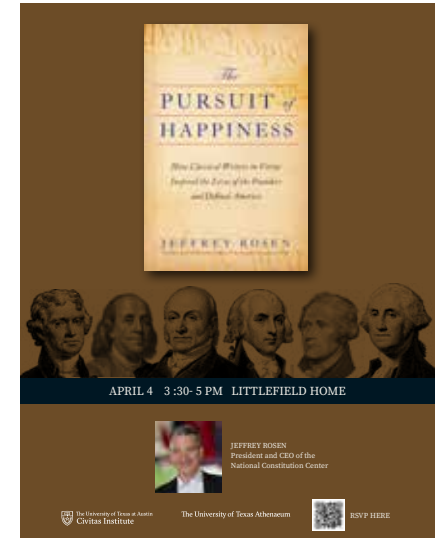
Rosen noted that when writing the Declaration, Jefferson replaced Locke's inalienable rights of "life, liberty, and property" with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Since the government can seize property legitimately (through taxes, for example) it is not "inalienable" in the same sense as life and liberty. But all citizens should live under a system of government that guarantees the right to self-improvement through their pursuit of a life devoted to developing the virtues.

How did the Founders apply these virtues? Rosen used as an example the famous story of Ben Franklin's list of virtues. Every evening Franklin evaluated how well he had practiced each virtue that day and marked any he had neglected. He was soon discouraged and gave up the practice, but he felt that it had improved him as a person.

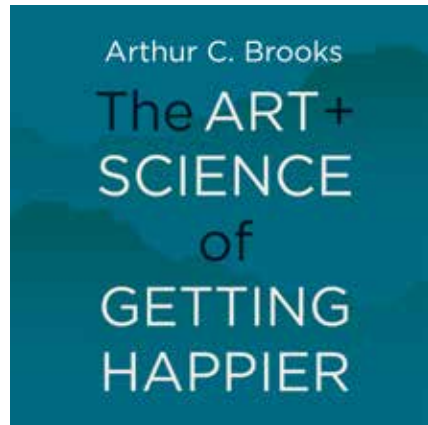
George Washington read Seneca's works widely and was renowned for his simple, calm presence and his command of his temper. In his Farewell Address at the end of his second administration, Washington exhorted the American people that personal self-government was necessary for public self-government.

The Founders worried that if citizens lacked the virtues of personal self-restraint and civic mindedness, America's experiment in democratic governance would fail. The consequence would be anarchy, at which point the mob would likely succumb to demagogues' pandering.

Rosen argued that James Madison had hoped for a media that would inform and educate the populace through calm reason. Modern media is the exact opposite: rather than educating the people it stokes fear among partisan mobs. Rosen's proposed solution is a return to "deep reading," especially of primary texts. Copies of his new book, *The Pursuit of Happiness: How Classical Writers on Virtue Inspired the Lives of the Founders and Defined America* were available to audience members free of charge after his talk. The book is organized around the twelve virtues on Franklin's original list and contains a useful appendix of the founding era's most cited books on happiness.







## The Art + Science of Getting Happier

Arthur C. Brooks

The evidence is clear: in almost every country, happiness is falling. When loneliness increases, political polarization rises, and relationships become harder to form, we can easily become sad and discouraged. But by understanding, practicing, and sharing with others the fundamentals of happiness science, we can beat this tendency. Author, columnist, Harvard University professor, and Civitas Institute distinguished fellow **Arthur Brooks** returned to the UT campus this March to talk about his latest book *Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier*, co-authored with Oprah Winfrey.



Brooks began his talk by correcting a common misperception: happiness is a destination, not a goal. People often mistakenly assume their unhappiness signals a fundamental defect, but Brooks argues that negative emotions are data points from which we can learn. In fact, happiness actually requires unhappiness. So rather than attempting to be happy, human beings should instead pursue “happier-ness.” According to Brooks, “happier-ness” is impossible until we learn how to manage our negative emotions and grow from them.

Much of *Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier* is devoted to the science behind emotional self management. Using the latest brain research theories, Brooks explained the process called meta cognition, which is learning to be emotionally aware—it’s thinking about thinking. Tools for emotional self-management such as journaling, prayer and meditation have the power to be life changing when applied correctly and practiced regularly.



Brooks identifies four pillars of happiness: family, friendship, work, and faith. His book includes practical, research-based practices to support and strengthen these pillars. He also warns against three storms that threaten our happiness: overuse of social media, hatred, and loneliness. By understanding the science behind our emotions, changing our habits, and practicing new ones, Brooks empowers us to reverse our culture’s rising tide of unhappiness, one brain at a time.



## Creating Knowledge in a Fragmented Age

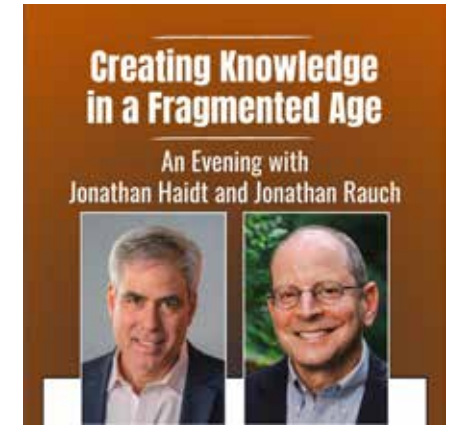
Jonathan Haidt and Jonathan Rauch

What role does the modern university play in students’ development of rational and critical thinking skills? What obstructs this process? Together with the UT Law School’s Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center and the Athenaeum, Civitas welcomed NYU professor **Jonathan Haidt** and Brookings Institute fellow **Jonathan Rauch** to consider these questions.

Haidt and Rauch, both scholars of political polarization and free speech, agreed on the problem’s nature. Students’ education is suffering, Haidt argued, due to a marked shift amounting to a “cultural revolution” in their anxiety, anger, and “catastrophized” thinking over the last decade. Rauch added that the media and higher education’s administrative structure mirrored this shift, thereby contributing to a hostile learning climate.

Both also agreed that the fertile ground technology offers for societal fracture has harmed students’ education. Technology is able to broadcast misinformation and cognitively manipulate its consumers, resulting in public confusion, demoralization, and retreat from civic life. Social media especially harms young people by distorting their thinking and altering the reality of the world around them.

But these are not hopeless problems. By increasing digital and media literacy and limiting technology use at home and school, young people can learn critical thinking without social media distractions. Rauch’s predictions for the future were optimistic. He argued that by strengthening the epistemology—the commitment to test and discover truth—of institutions like higher education and the media, civil discourse could return as the societal norm.



## Love, Sex, and Liberalism

Christine Emba

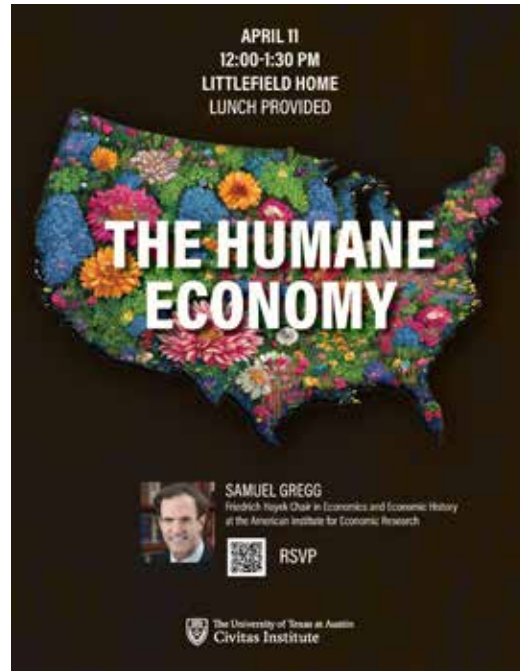
Together with the UT School of Journalism, Civitas welcomed author and columnist **Christine Emba** to campus on February 16 to discuss modern sexual ethics and their effect on our ability to form long-lasting connections and relationships. In her book *Rethinking Sex: A Provocation*, Emba outlines the cultural, historical, and psychological forces that have warped our idea of what is sexually permitted and what is considered “safe.” For decades, a modern sexual ethic has held that “anything goes”—as long as everyone gives enthusiastic consent. So why, asked Emba, even when all involved parties give consent, are so many of our sexual experiences filled with frustration, disappointment, and even shame? Drawing from the wisdom of thinkers including Thomas Aquinas and Andrea Dworkin, as well as sociological studies, interviews with college students, and poignant examples from her own life, Emba called for a more humane philosophy toward sex. She argued it should start with consent but also account for the very real emotional, mental, social, and political implications—even if that means challenging societal expectations or saying no to certain sexual practices.





# The Humane Economy

Samuel Gregg



How did West Germany achieve its so-called “economic miracle”—a recovery marked by low inflation, industrial growth, and high productivity—in the aftermath of the Second World War? Dr. Samuel Gregg of the American Institute for Economic Research delivered a lunch talk at the Civitas Institute on April 12 that examined the twentieth-century German economist Wilhelm Röpke’s economic principles that were instrumental in West Germany’s recovery.

*He feared that without a foundation of strong institutions and a moral people, free markets could easily degenerate into unfree societies.*

What were these principles? Röpke shared with the Austrian school of free-market economics many of its commitments, including opposition to price controls, currency manipulation, and government management of industry. Röpke recommended that

West Germany abolish these restrictive measures and allow market competition to stimulate its postwar economy. His identification of a tension between market economies and the bonds of community upon which free societies rest, however, differentiated him from the Austrians. In Gregg’s words, Röpke believed that successful “economic reforms depended upon cultural and moral commitments” that markets cannot necessarily generate. He feared that without a foundation of strong institutions and a moral people, free markets could easily degenerate into unfree societies. Nazism, for example, would have not found purchase in Germany had a strain of Enlightenment rationalism not hollowed out the country’s religious culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Röpke blamed this Enlightenment rationalism for deliberately weakening religion in Europe, thus leaving society susceptible to ideological takeover by intellectuals.

Those interested in learning more about these subjects should read Röpke’s book, *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (1960), an update to his influential first book, *The Social Crisis of Our Time* (1941). Gregg’s own book, *Wilhelm Röpke’s Political Economy* (2010), should supplement these primary sources.



# Sustaining Commerce’s Many Gifts

An Interview with Samuel Gregg

*What is the greatest gift that commerce bestows on human beings and society? What is its greatest downside?*

On one level, the greatest gifts commerce delivers are economic prosperity and radical poverty reduction. But I think the even greater gift is that prosperity enables many opportunities for pursuing the good, including wider possibilities for pursuing knowledge, marrying, having families, creating beautiful art, etc. Commercial society’s downside is that greater wealth brings with it tendencies to think that material wealth is the be-all and end-all of human existence—which is revealed as self-evidently false the moment you spend some time thinking about human reason, human nature, and the basic goods that we can know and freely pursue.

*Is commerce by nature useful or are there external norms and values that guide it towards good ends? If yes, which are the most important norms in your view?*

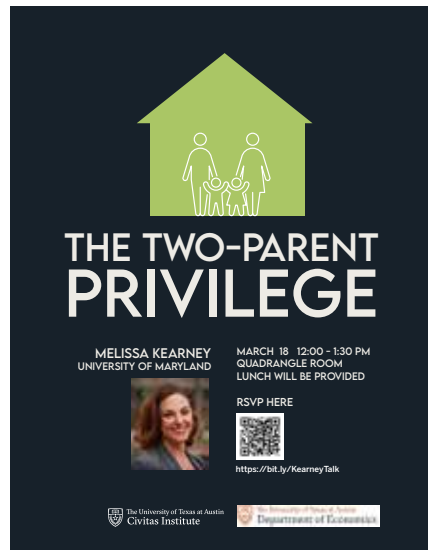
Commerce and markets have their own logic of supply and demand. They are also very reliant on people pursuing enlightened self-interest. They tend to encourage certain types of virtues, such as prudent risk-taking. But commerce always occurs within some type of moral culture, and a culture that celebrates hedonism is likely to encourage short-term thinking which is ultimately counter-productive for long-term market sustainability. If commerce is to “work” over the long-term, you need commitment to particular norms that are embedded in institutions like private property and rule of law. And those institutions themselves rely on certain principles—most notably particular conceptions of liberty and justice—that markets cannot generate by themselves.

*Some critics on both the left and right see a close relationship between the individualism commercial activity makes possible and fraying community ties and social capital. How do you think about these critiques?*

Certainly, markets can wear away at other forms of social relationships. Living in a commercial society is very demanding. We all know business leaders who spend very little time with their children because of their work’s heavy demands but consequently later in life have little to no relationship with their children. That said, there need not be perpetual tensions. On one level, it’s about people recognizing that markets, as great as they are, are not the summit of human existence, and then living your life accordingly. Equally important is recognizing that the freedom that gives rise to markets also gives rise to other relationships beyond those of kith-and-kin. Here we can learn a great deal from the thought of economists like Wilhelm Röpke and political thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville. Both were great advocates of limited government and free economies. Yet they also stressed the importance of the habits of association that give rise to what we call “civil society.” Whether it is through religious organizations, voluntary charity, philanthropy, or free standing educational and cultural institutions, civil society maintains and replenishes the social capital upon which we all depend. A commercial society can also be one that has a rich civil society, and America has historically shown us how this is done.







## Strong Families Raise Successful Children

Melissa Kearney

University of Maryland professor **Melissa Kearney**'s new book *The Two-Parent Privilege*, explores the effects of family structure on children's educational and social outcomes. At her March 18 talk, Kearney argued that the decline of marriage and the rise of single-parent households is a driver of economic inequality. This problem is especially acute in the United States, where 23 percent of American children are raised in single parent households. This rate is the world's highest. Outcomes from children raised in two-parent households are better, Kearney argued, because two-parent households tend to have greater available resources, including income, time, and mental bandwidth.

Kearney and the audience were particularly interested in discussing single parenthood's causes. She rejects the narrative that women's higher levels of education and economic independence fuels the uptick. The data indicates the reverse: mothers who finish college are more likely to raise their children in a two-parent household than mothers who do not attend college. The economic inequality single parenthood causes is particularly pronounced in the class of Americans without a college degree.

The audience asked additional questions about how Kearney's story of families and children maps onto the experience of America's religious families and about policy proposals for improving children's outcomes. Kearney did not propose specific policies, but she encouraged programs aimed at strengthening marriages and families and fostering a two-parent norm without stigmatizing single motherhood.

The second cultural obstacle is our crisis of confidence: we no longer believe that we are good. Many modern adults hold that neither our culture nor even our species is worth perpetuating. From those who believe having children is immoral because of impending climate doom to those who believe having children will perpetuate one or another kind of systemic or historical oppression, our culture does not support parenthood as a worthy endeavor.

Finally, our selfishly individualistic culture increasingly construes children as a self-imposed, costly burden that hinders freedom and the fulfillment of personal desires. When the choice is between having kids and changing diapers, or going to Paris and buying designer clothes, all too frequently we are choosing to be child free.

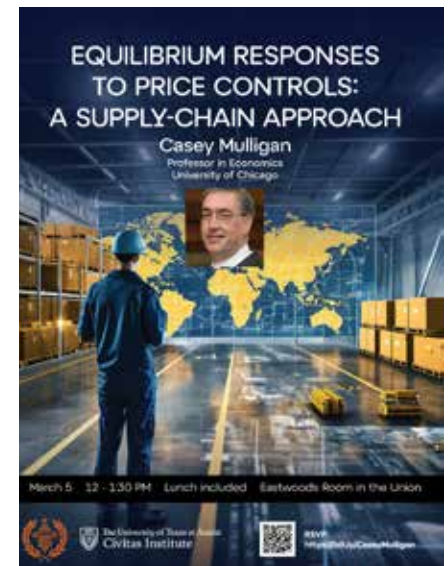
The baby bust's consequences will be far reaching and there is no obvious solution to the cultural problems facing America and the West.



## State of the Economy

Casey Mulligan

University of Chicago economist and former White House Council of Economic Advisers Chief Economist **Casey Mulligan** provided a novel approach to the distortionary consequences of government-imposed price controls in competitive private markets. To offset their inability to purchase a product due to low availability at below competitive market prices (a price ceiling), consumers will increasingly take on some costs of producing the product and suppliers will provide a less finished "do-it-yourself" version of that product. In New York City, for example, tenants may be willing to offer to do their own repairs on their price-controlled apartments in order to effectively increase their purchasing power. In turn, landlords may be willing to rent the price-capped apartment to a tenant willing to do his own repairs, thus saving the landlord the cost of the repairs and bypassing the price ceiling. This new equilibrium outcome is still inefficient compared to not imposing price controls. Mulligan's approach, however, maps these behavioral changes by suppliers and consumers and shows how they result in greater production of the product (e.g. housing) and predicts who exactly is willing to purchase the product more effectively than conventional competitive models.



## America's Missing Baby Boom

Tim Carney

America faces an empirical puzzle: by all accounts the past twenty years should have seen a baby boom but instead we have faced a baby bust. Despite favorable economic conditions, Americans are having not only fewer children than they wish, but even fewer than they "realistically expect" to have. In his April 17 talk, **Timothy Carney** previewed his forthcoming book, *Family Unfriendly*, where he offers three cultural factors to explain this puzzling trend.

First, the contemporary ideal parenting style is excessively ambitious and overbearing. Parents have high expectations for their children's success. They enroll their kids in scores of activities, shepherd them around the state to participate in sports, transfer them from one school to another, and push them to do all they can to attend Ivy League colleges. At the same, Carney argues, these parents want to shield their kids from any trauma or insecurity. It therefore comes as no surprise that parents can't afford the time or money to helicopter more than one or two children.

## FREE Knowledge Hub's April Launch



The Financial Responsibility and Economic Education (FREE) program helps educators reach the newest generation of students with engaging and relevant resources. In doing so, we are building a curated media resource collection for Texas economic and personal finance

educators. Local instructors as well as veteran economic education researchers are contributing to this growing collection to ensure it will be a robust classroom resource.

The FREE Knowledge Hub currently has microeconomics and macroeconomics collections along with a teaching guide to help instructors easily integrate accessible, engaging, and effective media content into their lectures. We understand the demands on instructors' time, so our easily navigated, classroom-tested media resource collection does the work for them. We will add a personal finance collection in the future.

Students can find learning economics challenging because of the unfamiliar material. Effective media actively engages the learner, aids retention, motivates subject matter interest, and helps illustrate concept relevance. Songs, TV clips, viral videos, and other media can illustrate complex ideas in a short time period connecting theories taught in the classroom to real-world events.

As an example, our "Supply, Demand, and Equilibrium" (<http://free.civicleadership.utexas.edu/2023/08/28/supply-demand-equilibrium/>) section in the microeconomics collection highlights "How Taylor Swift Created Her Own Economy" with everything from "Swiftcations," to prompting congressional hearings, to changing the way recording contracts are written. Swift is extremely influential among the newest generation of students, and now teachers can easily harness this influence to teach economic principles.



## Braver Angels Debate

The Civitas Institute and Braver Angels hosted a spirited, student-led debate on the following question: does A.I. pose a serious threat to human wellbeing? Six students exchanged arguments and doubts on this topic in Littlefield Home's parlor, where the Victorian decoration contrasted beautifully with the evening's futuristic theme.

Three students argued that A.I.'s danger lies in the possibility that by becoming ever more exponentially intelligent, it will surpass human comprehension. They argued that what A.I. is doing or planning to do, and what morally questionable means it might use carry out our orders, will become unfathomable. Such concerns were overblown, even fanciful, according to the students arguing in favor of A.I. As an advanced language model, A.I. is merely a technological tool, essentially no different from the others we've developed and used for both good and evil ends. It does not in itself pose a threat to humanity. If used prudently, they argued, and in such a way as to enhance liberty, it can even lead to a new form of literary—A.I. literacy—just as revolutionary and beneficial to humanity as the original form was in its time.



Braver Angels debate's unique character is remarkable. Unlike traditional debates, this gathering was not a competition but an invitation to experience

civil discourse at its finest and friendliest. Guided by a light parliamentary style and a graceful moderator, participants eschewed gotcha-style questions in favor of open-minded inquiry, and dogmatic sermonizing in favor of candid reflections.

## ISI – Civitas Debate on Ukraine

Civitas and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute hosted a debate between **Noah Rothman** and **Michael Anton** on America's role in preserving and shaping the liberal international order in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Rothman maintained that defending the liberal international order requires American support of Ukraine. Anton disagreed, arguing that no prudential rationale exists for remaining in a theatre in which vital American interests are not at stake. The debate was well-informed and thought-provoking and maintained a high level of civility. The debaters treated each other as fellow citizens sharing a common goal of advancing American interests, despite disagreements.

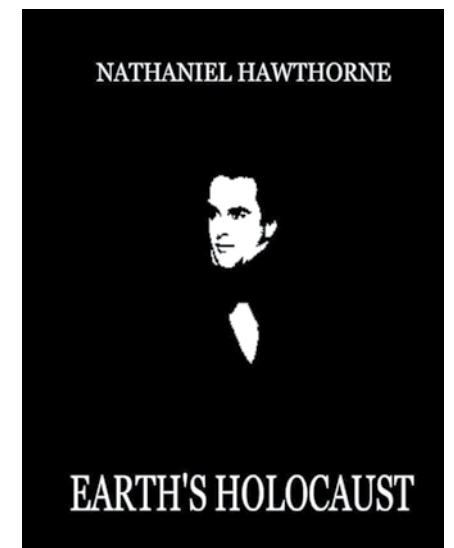


*Michael Anton sat down with the Society of Fellows to talk about contemporary politics, the American Founding, and Machiavelli.*



## Nathaniel Hawthorne with Christopher Scalia

Does ridding the world of old traditions and practices engender social reform? How is true and lasting reform possible? These questions were at the forefront of A.E.I. senior fellow **Christopher Scalia's** seminar on Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Earth's Holocaust." The story revolves around a bonfire humanity builds to burn everything deemed harmful or unnecessary, including material possessions, ancestral institutions, weapons, and the Bible. Scalia began by arguing that we ought to engage with literature and culture because of what it can teach us about politics and human flourishing before leading the students in a conversation about political and social reform, human nature, utopianism, and the idea of progress.







## OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS & SENIORS

You have questions. What is friendship? What's a good life? What is good, beautiful, true? How can a political community protect liberty and provide order? What is the common good?

For all that you do in high school, what is worth doing well? Beyond G.P.A.s and credentials, what's the point of your education?

Your education can be more than earning a degree. It can help you decide what is worth doing with your life.

**Freedom & Virtue Seminars at UT Austin's School of Civic Leadership (SCL)** bring together bright, motivated high school students with a passion for Western civilization, the American founding, and the common good.

Apply for a one-day seminar (apply to one seminar date only):

Thursday, June 13, 2024 **Freedom & Virtue Seminar: Western Civilization**

Thursday, July 25, 2024 **Freedom & Virtue Seminar: The American Constitution**

In the seminar, an SCL professor leads a small cohort of high school students in a discussion of an essential text of Western Civilization or the American tradition. Seminars meet at UT Austin.

Both of the Freedom & Virtue Seminars will adhere to the following schedule:

9:00-10:00 am	Breakfast at the Littlefield Home
10:00-11:00am	Seminar 1
11:15-12:15 am	Seminar 2
12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch at the Littlefield Home
1:30-2:30 pm	Seminar 3

Potential seminar themes

- Excellence of Character: The Virtues
- The Quest for Community
- Politics and the Transcendent
- Perennial Problems of Politics
- Origins of American Institutions
- Constitutionalism: Ancient and Modern
- Democracy and Capitalism
- Truth and Persuasion

Please address inquiries to:

**Antonio Sosa**  
Associate Director  
Civitas Institute  
University of Texas at Austin  
Email: antonio.sosa@austin.utexas.edu



SCAN  
TO APPLY  
HERE

 The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Civic Leadership  
civicleadership.utexas.edu

## SOCIETY OF FELLOWS

The Society of Fellows's spring semester began with a provocative talk by **Christine Emba** on modern sexuality's fragmented character. She discussed how relying on consent as sexual morality's only legitimate metric leaves many young people alone and disoriented. The fellows then turned to literature: their seminar on Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Earth Holocaust," led by **Christopher Scalia**, looked at the utopian drive and the importance of respect for tradition. Next was **Bernard Haykel**, whose affable and gentle style endeared him to the fellows as much as his candid assessments of political leaders and their policies did. His coffee talk on the prospect of liberal reforms in Saudi Arabia and on the kingdom's strategic posture toward Israel, Iran, and the United States was a perfect prologue to A.E.I. president **Robert Doar**, whose talk covered the public policy world, American conservatism, and the political attitudes of UT Austin's students. The following month, our fellows led a debate on A.I.'s promise and perils, co-hosted with Braver Angels. They finished their semester with lunch talks from **Michael Anton** and **Kody Cooper**. Anton's talk outlined his view of how Machiavelli's thought relates to our present political situation, while Cooper's looked at Jefferson's seemingly ambiguous understanding of happiness.

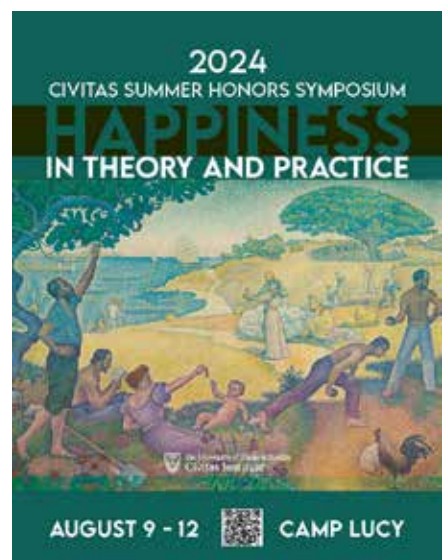
Our fellows also participated in lively social events. In addition to an evening of discussion, pizza, and rounds of Uno at the Littlefield Home, our fellows enjoyed a bowling party at the Student Union Underground and a tour of the Texas Capitol.

But the "Liberty in Europe" conference in Madrid, Spain was the year's social and intellectual highlight. The fellows attended seminars on Europe's liberal tradition and visited some of the world's finest museums and architectural wonders. With Constant, Tocqueville, and Ortega y Gasset in the morning, and Rubens, Velázquez, and Goya in the afternoon, the students deepened their education while experiencing a true taste of Madrid life.

## Society of Fellows Summer Honors Symposium and Inaugural Conference

The "Theory and Practice of Happiness" will be the theme of this summer's Civitas Institute Summer Honors Symposium. During three days in Dripping Springs, students and scholars will discuss readings on happiness as understood by philosophy and sociology. They will begin with Ancient Greece and Rome. Plato and Aristotle's views, along with Stoic and Epicurean thought will lay the symposium's philosophical foundation. Turning to modernity, they will examine Mill's utilitarian conception of happiness and Tocqueville's reflections on the democratic soul's restlessness. They will end with a study of Putnam's analysis of the prospects of social capital in modern America.

The Society of Fellows 2024 will launch with an inaugural conference on civic virtue. The first day's seminars will examine how the Western tradition defines and understands civic virtue and how the Founders viewed it. The second day will center around the practical question of how ambition relates to civic virtue. These seminars will address Cicero and Washington's ambition, as well as Tocqueville's reflections on the problem of ambition in democratic times. The conference aims to deepen our students' awareness of the perennial problems connected with the pursuit of civic virtue and the specific difficulties such a pursuit encounters in democratic times.





# Society of Fellows Study in Madrid

After intensive morning seminars on “Liberty in Europe” lead by **Erik Dempsey**, **Bridget Wu Isenberg**, and **Guillermo Graiño** that took students through the writings of Constant, Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, Montisquieu, Kant, Toqueville, and Ortega y Gasset, everyone needed rest and relaxation. The morning seminars were followed by rooftop dinners, side trips to Barcelona, Toledo, and Magala, and topped off by a student-initiated award ceremony.







[Hudson Thomas, a student in the Civitas Institute's Society of Fellows, wrote the following note to Antonio Sosa, director of the Civitas Institute's undergraduate fellowship programs, after returning from Madrid. It is reprinted here with the author's permission.]

*A few days have passed since the Madrid trip and after having allowed some time to settle back into the normal swing of things here at home, I wanted to extend a warm thank you to you personally for such an amazing year and trip!*

*It is no exaggeration to say that I firmly believe Civitas and the Fellows Program have been a God-given blessing to me this past year. I've met life-long friends through the program, developed an even greater passion for politics, philosophy, policy, and learning at large, as well as experiencing some of the most interesting and unique opportunities of my life thus far through the program. Because of your hard work, as well as the hard work of everyone involved in the Civitas world, I can firmly say that my time in Civitas has been nothing short of extraordinary!*

*With regards to the Madrid trip: all I can say is that it was one of the greatest trips of my life! It was almost surreal how well everyone got along with each other and genuinely loved the topics discussed. There are so many special memories which I could elaborate on to the point of exhausting the subject, but two such instances remain imbedded in my memory from the trip. The first is of myself, Blake [Brawner], Clay [Pruitt], Diego [Lopez], and Nathan [Comeaux] walking late at night along the harbor of Mallorca discussing our favorite books and contemplating the big questions of life. I remember Diego and I talking afterwards about how uniquely special that night was and how rare it was that like-minded people with such similar passions were afforded the opportunity to go on an adventure that allowed our friendships to blossom beyond simply school peers. The second instance was the last dinner on our last night of the trip. I'm sure you've seen the videos, but Anna Grace [Holloway] and Sara Beth [Beasley] making the end of year Civitas Superlatives Awards Show was so funny and authentically true. The group was just so tightly knit that I know for at least myself it was a bittersweet moment seeing the seniors go onto their next stage of life.*

*Overall, in conclusion I just wanted to reiterate on behalf of both myself and the whole group, how thankful we all are for the opportunity to travel to Europe this summer and for a great first year of Civitas. I know there has been so much to do on your end trying to figure out the structure for what an undergrad fellowship looks like, but all I can say is that you and the team did a superb job! I am so passionate about the program and where it is heading in the future! The old adage of The University of Texas is "Give the best you have to Texas, and the best will come back to you." And while that is certainly true, in some ways I think it may be even more true for Civitas. A novel program that offers seemingly boundless heights to achieve is just the sort of program that I am honored to be a part of. If you ever need anything from me, or any of us in the fellow's program please don't hesitate to reach out! I'm so excited for next year, and I can't wait to see how the program continues to flourish moving forwards!*



## Society of Fellows



One of the main things I gained from this fellowship was a great sense of community with fellow students who share my passion for public policy. Students are able to freely exchange their ideas and broaden their views on what it means to be a good citizen. Future students can expect a one-of-a-kind experience

as they get to hear from some of the world's most esteemed professors in one-on-one settings and participate in open debate with other intellectually curious students. The Society of Fellows also offers a great variety of social events, such as the Littlefield meet-ups and Christmas dinner. This fellowship informed my sense of responsible citizenship by promoting an environment of uninhibited discourse where students are encouraged to ask challenging questions. Students are able to take an active role in considering how public education should be used to build the next generation of leaders who are devoted to the common good and moral virtue.

—Olivia Zhang



Through the Society of Fellows, I have been able to have valuable, personal conversations with esteemed thinkers in the fields of politics, philosophy, and literature. Outside of events, I have found a welcoming community that is passionate about learning in a way that is distinct from my day-to-day

classes. In the future, students can expect to engage in high-level discussions about salient issues and walk away with applicable knowledge to bring to their individual circles. The Society of Fellows elevated my sense of responsible citizenship by bolstering my framework for our founding, our present, and our future as a liberal democracy.

—Sydney Baker



The Society of Fellows has provided me with the opportunity to explore important ideas with similarly curious individuals. From discussing topics ranging from classical Greek philosophy to current political debates, this fellowship has informed my sense of civic responsibility and the importance of civil discourse.

Students can expect to discuss essential ideas and questions, enjoy lasting friendships, and grow in curiosity, a common fruit of the examined life.

—Blake Brawner



[In reference to Brooks's talk] Arthur Brooks is an exceptionally articulate, reflective, and captivating speaker. I enjoyed listening to him speak and it was great to meet and converse with him after the event. His adeptness at skillfully weaving together insights from psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and

personal anecdotes resulted in a very captivating and thought-provoking exploration of the pursuit of happiness.

—Diego Lopez

[In reference to Emba's talk] Christine Emba's discussion on her book, *Rethinking Sex* made me question the limitations of solely relying on consent as the guiding principle in sexual encounters. I was particularly intrigued by Emba's point that while consent is essential, it shouldn't be the ultimate goal—it's the bare minimum for healthy sexual relationships. Also, I was amused by her argument that the abundance of dating options, fueled by apps and online platforms, can create a sense of decision fatigue and a constant search for something better. Her perspective on how this paradox of choice contributes to a lack of commitment and deep connection in relationships was rather eye-opening.

—Disha Ashok Garish, Affiliate Fellow

## Graduate Fellows

*What have you gained in your experience as a Civitas Graduate Fellow?*

*What's the highlight of the program/semester/week for you?*

*Anything surprising or that others should know about the Civitas community or mission?*



**Zander Batson**

Civitas Predoctoral Fellow  
Ph.D. Candidate, History,  
Yale University

For me, the biggest benefit of the Civitas Predoctoral Fellowship is the interdisciplinary community of Civitas fellows. Interacting with colleagues in political theory, economics, and philosophy has forced me to broaden my scholarship and consider how to make it appealing to non-specialists. My favorite part of the semester has been our weekly research lunches, where the fellows gather to discuss presentations ranging from Aristotelian ethics to presidential leadership. I'm very thankful to have been a part of the Civitas community this year!



**David Futscher Pereira**

Civitas Dissertation Fellow  
Ph.D. Candidate, Government,  
UT Austin

The Civitas Institute has built a community of scholars, who, albeit from different disciplines and at different stages of their careers, are united by a shared conception of civic education. As a Civitas Dissertation Fellow, I have benefitted immensely from being exposed to this cross-section of thinkers at such a crucial moment in my education. Not only have I learned a great deal from the research lunches, lectures, and talks that Civitas hosted throughout the year, but the exposure to outstanding scholarship



has improved my own research and writing. What's more, as a result of receiving great advice about the academic life and its attending responsibilities from remarkable professors, I have myself become a more thoughtful scholar and a more civic-minded teacher.



**Stella Fillmore-Patrick**

Civitas Dissertation Fellow  
Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy,  
UT Austin

I've gained a great deal from my time as a Civitas Dissertation Fellow. It's been great to be exposed to scholarship outside of my academic

field. Different fields have such different styles and methods, and it's nice to get out of one's bubble. There have been some really interesting lunchtime presentations on subjects I knew nothing about. I was on the job market this year, so the weekly sessions on professional development were very useful. It was also really valuable and fun to be able to present my own work this semester. Everyone who attended my talk was so eager to discuss my project and provide feedback, which is a great feeling. I was concerned that my topic was too far afield from what others are working on, but this didn't turn out to be a problem. It might be surprising to some to know that there really are a wide variety of viewpoints among Civitas scholars. The atmosphere at the institute is non-dogmatic and open minded.





SCHOOL OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP  
CIVITAS INSTITUTE  
302 W. MAIN  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712

[CIVICLEADERSHIP.UTEXAS.EDU](http://CIVICLEADERSHIP.UTEXAS.EDU)  
[CIVITAS.UTEXAS.EDU](http://CIVITAS.UTEXAS.EDU)



Appreciative staff, fellows, and faculty gather to congratulate **Justin Dyer** on being named Dean of the School of Civic Leadership and **Ryan Streeter** for taking over as Executive Director of the Civitas Institute.

