Weidenbaum Center’s Media Retreat Plays Important Role in Evidence-Based Journalism

The Weidenbaum Center’s Media Retreat Program is approaching its 17th year. Through this program, the Center has worked with more than 300 media participants to enhance and strengthen their ability to work with numbers, statistics, and data more accurately and in the realm of economics, government, and public policy. Because advocates on both sides of issues use numbers to support their positions, the reliability and use of this information have tremendous impact on how the media covers and presents the news. The goals of this intensive series of seminars are to help journalists:

- better evaluate and investigate the validity of numbers;
- accurately use numbers to substantiate or refute a story;
- challenge conventional wisdom when appropriate with fact checking and reliable sources.

Many participants have expressed how the Media Retreat has given them better insight on how to look at the data that is being used when working on stories. This feedback and the resulting articles have shown that this program has made a real impact on media participants in their investigations and reporting.

Approximately 20 members of the media—writers, reporters, editors; producers from print, radio, television; and online journalists—participate in the program each year. Opening sessions look at the basic pitfalls of applying numbers to public policy, followed by sessions that apply these tools to areas of public policy such as debt, income inequality, the trade deficit, economic development, macroeconomic data, polling, and congressional voting.

To learn more about this program, contact:
Gloria Lucy—314-935-5689, glolucy@wustl.edu

CALENDAR

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Calendar subject to change. Please visit wc.wustl.edu for more information on Weidenbaum Center programs and activities.
CENTER LEADERSHIP

The Weidenbaum Center continues both its academic and public policy efforts. Our mission remains to serve as a bridge between policymakers and scholars by supporting scholarly research, public affairs programs, and other activities at the intersection of business and government.

This newsletter provides insight into our upcoming public policy and public outreach programs, as well as some other special highlighted programs and activities. The academic research efforts and programs encouraged and supported by the Center can be viewed on our website and in our annual reports.

As always, we welcome your insights, comments, and/or recommendations for public policy issues that we might evaluate for future programs.

Steven Smith

On March 23, 2018, the Weidenbaum Center will host another excursion for its Eliot Society members. The excursion will be to the newly updated National Churchill Museum.

Our tour guide will be Dr. Timothy Riley, Executive Director of the Museum. The tour will consist of:

- National Churchill Museum—Located on the Westminster College campus, the site of Churchill's famous “Iron Curtain” speech. The museum was founded in 1969 to honor the life and legacy of Winston Churchill.
- Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury—Twelfth-century London church, designed by Sir Christopher Wren and built in 1677; relocated to Fulton in 1966.
- Winston Churchill Sculpture—The only sculpture to capture the exact moment when Churchill uttered his famous words, “an Iron Curtain has descended.”
- Breakthrough—An 11 foot high by 32 foot long structure sculpted from eight sections of the actual Berlin Wall, designed by artist Edwina Sandys, granddaughter of Winston Churchill.
- Special luncheon

The museum tells the story of a hero who led the free world’s fight for freedom, from his privileged youth as the son of a British aristocrat to the darkest days of war. It also serves as a venue for special artistic and historical exhibits, as well as a variety of social and cultural events. Going through the museum, you will find yourself in a trench on the Western Front during World War I. Then, a light and sound show will place you in the middle of a London air raid at the height of “The Blitz.” You will be able to look on as Churchill guides Britain through World War II in the film “Churchill’s Finest Hour.” You will read some of Churchill’s personal letters and touch artifacts. You can then relax in the plush armchairs of the “Gentleman’s Club” and listen to a few stories highlighting Churchill’s wisdom—and wit.
**George-Levi Gayle**, Associate Professor of Economics, submitted a proposal to the Russell Sage Foundation for his research on “Work Flexibility, Family Structure, Early Childhood Parental Time Inputs, and Intergenerational Mobility.” He is a subcontractor with the University of Notre Dame on a proposal entitled, “Religion and Female Labor Participation Gaps in India” (submitted to Templeton Religion Trust).


**Gregory Magarian**, Professor of Law, recently published his book, *Managed Speech: The Roberts Court’s First Amendment* (Oxford University Press, 2017). In conjunction with that, OUP also published his blog, “Free speech and political stagflation,” in Fall 2017. He was also interviewed by Washington University’s *The Source* on “NFL protests are free speech, but not protected by First Amendment.”

**Timothy McBride**, Professor at the School of Social Work, co-hosted/presented at a symposium in October on “Transforming Health Care in Missouri.” He was interviewed for an NPR piece on “Parents Worry Congress Won’t Fund the Children’s Health Insurance Program” and was quoted in *The New York Times* article “How a Republican Idea for Reducing Medicare Costs Could Affect You.”

**Andrew Reeves**, Professor of Political Science, co-authored two articles that were published in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*: “Attitudes Toward Delegation to Presidential Commissions” and “The Contextual Determinants of Support for Unilateral Action.” In October, *The Washington Post* printed his article, “Donald Trump’s lukewarm response to Puerto Rico was pretty predictable” and his research was referenced in *The Economist*’s “Counties that voted for the president get more in disaster relief.”

**Jake Rosenfeld**, Associate Professor of Sociology, was awarded a grant from NSF for his research project, “Pay Secrecy Policies and Pay in U.S. Workplaces.” He was quoted in August 2017 in *The New York Times* article, “One Effort to Close the Gender Pay Gap Won’t Get a Try Under Trump.”

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**Research Fellows**

- Gaetano Antinolfi, Economics
- Costas Azariadis, Economics
- Matthew Gabel, Political Science
- George-Levi Gayle, Economics
- Limor Golan, Economics
- Ronald Levin, School of Law
- Gregory Magarian, School of Law
- Timothy McBride, School of Social Work
- Sunita Parikh, Political Science
- William Peck, Center for Health Economics & Policy
- Andrew Reeves, Political Science
- Guillermo Rosas, Political Science
- Jake Rosenfeld, Sociology
- Betsy Sinclair, Political Science
**FACULTY RESEARCH**

The Weidenbaum Center worked with the following faculty/post-doc in submitting proposals to foundations.

**Department of Economics**

Ian Fillmore, “Tuition Discounting Over the College Career” (Spencer Foundation)

**Department of Political Science**

James Gibson, “Friends or Foes? The Role of Individual Information on Cooperation in Post-Conflict Societies” (Smith Richardson Foundation)

George Ofosu (Post-Doc), “Towards Informed Transparency Programs in Developing Countries” (Economic Development and Institutions)

Keith Schnakenberg, “Responsiveness in Elections: Theory and Estimation” (National Science Foundation)

Norman Schofield, “The Political Economy Effects of State and National Campaign Contributions and Advertising” (National Science Foundation)

**Department of Sociology**


Ariela Schachter, “Branded: Rental Housing Advertisements and Neighborhood Processes” (National Science Foundation)

**WEIDENBAUM CENTER GRADUATE FELLOWS**

Silvia (Michelle) Torres Pacheco is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science and an MA student in Statistics in the Department of Mathematics. Michelle’s current research focuses on the analysis of political images. What can we learn from the messages that images convey, how can we quantify such messages, and what are the consequences of visual stimuli on attitude and behavior formation? Political communication is a central element of several political dynamics. Its visual component is crucial in understanding the origin, characteristics, and consequences of the messages sent between political figures, media, and citizens. In one of her projects, she implements computer vision and image retrieval techniques to measure and understand messages conveyed in pictures. More specifically, she focuses on the classification of images of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement protests based on the level of conflict and violence they depict. For this purpose, she uses a Bag of (Visual) Words (BoVW). The BoVW is an intuitive and accessible technique for the extraction and quantification of visual features as a first step to understand and classify visual material. Michelle has also submitted a Doctoral Research proposal to NSF entitled, “Quantifying Visual Messages: Political Violence and the Bag of Visual Words.”

Patrick Rickert is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science. With the help of the Weidenbaum Center undergraduate research assistants, Patrick is creating and analyzing a database of all paired votes in the Senate over the past seventy years. This practice, once common, was when an absent senator would “pair” with a present senator who was voting the other way. The present senator would announce their pair and withdraw their vote, so the absent senator’s inability to vote did not influence the outcome. Pairing is an understudied practice, but by understanding who pairs with whom, we can learn more about the political context of Congress and how parties develop procedures that give them strategic advantages. Preliminary results indicate that pairing was mostly among ideologically distant co-partisans, and thus, that pairing was a way for ideologically heterogeneous parties to accommodate their membership without giving any help to the other guys. Additionally, this provides an interesting explanation for the decline in pairing: polarization dried up the well of ideologically distant, same party members.
MAJOR DONOR PROGRAMS

Public Policy Breakfast Series — The Weidenbaum Center Eliot Society and Major Donors series consists of informative presentations by local and national experts who summarize and share their insights on key current public policy issues. Details on upcoming programs follow.

January 22—Economics and Politics of the Tax Bill: Panel Discussion

The panel will consist of Weidenbaum Center Director Steven Smith and Dr. Joel Prakken, Senior Managing Director/Co-Founder of Macroeconomic Advisers. The Center’s Associate Director Steven Fazzari will moderate the discussion. Professor Smith’s research covers congressional politics, including party leadership in the U.S. Senate and the nature of party effects on congressional voting. Dr. Prakken has written numerous publications on topics ranging from tax reform to budget policy, to monetary policy, to the impact of technology on productivity. He has also testified frequently on these topics before committees in both the Senate and House of Representatives. Professor Fazzari’s research explores two main areas: financial determinants of investment and R&D spending by U.S. firms and the foundations of Keynesian macroeconomics.

February 7—Changes in Wall Street

Andrew Tuch is Professor of Law at Washington University. He teaches and writes in the areas of financial and securities regulation, corporate law and theory, broker-dealer regulation, and agency law. His work has explored how firm structure contributes to financial misconduct and financial instability. It has also examined the fiduciary, professional and other obligations of investment banks in a range of contexts, including in mergers and acquisitions. His scholarship has appeared in a variety of leading journals both in the United States and overseas. He is a two-time recipient of the Brudney Prize for the Best Paper in Corporate Governance at Harvard Law School, where he was an Olin Fellow in Law and Economics and a Fellow of the Program on Corporate Governance.

March 6—Aspects of White Supremacy Movements

David Cunningham is Professor of Sociology at Washington University. His current research, focusing on racial contention, is supported by the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. Professor Cunningham’s past work centered on the Ku Klux Klan, in particular the complex roles that the Klan played in various communities throughout the 1960s and the enduring impacts of KKK activity on contemporary voting patterns and crime rates. His recent book Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan (Oxford University Press, 2013) has been featured on NPR’s Fresh Air, CBS News, the Miller Center Forum, and in a PBS American Experience documentary film. An ongoing project examines the organization and enforcement of segregation under Jim Crow, as well as how related historical patterns continue to matter today. Professor Cunningham has directed a number of intensive field-based programs on the causes and consequences of social conflict.

March 20—The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized

Dan Hopkins is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. His research centers on American politics, with a special emphasis on racial and ethnic politics, local politics, political behavior, and research methods. He assists with the Philadelphia Behavioral Science Initiative, which brings together leaders in government and academia to discuss how social and behavioral sciences can be implemented to create more effective policies and programs in Philadelphia.
MAJOR DONOR PROGRAMS

April 9—Challenges in International Trade

Nathan Jensen is a Professor in the Department of Government at the University of Texas-Austin. His research addresses a number of topics in international political economy. His core research has focused on the relationship between multinational corporations and domestic governments. He has also published on the politics of natural resources, the political economy of international institutions, the diffusion of policy across borders, business corruption, and civil war.

Major Donors Public Policy Luncheon Series

The Center’s Major Donors roundtable discussions allow guests the unique opportunity to interact with leading scholars and industry experts from the University and the broader St. Louis community. Normally held every month during the academic year, the lunches provide a platform for participants to engage with both prominent intellectuals and one another in an open dialogue. Topics are selected from current events and address economic, political, legal, health, or international issues.

Upcoming meetings will be held on January 23, February 26, March 26, and April 24.

NOTE: These meetings are by invitation only and registration is required.

Other Eliot Society Member Programs

The Center also hosts other Eliot Society events and programs such as excursions, tours of print and painting collections with an expert guide, dinners with forum speakers, and receptions for members and prospective members. Many of these programs are graciously hosted by one of the Center’s Eliot Society members. These programs enable members to interact with each other on a more informal basis. Contact Gloria Lucy at 314-935-5689 (glolucy@wustl.edu) for more information.

In addition, Weidenbaum Center Eliot Society members are invited to Washington University Eliot Society lectures, travel series, the annual Eliot Society Dinner, and other special events and programs. For a list of upcoming events, contact Valerie Haffner, Eliot Society Office, 314-935-8096, or toll free 877-215-2727.

For additional information regarding the Weidenbaum Center’s major donor programs such as the public policy breakfasts, public policy luncheon series, or any Eliot Society events, contact Gloria Lucy (314-935-5689; glolucy@wustl.edu).
Center Forums (conferences, debates, and single-speaker events) focus on major public policy issues in the news. Speakers consist of academics, government officials, and business leaders. They are frequently cosponsored with other organizations and are free and open to the public. Please check the website (wc.wustl.edu) for calendar updates.

January 31 — The View From Washington: Economic Policy One Year Into the Trump Administration

David Wessel is a senior fellow in Economic Studies at Brookings and director of the Hutchins Center on Fiscal and Monetary Policy, the mission of which is to improve the quality of fiscal and monetary policies and public understanding of them. He joined Brookings in December 2013 after 30 years on the staff of The Wall Street Journal where, most recently, he was economics editor and wrote the weekly Capital column. He is a contributing correspondent to The Wall Street Journal, appears frequently on NPR’s Morning Edition, and tweets often at @davidmwessel.


This event is cosponsored with Washington University’s Assembly Series.

February 28 — Monetary Sanctions: A Permanent Punishment for the Poor

Alexes Harris is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Washington. Professor Harris uses a mixed-method approach to study institutional decision-making. Her research interests focus on social stratification processes and racial and ethnic disparities. She investigates how contact with varying institutions (educational, juvenile and criminal justice and economic) impact individuals’ life chances. Frequently, her work combines data types in order to illustrate both the macro context of the problem at hand, and at the same time investigate the micro processes leading to outcomes. Using participant observation, interview, and statistical methods, her work has investigated how institutional actors assess, label, and process individuals and groups, and how those processed respond. Her aim is to produce research that is theoretically informed and empirically rich, and research that is of value in local, state, and national policy arenas.

This event is co-sponsored with the Department of Sociology.

For additional information on Weidenbaum Center debates, forums, or lecture series, past or upcoming programs, program content, volunteer opportunities, or co-sponsorship of any of these events, please contact Melinda Warren (314-935-5652; warren@wustl.edu).
Support

The Weidenbaum Center, while an integral part of Washington University, is responsible for its own financial support. It relies upon generous donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

General support is needed for its operating budget and designated funds are relied upon for its special programs—such as its Murray Weidenbaum Scholars Program. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, it falls under the University’s 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Anyone able to help provide support or assist in fundraising should contact:

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