



Tocqueville Forum on American Ideas and Institutions

University of Houston - Political Science

Old Lessons for New Challenges: What the Past Can Teach About AI and New Media

January 26-27, 2024

Location: Student Center South Heights and Skyline



Elizabeth D. Rockwell
Center on Ethics and Leadership

Hobby School of Public Affairs





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Conference Program

Friday, January 26

9:00 - 9:30 AM – Welcome/Conference Introduction

9:30 – 11:00 AM – Panel Session 1

Title: Too Much, Too Fast

Chair: Alin Fumurescu (University of Houston)

Presenters:

Michael A. Gillespie (Duke University) – “The Printing Press, Fake News, and the Wars of Religion: A Cautionary Tale”

Alexander Orwin (Louisiana State University) - “Too Many Speeches: How the *Falasia* Anticipated the Fragmentation of Opinions and Mores in Online Democracy”

Jeremy Bailey (University of Oklahoma) – “The Problem of ‘False Opinions in League with False Facts’: Jefferson’s Turn on Freedom of the Press”

11:15 AM – 12:45 PM – Panel Session 2

Title: The Future in the Past

Chair: Michelle Schwarze (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Presenters:

Jeffrey Church (University of Houston) – “The New Despotism 2.0: Tocqueville on Social Media”

Mihnea Maruta (Babes-Bolyai University – via Zoom) – “The Virtual Ego: The Simulacrum We Fall in Love With”

Alin Fumurescu (University of Houston) – “Shame, Identity, and Disobedience: Three Lessons from the Hebrew Bible”

12:45 AM – 2:00 PM – Lunch



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2:00 - 3:30 - Panel Session

Title: Take Your Time

Chair: Michelle Clarke (Dartmouth College)

Presenters:

Mary M. Keys (University of Notre Dame) – “Aquinas and Weil on the Virtue of Study”

Thomas Pfau (Duke University) – “Grandeur et Misère de l’homme’: AI, Human Flourishing, and the Future of Memory”

Cary J. Nederman (Texas A&M University) – “The Original Social Media? John of Salisbury and Medieval Friendship Circles”

7:00 – 9:00 PM – Conference Dinner

Saturday, January 27

10:00 – 11:30 AM – Panel Session 4

Title: A Blessing and a Curse

Chair: Jeffrey Church (University of Houston)

Presenters:

Michelle Clarke (Dartmouth College) – “What Have the Romans Done for Us? Politics as Technology in Polybius’s Histories”

Jan-Werner Müller (Princeton University) – “What Representative Democracy Needs from Intermediary Powers – Then and Now?”

Michelle Schwarze (University of Wisconsin-Madison): “Ranking the Virtues: AI, Alignment, and Judith Shklar’s Moral Theory”

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM – Lunch/Concluding Reflections



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