

FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER



OUR halting emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic has coincided with the shocking discovery that the United States is fighting to preserve its democracy. Not striving to perfect its Union, not straining to bend the arc of the moral universe towards justice, but struggling to keep elections running and civil liberties intact. Covid-19 only slowed our world down enough to reveal the stagnant inequalities, growing polarization, backsliding democratic institutions, and retreating federal government that weigh heavily on American political life today.

Unfortunately, the increasingly beleaguered state of democracy in the United States is far from exceptional. In the German and French parliaments, the *cordon sanitaire* keeping nearly 100 far-right deputies out of each governing majority is fraying. In Italy, the heirs of the fascist party stand on the brink of power. In Tunisia, a new President has snuffed out the lone parliamentary democracy in the Arab world. In Eastern Europe, Russia has invaded and occupied the fledgling democracy of Ukraine.

These crises in global democracy have complex and multifaceted origins. Nevertheless, it is rare that so many international leaders agree upon a common culprit: the threat to credible sources of news and information. The same on-line platforms that were employed to foment a Green Revolution in Iran and to topple authoritarians during the Arab Spring were later weaponized against the US electorate and then the Congress itself -- acts repeated elsewhere and often.

JOURNALISM  
— 2022-23 — & DEMOCRACY



The marked shift to social media has also threatened the shoe-leather reporters at publishers with “obsolete” economic models and “outmoded” ways of gathering news. Worldwide, there are increasing obstacles to reliable political communication, and breaking through disinformation and distrust in politics, science, and institutions has become ever more difficult.

As we stand at a crossroads between constitutional and personal rule, with individual freedoms hanging in the balance, journalists may well contribute to the salvation of democracy. Though today we may think of them primarily as political fact-checkers, journalists’ democratic role has never been limited to that. Investigative reporters turn a spotlight on abuses of power that governments fail to detect, and that other civil society groups are often unable, or unwilling, to resolve.



News outlets also provide space to debate reforms and remedies for what ails the body politic. More broadly, democratic societies depend on the press to hold the powerful to account, keep their citizens informed, and keep the processes of democratic communication and deliberation alive.

As Michael Luo wrote in a 2020 *New Yorker* essay, “Any hope of halting [the decline of truth in American democracy] must begin with a renewal of journalism’s commitment to its public responsibility, and with an examination of how its methods might best adapt.”

But what would such a renewal of the democratic press, and the wider public sphere, look like? And what efforts—by journalists, scholars, civil society actors, and political leaders—are needed to make it a reality? These questions inspired the choice of “Journalism and Democracy” as the annual theme for my first year as Director of the Clough Center.



Through the Center’s programming this year, the Boston College community will have the opportunity to engage in conversation with renowned scholars, and practitioners, of journalism. This year’s class of Clough Fellows, introduced in this newsletter, will revisit these themes in seminars throughout the year, and begin crafting articles for our annual publication, to appear in spring 2023. The fellows are drawn from across the University and bring their unique disciplinary perspectives to the conversation.

At this crucial moment in the life of our democracy, these conversations could scarcely be more urgent, or more challenging. We hope you will join us for our year-long exploration of “Journalism and Democracy.”

— JONATHAN LAURENCE, DIRECTOR

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## At-A-Glance: Upcoming Events

**What the Constitution Means to Us** [Monday, **September 12 at 4PM** in the Murray Conference Room]. The academic year débuts with an all-star, all-BC cast of characters, featuring students and professors from across the University who will join in public reflection on the document – and the interpretations of it – that have inspired hope and provoked despair.

Later that week, far off-campus in Sarajevo (Bosnia) – and in keeping with the theme of compromise and cohabitation – the Clough Center is co-sponsoring the participation of BC faculty from Theology and the School of Theology and Ministry in a workshop on **Getting to Reconciliation**. Two days of meetings will examine processes and justifications for reconciliation in different political contexts and religious traditions. [**September 15-16**].

On September 22, the Clough Center launches its year of journalism-related programming with a star-studded event on **Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy: Framing the Conversation**, featuring CNN's Chief Domestic Correspondent, a beloved WBUR host, a *Boston Globe* columnist, the Washington envoy from *Le Monde* (Paris) and a leading media scholar from Columbia Journalism School. [**Thursday, September 22 at 4PM** in Gasson 100].

A related event will take place on campus in October, when the **Winston Center's Clough Colloquium** hosts a Russian newspaper editor and journalist who was awarded the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. [**Tuesday, October 11 at 4PM** in Gasson 100].

Later in October, Clough Center director Jonathan Laurence meets with a panel of religion scholars and historians to discuss religion and the modern state, from the Vatican State and the Ottoman Empire to Pope Francis and the contemporary Middle East, as explored in his recent book **Coping with Defeat**. [**Thursday, October 27 at 4PM** in Gasson 100].

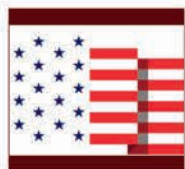
Rounding off 2022, we welcome two distinguished lecturers who will speak on their own latest research into the prospects for democracy in the US and worldwide: first, a sobering assessment of the **Degenerations of Democracy**, by the influential social scientist Prof. Craig Calhoun [**Thursday, November 17 at 4PM** in Gasson 100], and then a look at **Europe's Past and the Future of America's Polarization**, by renowned political sociologist Prof. Sidney Tarrow. [**Thursday, December 8 at 4PM** in Gasson 100].



**All events will be followed by a reception with food and drink**



## FALL CALENDAR



### **What the Constitution Means to Us**

*An All-BC Event featuring Faculty and Students*

Monday, September 12 | 4:00PM

Murray Conference Room

Vlad Perju (Law)  
Peter Krause (Politics)  
Ken Kersch (Politics)  
Angela Ards (English)  
Cathleen Kaveny (Law, Theology)  
Laura Steinberg (Schiller Institute)  
& Student Speakers



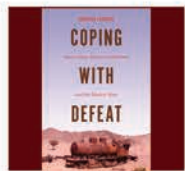
### **Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy**

*Framing the Conversation*

Thursday, September 22 | 4:00PM

Gasson Hall 100

Jim Acosta (CNN Anchor)  
Angela Ards (Journalism)  
Tiziana Dearing (WBUR)  
Renée Graham (Boston Globe)  
Michael Schudson (Columbia)  
Piotr Smolar (Le Monde)  
Michael Serazio (Communication)



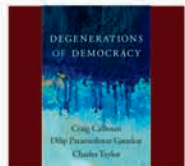
### **Islam and Catholicism in Modern States**

*A Roundtable Discussion with  
Clough Center Director Jonathan Laurence*

Thursday, October 27 | 4:00PM

Gasson Hall 100

Karen Barkey (Bard)  
Michael Driessen (John Cabot)  
Carol Ferrara (Emerson)  
Shadi Hamid (Brookings)  
Massimo Faggioli (Villanova)



### **Degenerations of Democracy**

*A Clough Distinguished Lecture by  
Professor Craig Calhoun*

Thursday, November 17 | 4:00PM

Gasson Hall 100

*Respondent:*  
Elizabeth McKenna (Harvard)



### **Europe's Past and the Future of America's Polarization**

*A Clough Distinguished Lecture by  
Professor Sidney Tarrow*

Thursday, December 8 | 4:00PM

Gasson Hall 100

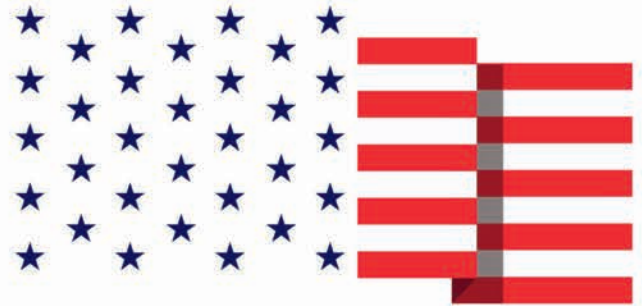
*Respondent:*  
Marshall Ganz (Harvard)

 **Focus on the Constitution**

Since the founding era of the United States, the American Constitution has been central to our public life. It has inspired hope, and it has provoked despair. It has remained in place, as few other national constitutions have. Yet it has also repeatedly been changed, and some today think it needs to change again. At a moment when its basic meaning seems more contested than ever, how should we look at the Constitution today?

This is the question at the center of “What the Constitution Means to Us,” the Clough Center’s first annual celebration of Constitution and Citizenship Day. Loosely inspired by Heidi Schreck’s award-winning play, and co-sponsored with the Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society, this event will feature an all-star panel of eight cross-disciplinary scholars from our own Boston College faculty. It will also showcase the work of select undergraduate and graduate students from across the University. Please join us for a rich evening of conversation, debate, and reflection on America’s founding document—and a lively reception—in what we hope will become a new yearly tradition at BC.

*A celebration of Constitution & Citizenship Day*



**WHAT THE  
CONSTITUTION  
MEANS TO US**



SCHILLER INSTITUTE FOR  
INTEGRATED SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

**Monday, September 12, 2022  
4PM, Murray Conference Room**

*followed by refreshments*



**Click to hear the 2022  
Clough Center Fellows'  
Constitution Day Playlist**

***A campus-wide critical reflection featuring premier Boston College faculty members:***



**HOSFFMAN  
OSPINO**



**KEN  
KERSCH**



**JONATHAN  
LAURENCE**



**CATHLEEN  
KAVENY**



**PETER  
KRAUSE**



**LAURA  
STEINBERG**



**VLAD  
PERJU**



**ANGELA  
ARDS**

***and student speakers, to be announced***

# Focus on JOURNALISM

## Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy

Thursday, September 22 | 4:00 PM  
Gasson Hall 100

By keeping the public informed and holding the powerful to account, journalism plays a vital role in the life of democratic societies. Maintaining an objective public record—whether by fact-checking political advertisements or scoring political speeches with Pinocchios—is only the most obvious of journalists’ contributions. When institutional norms fail, the media serve as an additional set of guardrails, offering critique while safeguarding democratic institutions. And media outlets also provide the independent forums needed to debate reforms and remedies for what ails the body politic.

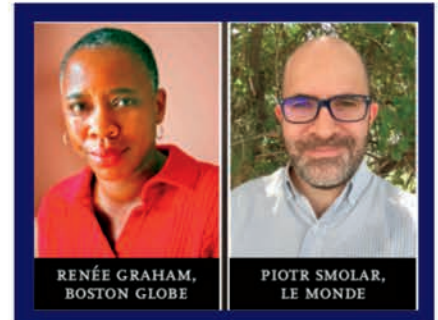
Yet today, the traditional institutions of both journalism and democracy appear to be in crisis. How are the challenges facing these two sets of institutions interconnected? What does the future hold for each? And what might a hopeful path forward be for both? To explore these pressing questions, the Clough Center has chosen to focus on “Journalism and Democracy” for the 2022-23 academic year.

At *Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy* we launch our year-long exploration of this theme with a star-studded panel of contributors. In an opening keynote, Michael Schudson, one of the country’s leading journalism scholars, will ask what values should guide journalism in a democracy, with a Q&A facilitated by Angela Ards (Director of BC Journalism). Next, in a journalists’ roundtable moderated by Tiziana Dearing (WBUR), we will hear Piotr Smolar (Le Monde) and Renée Graham (Boston Globe) speak to the local and international dimensions of these questions. Finally, Jim Acosta, CNN Anchor and Chief Domestic Correspondent, will close the evening by sharing his observations on the state of the field today, with a discussion afterward facilitated by Michael Serazio (BC Communications). Please join us for what promises to be a provocative, wide-ranging, and timely conversation.



JIM ACOSTA, CNN ANCHOR

MICHAEL SCHUDSON, COLUMBIA JOURNALISM SCHOOL



RENÉE GRAHAM, BOSTON GLOBE

PIOTR SMOLAR, LE MONDE



TIZIANA DEARING, WBUR

## Clough Colloquium of the Winston Center for Leadership and Ethics

Tuesday, October 11 | 4:00 PM  
Gasson Hall 100

Featuring *Dmitry Muratov, 2021 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Editor-in-Chief of Novaya Gazeta*



## Clough Spring Symposium and Lowell Humanities Lecture

Wednesday, March 15, 2023 | 4:00 PM  
Gasson Hall 100

Featuring *Yamiche Alcindor, Washington correspondent for NBC News and Anchor and Moderator of PBS' Washington Week*



SERIES

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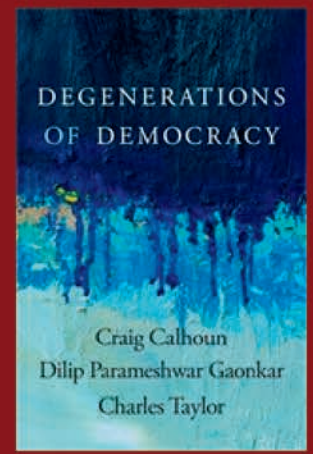
**CLOUGH DISTINGUISHED LECTURES**

***Degenerations of Democracy: Craig Calhoun***

Thursday, November 17 | 4:00 PM | Gasson Hall 100

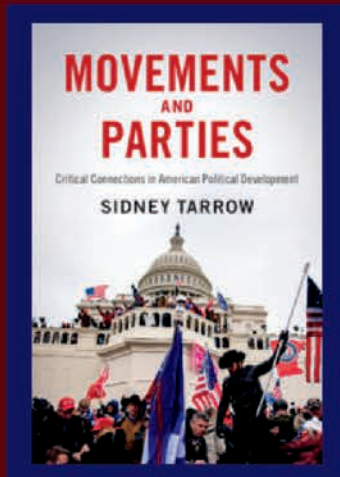
Craig Calhoun is a world-renowned social scientist whose work connects sociology to culture, communication, politics, philosophy, and economics. Currently the University Professor of Social Sciences at Arizona State University, he has previously served as Director of the London School of Economics, President of the Social Science Research Council, and University Professor of the Social Sciences at New York University.

As the first speaker in the Clough Center’s relaunched “Distinguished Lecture” series, Prof. Calhoun will address the issues explored in his most recent book, *Degenerations of Democracy*, co-authored with Charles Taylor and Dilip Gaonkar. Challenging commonplace narratives, this work interrogates the underlying causes of democratic decline, and examines the most promising strategies for revitalizing democracy across the globe. Calhoun’s respondent is Elizabeth McKenna, Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School and an expert in social movements, political parties, and grassroots democratic politics.



***Return of the Native: Europe's Past and the Future of America's Polarization: Sidney Tarrow***

Thursday, December 8 | 4:00 PM | Gasson Hall 100



For decades, political scientist Sidney Tarrow has been a leading expert on social movements, political parties, and, more broadly, the strategies and dynamics of political contention. He is the Emeritus Maxwell M. Upson Professor of Government at Cornell University, where he has taught since 1973. His most recent book is *Movements and Parties* (Cambridge 2021), a historical and comparative study of the interactions between social movements and political parties during five critical junctures of American history

As a Clough Distinguished Lecturer, Prof. Tarrow will draw on his extensive comparative research into European democratic regimes to speak to the challenges polarization poses to American democracy today. He will also make the case that the postwar experience of European countries can afford valuable insights into the nature of these challenges, and how they might be addressed. Prof. Tarrow’s respondent will be Marshall Ganz, the Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing and Civil Society at the Kennedy School of Government, and one of the foremost scholars and practitioners of community organizing.



 **INTRODUCING THE CLOUGH CENTER'S NEW DIRECTOR**

**After a decade of leadership by BC Law Professor Vlad Perju, the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy has a new director**

Jonathan Laurence arrived on the Heights in 2005, shortly after defending his PhD thesis, in comparative politics, at Harvard. Since then, Boston College's political science department has been Prof. Laurence's home base, but his research has frequently taken him out of town. In the course of his career, he has conducted interviews, archival research, and other fieldwork in more than a dozen countries and held fellowships in France, Germany and Italy. He was also a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC for over a decade, during which he delivered briefings to diplomats and analysts, volunteered on the Foreign Policy committee of two presidential campaigns, led a team of analysts at the State Department, and addressed lawmakers on Capitol Hill.



Prof. Laurence's work has been recognized with a Berlin prize fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin and multiple professional awards from the American Political Science Association, including twice for Best Book in Religion and Politics in 2013 and 2022. His years of study and fieldwork in Western Europe, Turkey, and North Africa have also given him a front-row seat to formal and informal political life in many countries. His research and commentary on international affairs have been featured on CNN and in the *Washington Post*, and he has published essays in the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Prof. Laurence's research focuses on the interaction of religion and politics in public life, and the comparison of religion-state relations across political contexts. Such issues were central to his first two books, *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (2006), and *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration* (2012). Laurence's latest book, *Coping with Defeat: Islam, Catholicism, and the Modern State* (2021) is also his most ambitious yet. It explores the topic of religion-state relations in great depth and breadth, developing a geographically and historically wide-ranging comparative analysis of Islamic and Catholic political-religious empires in Western Europe, Turkey and North Africa.

For *Coping with Defeat*, Laurence visited Vatican and Ottoman Archives and interviewed senior officials responsible for Islamic affairs and public religious education in Turkey and North Africa. On the basis of this extensive research, he documents centuries of religious and political institution-building, right up to the present day. Strikingly, Laurence argues, Catholicism and Sunni Islam have historically employed analogous strategies for responding to their cumulative loss of their political power. For this reason, he suggests, their comparison has much to teach contemporary democracies—and contemporary religious leaders—about how to combat religious extremism, preserve the spiritual authority of religious traditions in “secular” states, and promote civil peace in polarized societies.

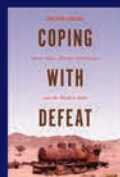
Under Prof. Laurence's leadership, in addition to its annual themes, the Clough Center will pursue an ongoing, multi-year exploration of “Religion and Democracy.” And to launch this new initiative, the Center will be sponsoring a roundtable discussion of *Coping With Defeat* on October 27th. At this event, Prof. Laurence will present his core findings, and four eminent scholars from multiple disciplines—each a specialist in Catholicism, Islam, or both—will engage him in conversation. As Christianity and Islam continue to shape public life around the world in unexpected ways, the issues at stake could scarcely be more relevant, or more contentious. Please join us for this first event in the Clough Center's “Religion and Democracy” series, and this public discussion of our new Director's research.

***Coping with Defeat: A Roundtable Discussion on Islam and Catholicism in Modern States***

Thursday, October 27 | 4:00 PM Gasson Hall 100



**Featuring... Michael Driessen, Karen Barkey, Massimo Fagioli, Shadi Hamid, and Carol Ferrara**



Since its release in 2021, *Coping with Defeat* has already attracted attention in the academy and the public sphere. The **Wall Street Journal** called the book a “refreshing, provocative work,” and **The Economist** described it as a “closely argued, contrarian piece of scholarship.” In 2022, the **American Political Science Association** recognized it as the **best book in religion and politics published within the last two years.**

 **INTRODUCING THIS YEAR'S CLOUGH FELLOWS**

**DOCTORAL FELLOWS**



JUSTIN BROWN  
RAMSEY  
English



ALEXA  
DAMASKA  
Sociology



EMILY  
DUPUIS  
History



TAEKYEONG  
GOH  
Sociology



BARB  
KOZEE  
Theology



MEGHAN  
MCCOY  
History



CASEY  
PUERZER  
Political Science



MARCUS  
TRENFIELD  
Psychology



OPHELIA  
WANG  
English



YINAN  
XU  
Sociology

**GRADUATE CORRESPONDENTS**



CARTER  
BRYSON  
Economics



CLAUDIO  
COLNAGO  
Law



PIETRO  
DALLARA  
Economics



MATTHEW  
GANNON  
English



DANIEL  
MALDONADO  
Philosophy



R. ZACHARY (ZAC)  
KARANOVICH  
Theology



SABER  
KHANI  
Sociology



MICHAILA  
PETERS  
Philosophy



CHANDLER  
SHAW  
English



FENGRUI  
TIAN  
Sociology



DENIZ  
UYAN  
Sociology



## RESEARCH FELLOWS



WESLEY  
CHRABASZCZYK  
History



INNOCENT  
MPOKE  
Political Science



HILARY  
NWAINYA  
Theology



ANNIKA  
RIEGER  
Sociology



JACOB  
SALIBA  
History



ADAM  
SLIWOWSKI  
Political Science



SHAUN  
SLUSARSKI  
Theology



EMILY  
TURNER  
Theology



DENNIS  
WIEBOLDT  
History



YIYANG  
ZHUGE  
Political Science

## PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWS



AYESHA AHSAN  
Law



JAVON DAVIS  
Law



DANIEL HAMM  
Law



HANNAH IANELLO  
Neuroscience



HELEN LYKOS  
International Studies



MATTHEW MALEC  
Political Science



JULIE MEYER  
Law



ALI SHAFI  
Law



NATHANIEL SHAY  
Law



TRACY WERWICK  
Law

## UNDERGRADUATE CORRESPONDENTS



MABEL BASSI  
Neuroscience



CAROLINE BREWSTER  
Political Science



LOUIS GLEASON  
Political Science

## Fellows' Corner

"1776" at the American Repertory Theatre

Directed by Jeffrey L. Page and  
A.R.T. Artistic Director Diane Paulus



A delegation from the Clough Center traveled from Newton to Cambridge over the summer to attend the revival of 1776 at the American Repertory Theater. Now headed to Broadway, the musical reminds us of the terrible tradeoffs that comprise political bargains, foreshadows the Civil War, and hints at continued strife today. Beneath the surface tensions of drafting the Declaration of Independence, as one Clough fellow writes below, a “horrific compromise” was in the works.

Leaving the theater, we became more aware of the Revolutionary milestones around our own neighborhood and the lingering inequalities across our land, our thoughts provoked by the creative reworking of American history.

... as seen by Clough Fellows

## "1776" at the American Repertory Theatre...

### *"Fallible Individuals with Human Urges..."*

1776 is a creative and thrilling look at the founding documents of the United States as well as the people involved in producing them. It invites viewers to reimagine American history, or at least to reconsider it, along several dimensions. One thing that stands out is how it portrays the "founding fathers" as fallible individuals with typically human urges. They drink, they make crude sexual jokes, they argue irrationally, they are prideful, they hold grudges. This aspect of the musical allows the audience to contemplate how they might behave in a similar situation. If you were designing a new country from scratch, how would you act? Why would you be there in the first place? For personal gain? For the "greater good"? The musical does not shy away from the issue of slavery and other "original sins" of the American project. The treatment is subtle at times, taking place between the lines of dialogue; it seems constrained, to some extent, by the original script.

- Carter Bryson

### *"The underbelly of the country that is about to be created..."*

The musical 1776 presents crucial moments in the history of democracy, led mainly by white men. The adaptation throws light on the people and perspectives often left out of this story. This creates a critical distance from both the text and the depicted events. Most of the characters are cisgender white males, but the adaptation uses non-male actors, many of them non-white, for those roles. The strategy of using actors whose perceived race or ethnicity does not coincide with that of the characters has an important precedent in *Hamilton*. I have also seen this strategy, which makes sense in places with a strong white population, in some adaptations of classical plays by the British National Theater.

The critical distance from the text and from the events portrayed is also achieved through another strategy. Actors appear wearing contemporary shoes but then replace them with eighteenth-century footwear. The importance of race in this adaptation is also evident in a key moment—when delegates discuss slavery. Only then is the whole depth of the stage revealed. Towers of barrels emerge to represent all the physical work extracted from enslaved people—the underbelly of the country that is about to be created.

- Daniel Maldonado

### *"Complicated, Messy, Inherently Flawed..."*

Not only was 1776 filled to the brim with incredible, racially-diverse performers (all of whom identified as female, trans, or nonbinary), but the production also shifted the historical narrative of the American Revolution from one of an undiluted victory to a complicated, messy, and inherently flawed undertaking.

This was most evident when the cast performed "Molasses, to Rum, to Slaves," a piece which pointed out the Northern colonies' hypocrisy (mainly Boston) for verbally condemning slavery yet still profiting off of it. The show takes this problem one step further when, while debating the various clauses making up the Declaration of Independence, pro-slavery congress members force Jefferson and the other lawmakers to strike out the section that would have abolished slavery in order to achieve a unanimous vote on independence. It's a horrific compromise, and one cannot help but wonder how the next 250 years of this country's future would have unfolded had this agreement over slavery not been reached.

- Meghan McCoy

### *"A huge step by individuals not in perfect unison..."*

1776 provided a high-level performance and a great deal of information. I learned that the huge step of independence was achieved by individuals who — critically — were not acting in perfect unison. The efforts made to reach consensus, choosing words and drafting the Declaration of Independence were depicted vividly in the musical. It felt like sitting and reliving that part of American history with the historic figures that only previously appeared in abstract form in textbooks. I appreciate their casting of "female, non-binary, and trans actors," half of them people of color.

This addresses how people who had historically been excluded from the rights promised in the Declaration, articulate the very history. The core of the story, however, is still about white, male historical figures — commonly remembered as the founding fathers. It would be interesting to know then, what the same period of time was like for marginalized groups of people, who have been excluded from mainstream history.

- Fengrui Tian

... as seen by Clough Fellows

## "1776" at the American Repertory Theatre...

### *"Reimagining our founding fathers as Black, Asian, female, non-binary, and trans..."*

This production drew connections between the past and the present, calling on the audience to think critically about racial justice and gender equality, among others. Reminiscent of *Hamilton*, this production reimagined our founding fathers as Black, Asian, female, non-binary, and trans. A central theme of the musical is the evil of slavery and the division among the founding fathers over slavery's place in the fledgling nation. The diverse cast acting out these discussions highlighted the profound inequality of the United States at its founding.

*1776* calls on the audience to consider the disconnect between the lived experience of people of color and the Declaration of Independence's famous phrase: "all men are created equal." As the musical makes clear, many founding fathers did not believe that all people were equal. While there have been strides toward equality — the Civil Rights Act and *Brown v. Board* — *1776* stresses the continuing importance of racial justice efforts. The most poignant commentary occurred when modern-day images flashed on the stage, depicting protests for racial justice alongside the recently sworn-in Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. The juxtaposition of current events and history was moving. Not merely a reimagining of history, *1776* is a call to action. As residents of the United States, we must continually fight for equality if we hope to live up to the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

- Tracy Werick

### *"The porousness of the fourth wall..."*

When I heard about the casting concept of the A.R.T.'s new production of *1776*, I must admit that I was a little bit skeptical. It was not because I was offended by the idea of a multi-racial cast of women, transgender and nonbinary people playing the white cisgender male delegates at the Second Continental Congress. Instead, I was concerned that directors Jeffrey L. Page and Diane Paulus were merely riding on the artistic coattails of *Hamilton* and its innovative casting. But *1776* offers audiences a fabulous production that showcases the talents of a diverse non-male cast in an industry that is still largely dominated by male roles for male actors.

Besides the electrifying performances, the memorable music, and the stunning choreography, what struck me most about this production was the porousness of the fourth wall. In *1776*, the theatrical technique felt different, more meaningful, more existential. At the beginning of the musical, before becoming John Adams, Crystal Lucas-Perry walks on the stage, sizes up a projection of the white founding fathers and shares a skeptical look with the audience. Shortly after, the members of the cast line up, remove their twenty-first century sneakers, and together don eighteenth century buckled shoes and brocade jackets. In this production, we are not expected to suspend our disbelief. We are not expected to pretend that the people on stage are actually John Adams, Ben Franklin or Thomas Jefferson. Instead, we are invited to see ordinary people exploring the hopeful though tragically flawed story of our founding.

- Shaun Slusarski

### *"Worth retaining as part of our national mythology?"*

The new revival of *1776* begins with its actors putting their clothes on. As the overture plays, the racially diverse, all-female and nonbinary cast members slowly don the 18th Century garb of the elite white men whose story they will shortly re-enact. Standing in formation and facing the audience, they pull on their frock coats, slip into their buckled shoes, and laboriously draw up their breeches. (Mercifully, they are spared the powdered wigs). The spectacle has a comic effect, but it also calls attention to the fact that what we are watching is a re-enactment. A distance is created between the historical events being depicted and the contemporary actors, and audience, who are choosing to revisit them. What are the performers trying to say about those events, and about the 1969 musical itself? One of the show's great strengths, I think, is that it leaves us wondering. Is the birth of the United States of America in 1776, and its Declaration of Independence, worth retaining as a part of our national mythology? Is the musical itself? The show can hardly be said to answer these questions decisively. Yet ultimately it does not leave them wholly unresolved. Through its own re-appropriation of the past it shows that the meaning of the American story is still being determined in the present. And we too can play a role in shaping that story, provided we choose, like these actors, to assume a place in it ourselves.

- Nicholas Hayes-Mota

... as seen by Clough Fellows

 **Correspondents' Corner: Book Review**



**Mabel Bassi**

The story Margaret Sullivan tells in *Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy* is one she knows intimately well. Her journey as a journalist began with a summer intern position at her hometown newspaper, *The Buffalo News*, where she eventually rose to become top editor. Over the course of her 32 years there, Sullivan watches the previously vibrant institutions of local journalism slowly dwindle as their funding decreases, their employee base shrinks, and new forms of technology change the face of newspapers. Her experience gives her a unique, reflective perspective on what threatens fact-based journalism. In a contemporary context characterized by endangered press freedoms and the spread of supposed “fake news”, Sullivan’s book demonstrates a clear link between the foundering of local journalism and the current crisis of democracy.



**Ghosting the News, Margaret Sullivan**

The decline of local journalism first and foremost hurts local communities. Sullivan believes that the underpinning of authentic journalism is in fact local journalism, as it connects communities with information that cannot be found on larger-scale (e.g. national or global) broadcasting platforms. Within local communities and neighborhoods, people’s lives are shaped by the daily newspaper they read. Likewise, the paper’s reporters uncover vital stories on the workings of the many local governments, schools and organizations that are fundamental to the day-to-day functioning of our democracy.

Beyond that, however, as local journalism declines, the integrity of factual information flow also decreases on a broader scale. As Sullivan shows, in the absence of local news sources, ordinary citizens are far less likely to be informed about what is actually happening, both locally and nationally. Instead, they turn to social media, radio shows or cable news sources which may or may not be verified. This allows citizens to fall prey to the spread of unsubstantiated information and feeds the idea of “fake news,” as people begin to lose trust in their national government and institutions. The implications for our democracy are dire. The more people lose trust in our shared political and media institutions, the more divisions appear in our country.

Sullivan also sheds light on how technological innovation is not always a benefit. As broadcast and digital media have become increasingly dominant, many veteran reporters and journalists have been laid off, at great cost to the field and its practitioners. This is but one example of how new technologies can threaten employment in all manner of fields throughout the United States, especially as industries become more automated. As new technologies continue to develop, it is urgent that democratic governments focus on the costs they impose.

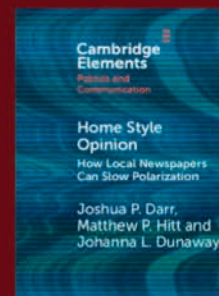
Nevertheless, even with this wider decline of local journalism, Sullivan points to local news organizations that are still producing great work, despite facing chronically low resources. What enables them to do so is often the help of the local community itself. Sullivan highlights the example of East Lansing Info (“ELI”), a nontraditional news organization in East Lansing, Michigan that is primarily composed of women who volunteer time to uncover local stories. While they receive no pay, these women collaborate to undertake the critical work necessary to keep their town informed. What’s more, many of their news reports have surfaced important scandals within their local government and community institutions, such as mercury spills, the city’s huge pension debt, and the misappropriation of funds by the city’s attorney general. Thanks to the tireless work of its volunteer reporters, ELI was able to directly inform the public about these matters.

Altogether, I’m walking away from Sullivan’s book with a new perspective on the key factors contributing to both the decline of journalism and the decline of informed democracy. Journalism bridges the information gap between the public and the government, which is vital in order to have an effective and successful democracy. Sullivan shows that without local journalism, our collective capacity to know the truth, uncover the clandestine mechanisms of power, and create connected communities is much the worse.

**For further reading...**

Check out BC Alum  
Joshua Darr’s

**Home Style Opinion:  
How Local Newspapers  
Can Slow Polarization**



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THE CLOUGH CENTER  
FOR THE STUDY OF  
CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

Jonathan Laurence, Director  
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SAVE THE DATE: MARCH 15-17, 2023  
CLOUGH SPRING SYMPOSIUM ON JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY



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