SBS Downtown Discussion Series to Focus on Trust in 'Post-Truth' Era

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
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In our current "post-truth" era of alternative facts and fake news, how do we maintain trust in each other, in our elections, in our journalists and media outlets, and in our governments and world leaders?

This fall, the UA College of Social and Behavioral Sciences is hosting a series of discussions with national experts who will explore the current state of American truth, trust and global relations. In addition to the experts from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, participants include the executive editor of The New York Times and the former head of counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State.

Titled "Truth and Trust in the Global Scene," the series will be held Oct. 11, Oct. 19 and Oct. 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the Fox Tucson Theatre, 17 W. Congress St.

This is the fifth year of the Downtown Series [1]. Previous years focused on happiness, food, immortality and privacy.

"When we sat down to discuss this year's theme, we couldn't escape the fact that the topics of elections, incivility, truth in the news, and global conflict are not only what everyone is concerned and talking about, it's also what our faculty study. So we are jumping right into these weighty and controversial topics," said John Paul Jones III, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences [2].

"Our faculty are prepared to weave breaking news into the conversations," Jones added. "At the same time, they will offer a sense of history, global connectedness and deeper analysis than people get from their daily searches on the web. The audience will leave the Fox having learned something that they couldn't from just watching the news."

The conversations are free and seating will be first-come, first-served. The public can reserve tickets for each event in advance through Eventbrite [3]. Tickets are also available at the Fox Tucson Theatre box office on the day of the event.

Below is a summary of the topics and speakers in this year's series:

Oct. 11 ? "The Future of Elections: Who and What Can We Trust"

As identity politics, partisan incivility, media and special interests reshape both the country and the vote, this discussion considers the pivotal role of trustworthiness in maintaining a democratic society and whether elections as we know them have a future.
This conversation will feature:

- Carolyn Lukensmeyer, executive director of the National Institute for Civil Discourse
- Kate Kenski, associate professor in the Department of Communication
- Samara Klar, assistant professor in the School of Government and Public Policy

The conversation will be moderated by Christopher Conover, a reporter and producer with Arizona Public Media.

**Oct. 19 ? "Redefining Journalism in the Post-Truth Era"**

In an age where the facts are up for grabs, The New York Times not only reports the news, but also frequently appears in the headlines for challenging government obfuscation and dishonesty. During this discussion, Nancy Sharkey, a professor of practice and associate director of the School of Journalism, will interview the executive editor of The New York Times, Dean Baquet, about redefining journalism and safeguarding its integrity in these unprecedented times.

**Oct. 26 ? "What the News Doesn't Tell You About Rising Global Conflict"**

While news coverage of conflict is plentiful, it often does not divulge the inside stories behind the rise in authoritarian rule, terrorism and civil war that shape much of our world today. This conversation reveals what the news won't about international politics, diplomacy, and the future of global conflict in its many guises.

Participants:

- Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, former head of counterterrorism for the U.S. Department of State
- Faten Ghosn, associate professor in the School of Government and Public Policy
- Alex Braithwaite, associate professor in the School of Government and Public Policy

The conversation will be moderated by Albert Bergesen, director of the School of Sociology.

The 2017 "Truth and Trust in the Global Scene" Downtown Series is sponsored by Tucson Medical Center, Arizona Public Media, and the Arizona Daily Star. Additional support comes from the UA Office of Global Initiatives; Steve and Nancy Lynn; Jo Ann Ellison and Barbara Starrett; Adib and Vivi Sabbagh; and Downtown Kitchen + Cocktails.

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[2] https://sbs.arizona.edu/