



Mind of State: The Curriculum

**A Socratic Course for Students and Citizens
on the Interface of Psychology and Politics
in Contemporary Issues**

by Betty Teng, Jonathan Kopp & Thomas Singer

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mindofstate.com

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OVERVIEW

Course Description:

This course explores the fertile and entangled intersection of politics and psychology through a Socratic method of inquiry. It is based upon a series of Mind of State podcast interviews hosted by Betty Teng and Jonathan Kopp. Each unit explores a highly charged contemporary conflict in a dialogic structure that is brought into greater focus with the accompanying questions.

Course Objectives:

At a time when we are being assaulted with multiple and seemingly insoluble social and political issues that flood us with deep emotions and psychological complexities, we, the citizens of our country, have been reduced to getting our information from soundbites. We are too often fed, via social media and an incessant 24/7 news cycle, overly simplistic, black and white thinking about nuanced socio-political issues. This course aims to create the much-needed space required to think more clearly and critically about these deep and ongoing conflicts.

“It’s a good thing that God, if he exists, and even if he doesn’t, gives us a place where we can think in peace. Perhaps that’s the whole point of prayer—to think to yourself in peace, to want nothing, to ask for nothing, but simply to sort out your own mind. That should be enough.”

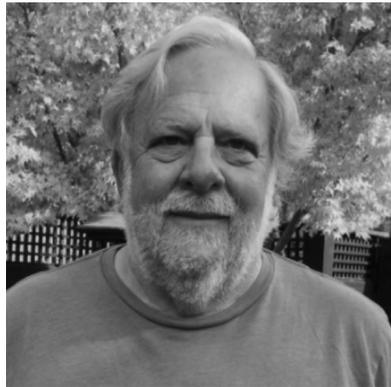
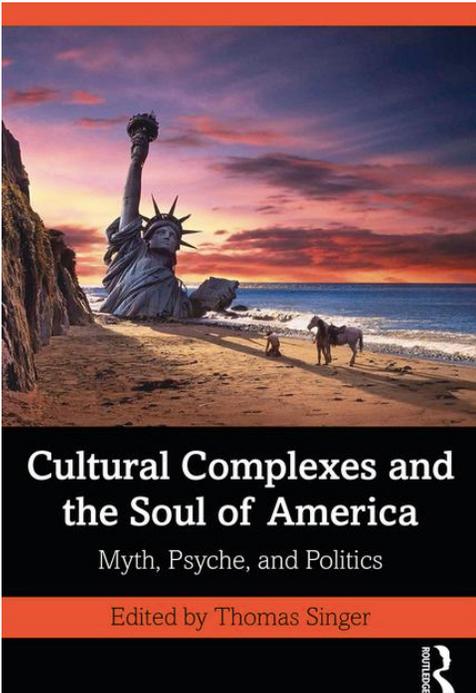
- Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead, by Olga Tokarczuk

Course Content:

The course has 17 units which can be studied as a whole or separately. Each unit consists of a conversation with an expert, a set of questions based on the conversation, and further references.

Cultural Complexes and the Soul of America

Guest: Thomas Singer



What underlying, deeply rooted conflicts – or “cultural complexes” – shape our country’s politics and collective psyche? Does the nation’s soul get forged in the political dynamics of cultural complexes playing themselves out? This notion provides a basic conceptual framework for the course and is discussed with Mind of State co-founder, Dr. Thomas Singer.

INTERVIEW:

mindofstate.com/cultural-complexes-the-soul-of-america

TRANSCRIPT:

mindofstate.com/cultural-complexes-and-the-soul-of-america-transcript

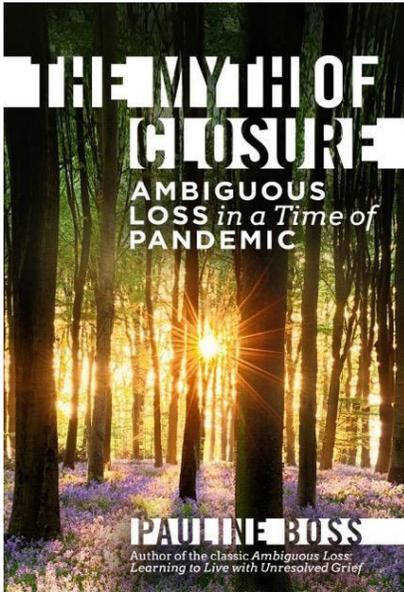
COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Why talk about “psyche” and “polis,” rather than psychology and politics?
2. Why talk of “psyche” in groups as an inner sociology?
3. What is a “cultural complex?”
4. Why speak of cultural complexes as a psychological filtering system?
5. Are cultural complexes normal or abnormal?
6. What are the characteristics of cultural complexes?
7. What does it mean to say a cultural complex is “autonomous”?
8. Do cultural complexes function autonomously?
9. Do the emotions of cultural complexes inhibit our ability to think?
10. Do cultural complexes selectively collect historical memory to amplify their point of view?
11. Is the thinking of cultural complexes simplistic or complex?
12. Is there a relationship between politics and soul?
13. How is soul forged in the playing out of cultural complexes?
14. What is the relationship of cultural complexes to the institutions of government?
15. What are the seven cultural complexes outlined in this talk?
16. Is our relationship to loss and trauma a cultural complex?
17. Are the language and thinking of politics and psychology similar to or different from one another?

Reference: *Cultural Complexes and the Soul of America*, edited by Thomas Singer, MD, Routledge, London.

Ambiguous Loss

Guest: Dr. Pauline Boss



Dr. Pauline Boss describes her groundbreaking research on ambiguous loss and its effects on both the individual and society, especially in a time of trauma fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic decline, climate change, and systemic racial injustice.

INTERVIEW:

mindofstate.com/ambiguous-loss-and-the-2020-pandemic-revisited

TRANSCRIPT:

mindofstate.com/ambiguous-loss-and-the-2020-pandemic-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the definition of “ambiguous loss?”
2. What ambiguous losses are we grappling with today?
3. How does a “mastery culture,” such as the United States, deal with ambiguous loss and increased uncertainty?
4. What is nonbinary thinking?
5. How does binary thinking express itself in politics? In psychology?
6. What opportunity is there in times of chaos?
7. How do elected officials deal with ambiguous loss?
8. What kind of political leaders are best suited to deal with ambiguous loss?
9. What is a paradigm shift?
10. How would one describe the legacy of America’s multigenerational history of unresolved loss?
11. How can we “own” our unresolved losses?
12. Can political leaders help us deal with unresolved and ambiguous losses?
13. What is the function of reckoning with loss?
14. What is abnormal and normal in grief?
15. How does ambiguous loss express itself in political life?

Reference: *The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic*, Pauline Boss, Norton, New York.

The End of Truth

Guest: Dr. Scotty McLennan



Maat is the Egyptian goddess of the truth and her emblem is a feather.



What is “truth” in the post-modern world -- where facts lie in the eye of the beholder and partisans turn to their own tribes for reporting that reaffirms their polarized world views? Dr. Scotty McLennan, an ordained minister, lawyer, professor, and former Dean of Religious Life at Stanford University, joins us for a conversation about the quest for objective truth and journalistic ethics amidst a sea of media fragmentation and moral relativism.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/the-end-of-truth

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/the-end-of-truth-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What is a post-truth world?
2. What kinds of truth are there?
3. What is the postmodern world?
4. How do we track truth online?
5. What is “journalistic” truth vs. “legalistic” truth?
6. Can you know anything for certain in the face of cultural relativism?
7. Is truth a function of power?
8. Do religions have the real truth?
9. Have we lost our legal, scientific, and religious notions of truth?
10. Do people listen to the news to learn more about what is happening in the world or to reaffirm their identity, their tribe, their belief system?
11. What happens to our understanding of democracy when we only listen to sources we agree with?
12. Do we have a vision of redemption in the United States?
13. What happens when we fail to see the humanity in “the other?”
14. What is the role of religion in our society now?
15. Does the left look down on religion?
16. Does every group have legitimate claim to having been subjugated?
17. In the United States, is there an “unum” in “e pluribus unum”?
18. Is there a place for teaching ethics and civics in our schools?

Reference: *Christ for Unitarian Universalists: A New Dialogue with Traditional Christianity*, Scotty McLennan, Skinner House Books, Boston.

Collective Trauma

Guest: Dr. Judith Herman



We typically think of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as afflicting an individual who has experienced a terrifying event, such as combat, sexual assault or the death of a child. But, a whole society can suffer from trauma as well — as with the COVID-19 pandemic or the historical impact of slavery. Dr. Judith Herman, whose three-stage trauma recovery model has guided therapists for over twenty years, explores the concepts and treatment of collective PTSD and intergenerational trauma.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/our-collective-trauma

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/our-collective-trauma-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Is trauma an individual or societal problem?
2. Can we apply what we know of the individual's experience of trauma to the collective experience of trauma (e.g. genocide, climate change, racial injustice, pandemic, economic collapse)?
3. Do we live in a society of dominance and subordination?
4. Can the injustices and inequities of a society be considered weaknesses of its collective immune system, or its preexisting conditions?
5. Is social support a predictor of resilience in trauma recovery for the individual?
6. Do we have medications to make trauma go away?
7. What are the three stages for the treatment of trauma?
8. Is safety a necessity as a first stage of trauma treatment?
9. What are some of the signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder?
10. What is hypervigilance?
11. How does it help to name shame, anger, and terror as prime emotional symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder?
12. Does it help to treat trauma survivors in a group setting? Why or why not?
13. How does physical and emotional isolation contribute to the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder?
14. What does it mean to "reckon with the past"?
15. Which are the most important symptoms of trauma? The emotional impact? The bodily sensations? The thoughts?
16. Is treatment of trauma like exorcism?
17. Is it possible to return to the person or group one was before the experience of trauma?
18. What kind of grieving is necessary in the treatment of trauma?
19. What is a "survivor mission"?
20. Can survivors of trauma heal?
21. Can the injustice experienced by survivors of trauma be addressed?
22. How can what we have learned about the treatment of individuals who have survived trauma be applied to collective trauma, such as the Civil War or the Jim Crow era that followed?
23. Are the truth and reconciliation commissions in nations, such as South Africa, effective for treating collective trauma?
24. Are reparations necessary for those who have suffered collective trauma?
25. What would "reckoning with the past" look like in the healing phase of collective trauma treatment of racism in the United States?
26. What is the difference between bearing witness/grieving the experience of trauma vs. "moving on"?
27. What does it mean to say "the United States is a nation founded on unresolved grief"?
28. Is it important to deal with trauma by oneself or to find a support system?

Reference: *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, Judith Lewis Herman, Basic Books, New York.

Justice, Rage and Peace

Guest: Eric Ward



How do we combat the rising tide of fascism and defuse the racism and antisemitism that fuels it? Civil Rights leader Eric Ward, of the Western States Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center, shares his vision for how we process the rage of injustice in our collective search for equality and peace.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/justice-rage-and-peace

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/justice-rage-and-peace-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What creates a favorable climate for the rise of authoritarianism?
2. What are the drivers of authoritarianism?
3. How does authoritarianism organize anxiety into power?
4. What is the difference between white supremacy (system of exploitations—a narrative to organize society) and white nationalism (removal of all non-whites)?
5. Why are 1960's so important in terms of the history of white supremacy?
6. How is White nationalism rooted in antisemitism?
7. Is white nationalism driven by hatred and/or is it a useful weapon for organizing?
8. Are white nationalists primarily dropouts, poor and rural whites?
9. Are white nationalists identifiably different from most Americans?
10. Are white nationalists successful because of the inability of the Left to build consensus?
11. Does authoritarianism build on binary thinking that sees things in terms of purity and black- and-white?
12. How do you face hatred without getting sucked into it?
13. Is part of the national problem the inability to think in terms of the longer arc (70 years) vs very short time frames (3mos-1 year)?
14. Is 2021 better than 1920 is better than 1820 in US? What type of society do we want in 2021?
15. Has life been unfair to the majority of people living on the planet?
16. Should revenge for injustices be our goal?
17. What does one do with the intense feeling of rage about injustice?
18. How is one able to find the space “to think” when feeling rage?
19. Whom do you negotiate peace with? Your friend or your enemy?
20. Does one sometimes have to let go of the rage for justice in order to get peace?
21. What can an individual do to make a world of rage and injustice better?

References: “As White Supremacy Falls, White Nationalism Stands Up”, Eric Ward, Pop Culture Collaborative; “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism”, Eric Ward, The Public Eye.

Can Voting & Democracy Survive the Internet?

Guest: Nate Persily



Does social media foster debate or threaten democracy? Stanford Law Professor Nate Persily discusses the Internet's impact on voting, democracy, and healthy elections in a time of great civil unrest.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/can-voting-and-democracy-survive-the-internet

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/can-voting-and-democracy-survive-the-internet-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Is voting the foundation of democracy?
2. How has technology affected voting and campaigns?
3. How has the internet affected democracy?
4. What is the psychological effect of targeted political advertising on campaigns?
5. Does foreign political advertising in the United States exploit issues that are socially divisive, such as gun rights, immigration, race?
6. What makes social media so unique and potent in terms of its impact on elections?
7. What does neuroscience tell us about the appeal to, and effect on, emotional vs rational functioning on the internet?
8. Is the blurring of news and entertainment increased by the stripping of cues that identify the source of information?
9. Does the two party system safeguard or weaken a healthy democracy?
10. Why should Americans have faith in voting?
11. Why is America's voter participation rate lower than other democratic nations?
12. What is the strategy behind an election boycott?
13. What is the impact on our democracy when the candidate who loses the popular vote wins the election?
14. What contributes to people losing confidence in the vote?
15. Can voting be audited effectively?
16. What are the pros and cons of early voting?
17. How do we protect the integrity of campaigns and elections from the influence of inaccurate information spread via social media?
18. Do fear and outrage tend to divide and polarize the population?
19. Does the basic infrastructure of democracy work?
20. How do we shift our perceptions to deal with delayed reporting of results in close elections?
21. How does one counteract unfounded conspiracy theories contaminating voter confidence?
22. What steps can voters take to ensure that their vote will be accurately accounted for?

Reference: *Social Media and Democracy*, edited by Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker.

Perfect Storm: Climate, Race, and Covid

Guest: Dr. Adrienne Hollis



INTERVIEW:

mindofstate.com/perfect-storm-climate-race-and-covid

TRANSCRIPT:

mindofstate.com/perfect-storm-climate-race-and-covid-transcript



The adverse impacts of climate change have disproportionately burdened poor and underserved communities of color in the US. Dr. Adrienne Hollis, Senior Climate

Justice and Health Scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, explores the notion of a “syndemic,” or the union of multiple, simultaneous, interconnected crises. She does so in the context of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn and racial injustice.

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the impact of climate change on communities that have already been adversely impacted by environmental pollution?
2. Is there a racial component to climate change?
3. Is denial about climate change linked to denial about institutional racism?
4. What does “syndemic” mean?
5. Is there an intersection between structural racism, climate change, environmental pollution, economic injustice and Covid-19?
6. Are we capable of dealing with the perfect storms of syndemics?
7. What are the barriers to healthy adaptation to syndemics?
8. What helps people stay motivated in activist work?
9. What does “intersectionalism” mean?
10. How are Covid-19 and the George Floyd murder related?
11. Is there a “class” factor in response to the pandemic?
12. How do we measure our health/wellbeing as individuals and as communities?
13. What is an “environmental needs assessment”?
14. What does it mean to be “siloeed”?
15. Is the “Green New Deal” siloeed”?
16. How does one develop a human centered approach to environmental justice?

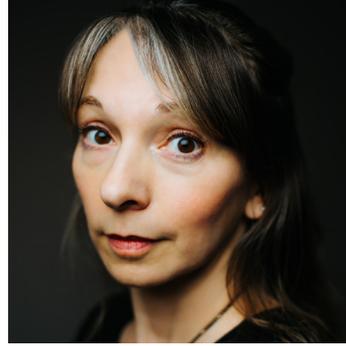
Reference: <https://blog.ucsusa.org/author/adrienne-hollis>.

Guns and Living Unarmed

Guest: Megan Doney



Stash of weapons seized from would-be mass killer in Atlanta, March 2021



What's the lesson plan for first day back in class after a school shooting? Megan Doney, an English professor at in Virginia, who has lived through the nightmare scenario of a school shooting, shares her personal story from that day and how she has processed

the trauma since then. In doing so, she reflects on the personal and political impact of violent events, like the January 6th siege on the US Capitol, which have traumatized the entire nation.

INTERVIEW:

mindofstate.com/living-unarmed

TRANSCRIPT:

mindofstate.com/living-unarmed-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. How does a rational person argue with an irrational individual?
2. How does one's perception of time shift in the midst of a traumatic event?
3. How does one's perception of reality shift in the midst of a traumatic event?
4. Does one experience fear in the midst of a traumatic event?
5. What sorts of physical sensations occur in the midst of a traumatic event?
6. What is the new normal after surviving a school shooting?
7. What changes as a result of surviving a school shooting?
8. Is living in a state of dangerousness a new normal for our culture?
9. Can one make sense of nonsense?
10. Can active shooter drills adequately prepare a person to survive a real-world event?
11. How can we take sensible measures to reduce gun violence?
12. Are the common sense gun reforms happening at a local level that are different than changes on a national level?
13. With regard to active shooting cases,
 - a) What does it mean to be safe?
 - b) What does it mean to be a man?
 - c) What does it mean to be free?
14. Are most active shooters men, or are perpetrators of mass shootings equally divided between men and women?
15. Are medications, video games, or the decline of the nuclear family responsible for the increase in school shootings?
16. What is gender retribution? Are school shootings often related to gender retribution?
17. Are girls and women more likely to hurt themselves or other people?
18. Are boys and men more likely to hurt other people or themselves?
19. What is it like to live where no place feels safe?
20. What does it mean and feel like to be a survivor?

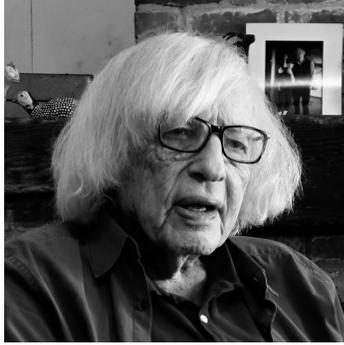
Reference: <https://www.creativenonfiction.org/authors/megan-doney>.

Cults and Losing Reality

Guest: Robert Jay Lifton



Mary Frank "Destinies"



Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, the foremost scholar of modern cult leaders and followers, explores the mind numbing phenomena of “malignant normality” and “losing reality” in which large numbers of people seem to lose their capacity to “test reality” when following a charismatic and authoritarian leader.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/sounding-the-alarm

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/sounding-the-alarm-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to talk about a breakdown in reality?
2. What is solipsistic reality?
3. What is presidential killing?
4. Can people simultaneously believe in two or more contradictory, antithetical ideas?
5. What is the difference between the manipulation of lies and those expressions of solipsistic reality in which one believes in falsehoods?
6. What allows a charismatic leader to bend a political narrative to motivate a supportive public?
7. What does it mean to “delegitimize?”
8. What is “narrative necessity?”
9. How is it possible to motivate people to ignore falsification?
10. Is there a long standing tradition of American distrust of the government or governance of any kind?
11. How is it possible to be an anti-government outsider as a sitting president or other elected official?
12. Is it possible to be a cult-like and mafia-like leader at the same time?
13. Are there transgressions that a democracy cannot sustain?
14. Is it harder to lie about the truth of people dying of a disease than it is to lie about ideas or conversations?
15. Did the COVID-19 pandemic undermine Trump’s claim to the truth of an unreality?
16. What does it mean to be a witnessing person—either as a professional or as a citizen?
17. What is malignant normality?
18. In what ways did the Trump presidency cultivate a malignant normality?

Reference: Lifton, Robert Jay. *Losing Reality: On Cults, Cultism, and the Mindset of Political and Religious Zealotry*. New York: The New Press, 2019.

Activism and The Politics of Care

Guest: Deva Woodyly



Dr. Deva Woodyly, New School professor of Politics, unpacks how social movements, even rebellion, are essential to progress, as they keep our leaders focused on the people they serve, rather than on preserving their own power.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/the-politics-of-care

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/the-politics-of-care-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. How are social movements different from institutional political processes?
2. Are social movements effective?
3. Are social movements episodic disrupters or an essential ongoing part of the democratic process?
4. If institutions tend to become self-serving rather than focused on a mission, are social movements corrective to that oligarchic tendency of institutions?
5. Do people feel helpless in the face of political processes?
6. Do social movements help convert a sense of helplessness into effective action?
7. During the course of American history have social movements played an important role in shaping political process?
8. Does direct action and militant protest help secure concessions with established institutions?
9. Does militant protest preclude working with voices inside institutions?
10. What is the relationship between working in the streets and working in policy/government?
11. What is an organizer?
12. Are people under 35 more comfortable with “socialism” than people over 65?
13. Are people skeptical about values and the ability to make effective change?
14. Have values become sound-bites?
15. What is the politics of care?
16. What is the “electoral justice” movement and what does it want to accomplish?
17. Do social movements focus on the long hard work of effecting change over time or the one big moment with instantaneous change?
18. Are we making people feel more effective with social movements?
19. Is a goal of social movements to build power through getting citizens engaged at local as well as national level?
20. What is a “democratic citizenry”?
21. Do social movements change peoples’ expectations about what they can do in government?
22. Is abstention from voting an effective form of political protest?
23. Do the national elections matter to a lot of peoples’ actual lives?
24. Is it more effective to show people their power at the local or national level?

Reference: *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance*, Deva Woodyly, Oxford University Press, 2015.

The Case for Radical Openness

Guest: Dr. Anton Hart



What if we listened more carefully, instead of waiting for the chance to state our case? What if we engaged in dialogue, instead of debate, and allowed ourselves to be moved by another person's expression and context? Dr. Anton Hart discusses his concept of "radical openness" and how it could help enhance interpersonal understanding between therapists and patients, politicians and constituents, and a country caught in the Red/Blue divide.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/the-case-for-radical-openness

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/the-case-for-radical-openness-transcript

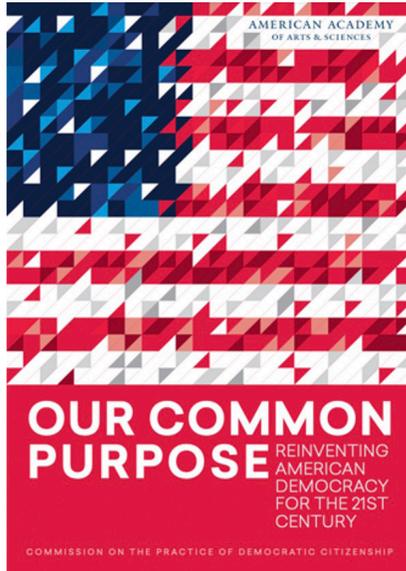
COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. How do we go forward in a divided state?
2. How do we bridge private and public communications?
3. What is "radical openness?"
4. How do we listen to the truth that resides in another person?
5. What does it mean to engage in a genuine conversation?
6. What can we relinquish when we engage in conversation?
7. Is radical openness about being extra self-disclosing?
8. What does it mean to say, "What can I relinquish in order to take the other person in?"
9. How does radical openness apply to politics and the non psychotherapeutic world, including corporations?
10. What is "radical transparency" in corporate and political communications?"
11. Is there a connection between "radical transparency" and "radical openness?"
12. When do people stop listening to one another?
13. What is the difference between private and public openness?
14. Can we bring "radical openness" into the political sphere?
15. Is "radical openness" the same as empathy?
16. As people make all sorts of prior assumptions about one another, is there a way to prepare people for "radical openness?"
17. How is "curiosity" a threat?
18. Can you tell people to be more open and let go of their preconceptions?
19. Is it normal for people to feel "armored" in the presence of people different from themselves?
20. Does leadership make a difference in how people listen to one another?
21. When does "radical openness" become impossible?
22. Does lying break down "radical openness?"
23. Does shame interfere with "radical openness?"
24. When dialogue feels impossible, can we find small ways of restarting a conversation? Is the breakdown of conversation an opportunity as well as a loss?
25. Can we listen to the ways in which we relate to other people might cause injury?
26. Can "radical openness" help with political divisions?

Reference: https://apsa.org/apsaa-publications/vol51no1-TOC/html/vol51no1_09.xhtml.

Restoring Faith in Democracy

Guest: Eric Liu



Democracy relies not only on the rule of law, but also on a shared set of beliefs and values about how we choose to govern ourselves. Eric Liu, CEO of Citizen University and co-author of *Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century*, discusses his prescription for bolstering our collective faith in the ongoing experiment of American democracy.

INTERVIEW:

mindofstate.com/restoring-faith-in-democracy

TRANSCRIPT:

mindofstate.com/restoring-faith-in-democracy-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Has your faith in Democracy been shaken? Or did you not have faith in democracy to begin with?
2. What is civic religion?
3. Is democracy a matter of belief?
4. Does civic faith need to be renewed?
5. What do our democratic ideals call us to do in engagement with civic and political life?
6. How do we repair a breach in democracy when it feels like there is a right side and a wrong side and we can't agree on facts?
7. What drives willingness to believe in a lie?
8. What fueled our constitutional crisis during the Trump presidency?
9. How do we rehumanize our politics?
10. Is the American democratic experiment coming to an end?
11. How do we expand participation in the political process?
12. Why would those who have power agree to expand democracy to those who don't have power?
13. What does it mean historically to say that we are facing a "fourth founding" of democracy? What are the previous three?
14. What is the aim of democracy?
15. What does it mean to say that we have become "hyperindividualistic"?
16. What is Citizen University?
17. What are the strengths and weaknesses of younger generations (millennials and gen x) in their attitudes about democracy?
18. What does "citizenship" mean in terms of the practice of democracy?

Reference: *Become America: Civic Sermons on Love, Responsibility and Democracy*, Eric Liu, Sasquatch Books, Seattle.

Conspiracy Without Theory

Guest: Dr. Nancy Rosenblum



The Rumor by Andreas Paul Weber



Alien life? JFK's murder? The Moon landing? These are classic topics for conspiracy theorists, who gather data, connect dots, and see where the evidence leads. But with more recent conspiracy theories, such as Birtherism, Pizzagate, QAnon, evidence is optional. For the new conspiracists, mere assertion

is all that is needed to draw outrageous conclusions and spread untruths. Dr. Nancy Rosenblum, author of *A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy*, discusses the danger behind this new, loose standard of proof.

INTERVIEW:

mindofstate.com/conspiracy-without-theory

TRANSCRIPT:

mindofstate.com/conspiracy-without-theory-transcript

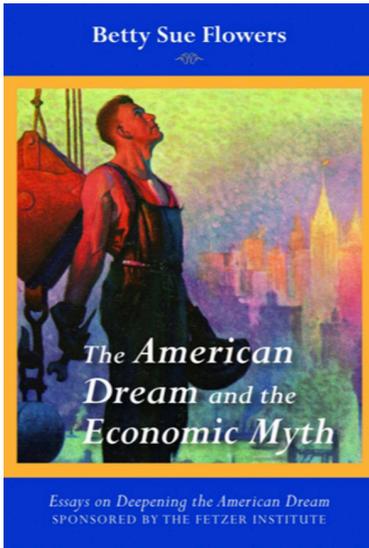
COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between older conspiracy theories and the newer conspiracism?
2. Do conspiracy theories tend to originate with the powerless?
3. Under what conditions does conspiracism emerge?
4. Are conspiracy theories and conspiracism unique to the political right?
5. What is the relationship between evidence, conspiracism, and “deeper truth?”
6. What motivates conspiracism: fear or performative aggression?
7. Is conspiracism a way of finding identity, belonging, and political participation?
8. How is conspiracism a substitute for governance?
9. What is the future of conspiracism?
10. What is the difference between mistrust and delegitimization?
11. What does it mean to say, “we need to be startled into thought?”

Reference: A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy, Nancy L. Rosenblum and Russell Muirhead, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

America's Economic Myth

Guest: Betty Sue Flowers



A debate has raged in the US over protecting our health versus preserving our wealth. Can our faith in the almighty dollar withstand a deadly pandemic and climate change? Dr. Betty Sue Flowers explores the roots of America's economic myth and differentiates it from preceding myths that dominated the understanding of what is most important in society.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/americas-economic-myth

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/americas-economic-myth-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What is a myth?
2. What is the dominant American myth now?
3. What is the highest value of the economic myth?
4. What is the highest value of the ecological myth?
5. What is the highest value of the hero myth?
6. What is the highest value of a religious myth?
7. What happens in contemporary life when the hero myth and the religious myth get layered on top of one another?
8. What are the historical origins of the economic myth?
9. Is the story we tell about the future a fiction?
10. Does the story we tell about the future shape the present?
11. What is "narrative need"?
12. Is there a relationship between love, beauty, and truth?
13. How does love move us vs being right or wrong or winner or loser?
14. Is winning or losing the highest value?
15. How do we choose more consciously the story we tell ourselves about the past, present, and future?

Reference: *The American Dream and the Economic Myth: Essays on Deepening the American Dream*, sponsored by the Fetzer Institute www.hillcountryalliance.org/uploads/HCA/BettySueFlowers.pdf.

When Myth Becomes History

Guest: Jules Cashford



Is the freedom not to wear a mask what America's Founders had in mind with the phrase, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" Is Donald Trump a modern day mad King George III? British psychoanalyst and mythologist, Jules Cashford, discusses the dangers of conflating myth with history and what happens when leaders begin to believe they are bigger than the mere mortals they actually are.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/when-myth-becomes-history

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/when-myth-becomes-history-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Does freedom mean different things to people in the US vs other countries?
2. What does it mean to identify with an archetype such as "the king?"
3. Does the moral character of the leader have consequences for the people and for the land itself?
4. What happened to the land of Thebes when Oedipus married his mother and became King of Thebes?
5. Does the land suffer from the king's moral failures?
6. Is there a link between the kind of thinking that sees the leader and the land as inseparably bound together and the spread of the pandemic in the United States?
7. What does it mean to say that "history has become myth" or "myth has become history"? Or that myth has overtaken history?
8. What does it mean for the myth of the US Constitution to become concretized in history — as, for example, with the 2nd Amendment and the current interpretation of the "right to bear arms"?
9. If the Constitution is taken as a "sacred text," is there room for it to evolve or to be further amended?
10. How do we reconcile the freedom to wear or not wear masks and the responsibility to the wellbeing of others? Is this a return of the notion of freedom to "the great wilderness?"
11. Was Trump identified with the archetype of kingship in his Presidency?
12. What is the shadow of freedom?
13. When history becomes myth, how does it become dangerous?
14. Can the emotional passion associated with the mythic level of reality be contained?
15. What helps contain the deep emotional energies of the mythic level of reality, such as the myth of freedom?
16. What does it mean to concretize a myth?
17. How does one banish or deflate a leader who has become too big?
18. Have we become addicted to chaos and the ever increasing noise surrounding events?
19. Can we reset to a less-inflated and hyper amplified news cycle?
20. Can one be convinced that they are delusional or that they been taken over by a myth?
21. Do we need to go into detox to get over our addiction to an inflated character and inflated times?

Reference: *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, Jules Cashford and Anne Baring, Penguin Books, London.

Analyzing the Election

Guest: Michael A. Cohen



As the dust settles on the 2020 presidential election, Boston Globe columnist, Michael A. Cohen, discusses the politics, the polls, Trump, Trumpism, what it all says about the US electorate, and what we might expect in the Biden Presidency.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/analyzing-the-election **TRANSCRIPT:** mindofstate.com/analyzing-the-2020-election-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Was there a global exhale of relief after Trump lost the US Presidential election of 2020?
2. How do professional political people and everyday citizens sustain energy and focus during and after exhausting elections?
3. Was democracy at stake in the 2020 election?
4. Do elections ever stop?
5. In the midst of feeling bombarded, overstimulated, and overwhelmed how does one make space to think in the midst of political struggle and division?
6. Was Trump more engaged in the minute to minute chaos with no long game in mind and is Biden more focused on the long term?
7. What is it like to live with a narcissist when one's sense of reality is constantly being gaslighted?
8. Are the capacity to reflect and be self-aware useful qualities in a president?
9. Are partisanship and polarization defining characteristics of American politics today?
10. Does a celebrity president engage more people in politics?
11. Did the 2018 and 2020 elections represent a backlash against Trump and Trumpism?
12. What is reactivity in politics?
13. Can polarization and division in US politics be bridged?
14. Do the Senate and the Electoral College privilege the white minority?
15. Is incumbency powerful?
16. Is the world more safe and secure than it has ever been before?
17. What are Americans afraid of? Terrorism, nuclear weapons, Russia, and China?
18. Should Americans be more focused on domestic threats, such as health care, gun violence, the opioid crisis, and affordable housing?
19. Do Americans believe that the government should be used to help people in times of need?
20. How do issues of identity and security get mixed up in US politics and psychology?
21. Are identity issues more powerful on the left or right in US politics?
22. Is educational attainment an indicator of partisan affiliation in the US?
23. Is educational attainment a determinant of economic achievement in the US?
24. Did policy, the debates, or the conventions impact the results of the 2020 presidential election?
25. Was the presidential election a referendum on Trump?
26. Should the presidency be about personality or policy?
27. Are Americans feeling hopeful or hopeless about their condition?

Reference: Clear and Present Safety: The World Has Never Been Better and Why That Matters to Americans, Michael A. Cohen and Micah Zenko, Yale University Press, New Haven.

The Wrap Up

Betty Teng, Jonathan Kopp & Thomas Singer



Trump overblown on Insurrection Day, January 6, 2021

In this season finale of Mind of State, hosts Betty Teng and Jonathan Kopp, along with their co-founder, Tom Singer, look back at season 2 as a time of extraordinary intensity, when the country wrestled with its demons and angels. The months leading up to and after the 2020 election were so filled with emotion, rancor, and conflict that digesting this season's themes, through-lines, and takeaways might be the work of generations. This wrap-up episode begins that process by providing some much-needed room to think.

INTERVIEW: mindofstate.com/its-a-wrap

TRANSCRIPT: mindofstate.com/its-a-wrap-transcript

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. Does the discussion of politics and psychology together make for an easy, natural mix?
2. Has COVID-19 hung over everything since March, 2020?
3. What ambiguous losses have gone along with COVID-19?
4. Was the 2020 Presidential election primarily about policy or Trump?
5. What does “syndemic” mean?
6. What happens when we talk past each other?
7. What is “toxic masculinity”?
8. How can we have a conversation with those with whom we disagree?
9. Has social media become an engine of reactivity and emotion rather than thoughtful reflection?
10. What has the effect of COVID-19 and other traumatic events had on the body politic?
11. Are we in danger of authoritarianism in the United States?
12. Are we in danger of losing the foundation of democracy in truth in the United States?
13. What is the appeal of authoritarianism?
14. What does it take to deal with the rising threat of authoritarianism in the United States?
15. What is the loss being expressed by people who embrace “Make America Great Again”?
16. How do we get beyond anger even while we are dealing with anger?
17. How do we manage the white nationalism that has been unleashed and was on display in the January 6 insurrection?
18. Does the trauma of the United States today have its origins in the Civil War?
19. Are people yearning for a different way of living?
20. Is politics a calling?
21. Is the process of politics corrosive?

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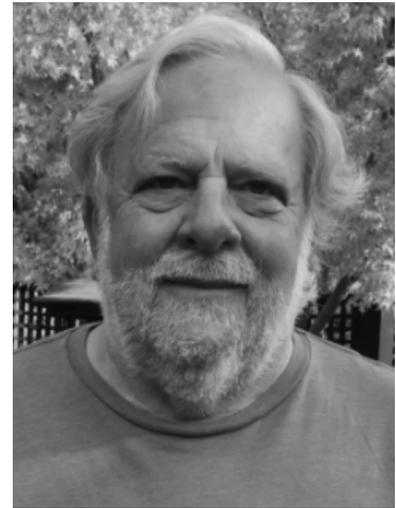
22. Have our US politicians gotten “lost at sea?”
23. Are the health vs. wealth priorities of our country engaged in an ongoing battle?
23. Will we continue to be a nation of unresolved grief?
24. Are we living in a time when things are out of proportion?
25. Is there a danger when our leaders begin to believe they are larger-than-life?
26. How did Trump’s myth of himself become the myth of so many people in the United States?
27. Did the pandemic break down Trump’s myth of himself and his claims to unreality when they ran into a force of nature that was bigger than he was?
28. Do you negotiate peace with your friends or your enemies?
29. Does rage inflate us?
30. Is there a way out of rage when groups are enraged?
31. In the long arc of history, was 2020 better than 1920, or 1820?
32. How can we best digest the important issues that have surfaced during the feverish nightmare we have lived through?



Betty P. Teng, LMSW, MFA, is a psychoanalyst and trauma therapist who has worked extensively with survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and childhood molestation. She is one of the authors of the New York Times bestseller, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*. Ms. Teng has spoken and written on trauma and its impacts for various conferences and media outlets, including *Slate* and *Vox*.



Jonathan Kopp is a communications strategist specializing in issue and positioning campaigns for candidates, causes, companies, and countries. He is a Partner at Finsburg Glover Hering (“FGH”) a leading, global strategic communications and public affairs firm. Jonathan was a member of the Obama for America 2008 National Media Team, the Opposition Research & Rapid Response Team of the 1992 Clinton/Gore “War Room”, and the Clinton Administration White House staff.



Thomas Singer, MD, is a psychiatrist and Jungian psychoanalyst. He is the editor of a series of books exploring cultural complexes, including *The Cultural Complex*, *Placing Psyche*, *Listening to Latin America*, *Europe’s Many Souls*, *Cultural Complexes and the Soul of America*, and *Cultural Complexes in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan*. He is President of National ARAS, an online archive of symbolic imagery that has created *The Book of Symbols*.