MEDIA DEMOCRACY DAYS 2019

Counter Populisms

PROGRAM GUIDE
Program at a Glance

Media Democracy Days 2019 will mark the 18th anniversary of the MDD program, a signature event for independent and democratic media in Canada.

Counter Populisms! is a response to the rising tide of authoritarian, right-wing populisms that aim to limit democratic action and threaten social change. Populist actions have a long and honourable history among progressive social movements around the world, and yet, in recent years, populism has come to be identified almost entirely with a politics of reaction, authoritarianism, and the rise of strong-man politics. In response, the mobilization of a popular politics ready to respond to the devastating implications of climate change, while mobilizing progressive voices and actions in support of indigenous communities, democratic media, and a politics of equity and justice is vitally important for our shared social futures.

Toward this end, MDD 2019 is organized around the theme, Counter Populisms!, in order to highlight actions, ideas, resources and networks that aim to reclaim populism for those concerned with democratic social action in response to the pressing concerns shaping our lives. MDD 2019 will host three events including:

**When Facts Fail: Competing Visions of Climate Populism**, with Shane Gunster, Bob Neubauer, Paul Saurette and Shannon Daub

**Trumping Right-wing Populism Canadian Style**, with a keynote and fireside chat with Dr. Barbara Perry and Am Johal, moderated by Tara Mahoney

**Face to Face(book) with Christopher Wylie**, a student-exclusive event with the Cambridge Analytica whistleblower

All three events are united in offering a platform to explore how popular actions and alliances can be mobilized together, to challenge and contest the alignment of populism with right-wing movements, including the alt-right. At the centre of this work is the need to change how politics is imagined today, to know the media, in order that we can be the media that will change the media and our hopes and possibilities for the future.
How does the rise of populism shape debates about climate and energy in Canada? Can left visions of ecological populism combat disinformation and challenge the forces of extractive populism?

Populism has become an increasingly prominent force in Canadian political life, with significant implications for how the public engages with the intersecting politics of climate change and energy. In a panel discussion featuring Shane Gunster, Bob Neubauer, and Paul Saurette, with respondent Shannon Daub, these authors of a forthcoming book will discuss how competing visions of extractive and ecological populism are shaping political debate in Canada.

While governments, the fossil fuel industry and conservative media and think-tanks have aggressively mobilized populist rhetoric to position tar sands expansion and pipelines as part of the ‘national interest’, the resistance to extractivism has also drawn upon populist themes to describe the democratic rights of Indigenous nations, local communities and citizens to defend their lands – and the common good – from those forces which threaten it.

What dangers and opportunities does populism hold for Canadian climate politics? How does it enable new forms of climate denial? Does it also open up new possibilities for mobilization and engagement beyond debates over climate science?

Shane Gunster teaches in the School of Communication at SFU, is a research associate with the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, and his work focuses upon the intersection of climate and energy politics in news media and advocacy communication.

Bob Neubauer is a Lecturer in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He researches the political economy of energy development, resource industry-funded civil society networks, and the media strategies of environmentalist and pro-oil advocacy groups.

Paul Saurette is a professor at the School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa where he researches and teaches on a variety of topics including ideology and rhetoric, political communication, populism, the conservative and progressive movements in North America, and a wide range of social and political theory.
While we would like to blame Donald Trump for the rise of the extreme right in Canada, there are a host of endogenous factors that have rendered Canada vulnerable to this trend. Our own breed of right-wing populism pre-dates the election of Trump and takes a peculiar yet also menacing form, ranging from political and media narratives that vilify newcomers and Muslims, et al., to social media platforms that breed fear and anxiety through purposive campaigns of misinformation.

After contextualizing the resurgence of right-wing extremism in Canada, Barbara Perry will offer a number of strategies that might be employed to challenge the current expression of hate fueled by the movement.

Barbara Perry is a Professor in the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and the Director of the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism.

Am Johal is Director of SFU's Vancity Office of Community Engagement and board member with 221A Gallery, the Indian Summer Festival and the Bloom Group. He is also an Associate of SFU's Centre for Dialogue, SFU's Institute for the Humanities.

Tara Mahoney is currently the Climate Change Communication Fellow at the David Suzuki Foundation.
The New Yorker calls him "a pink-haired, nose-ringed oracle sent from the future". Best known for his role in setting up – and then taking down – the cyberwarfare firm Cambridge Analytica, Chris has been listed in TIME100 Most Influential People in the World, Forbes' 30 Under 30, Politico's 50 Most Influential People in Politics and Business Insider's 100 Coolest People in Tech.

Named as "the millennials' first great whistleblower," his revelations exposing the rampant misuse of data rocked Silicon Valley and forced numerous Fortune 500 companies to overhaul cybersecurity and user privacy practices. Congress held its first ever hearings on the impact of social media on democracy and Facebook experienced the largest single-day share value drop in American corporate history – twice.

Don't miss Christopher Wylie in conversation about the real and present digital threats facing students today. After the conversation, there will be a moderated audience Q&A.

This event is open exclusively to high school and post-secondary students. Student ID is required for admission.
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SFU FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION, ART AND TECHNOLOGY | SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

VPL

Vancouver Public Library

THE MDD TEAM

Stuart Poyntz
Frederik Lesage
Ahmed Al-Rawi
Hanna Araza
OUR HISTORY

The Media Democracy Project works hard to create a significant presence for noncommercial media in Canada. Our small team brings diverse communities together with leading media makers, activists, and scholars to discuss the relationship between media and democracy.

Since 2001, our annual conference, Media Democracy Days (MDD), has become the signature event for alternative, independent, and democratic media in Canada. MDD has since expanded into a multi-day event presented by the School of Communication at SFU, OpenMedia.ca, and the Vancouver Public Library. In 2012, we launched The CounterCulture Speaker Series in partnership with SFU’s Institute for the Humanities and School of Communication to extend our reach beyond MDD proper. CounterCulture engages the public in critical debate on issues relating to art, media and politics through free bi-monthly film screenings and lectures. Finally, our advocacy is backed by our rich history of research into media democracy, through projects such as NewsWatch Canada and the Global Media Monitoring Project.

Throughout this history, we have approached the project of media reform with a three-pronged ambition:

Know the media by engaging in critical, progressive, cross-cultural, and intergenerational policy dialogue

Be the media by working directly with local media makers to produce messages that intervene in cultural and political life

Change the media by collaborating with community members to create progressive coalitions and actionable political goals

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