This retreat addresses the role of technology in the democratic crisis. After three decades of unrestrained “disruption” of markets, societies, and politics, the Internet industries are finally facing serious public scrutiny and political debate about regulation. These developments coincide with grave concerns about democratic backsliding, after decades of political polarization, cultural and racial backlash to societal changes, and growing anti-democratic sentiment in the public.

In our time together, we will consider the question of how scholars of political communication should respond through their research and teaching. Research sessions will discuss the challenge of public-facing research. We’ll consider what imperative might exist for the academy to reorient toward solving applied problems associated with technology and democracy, what the most urgent problems are, and how scholars committed to improving the state of democracy can best navigate the academic incentive system, which prioritizes theoretical advance over public problem-solving. In sessions on teaching, we will consider techniques for teaching in a time of polarization, incivility, and intolerance of disagreement. We’ll also discuss the challenges and opportunities of AI in education, and what we learned from the forced experiment of video-based teaching and learning during the pandemic, now that we have mainly returned to the physical classroom.

The retreat is designed for informal discussion and interaction by all. The role of panelists is to initiate discussion among all participants, rather than to present papers. The retreat is occasioned by the milestone of Bruce Bimber’s 30th year at UC Santa Barbara. It is organized by his former and current doctoral students.

Agenda

Thursday, Oct. 5

1:00pm: Welcome from the Organizing Committee and from Dean of Social Sciences Charles Hale
Keynote Address by Dave Karpf, George Washington University

2:30pm: Introductory 5-Minute Speed Talks by All Participants
(What do you teach? Study? What are you thinking most about? What do you want from this event?)
4:15pm: **Panel 1 - Teaching Tools and Techniques for the Current Technological Environment**
Moderator: Julien Labarre. *(Challenges and opportunities of generative AI; social media in the classroom; innovative techniques for assessment of student performance; alternatives to traditional assignments; use of video and the “flipped classroom” post-COVID, when so many of us came to hate video-based pedagogy…)*

6:30pm: Dinner at **The Club & Guesthouse**, UCSB campus

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**Friday, Oct. 6**

9:00am: **Panel 2 - Teaching in the Crisis of Democracy**
Moderator: Lauren Copeland. *(Civility in the classroom in a time of polarization; spirals of silence in the classroom; tolerance of unpopular views; the state of woke-ness; teaching in the context of student distress about the future; can we combat the erosion of democracy in our teaching…)*

10:15am: **Break**

10:30am: **Panel 3 - A Research Agenda for the Crisis of Democracy**
Moderator: Meredith Conroy. *(Urgent topics not being adequately studied; European perspectives; is there an imperative to be more public-facing and applied, even at the expense of “basic” science?; can we realistically design and test “interventions” in falsehoods, extremism, hate-speech, and so on…)*

11:30am: Lunch in the Conference Room

1:00pm: **Panel 4 - Obstacles to Public-Facing Research**
Moderator: Jessica Feezell. *(How could the academy be more supportive of public-facing research? tenure and promotion criteria; publishing; funding; backlash, especially threats to women; ethics of working with corporations who are part of the problem…)*

3:00pm: **Closing Remarks - Bruce Bimber**

4:30pm: Wine Tasting at **Grassini Family Vineyards** Santa Barbara Tasting Room, 24 El Paseo

6:30pm: Dinner at **La Playa Azul Cafe**, 914 Santa Barbara Street
Participants
Lance Bennett, University of Washington
Bruce Bimber, UC Santa Barbara
Jennifer Brundidge, California State Univ., Chico
Daniel Cervantes, UC Santa Barbara
Meredith Conroy, Cal. State Univ., San Bernardino
Lauren Copeland, Baldwin Wallace University
Jennifer Earl, University of Arizona
Daniel Gomez, UC Santa Barbara
Ariel Hasell, University of Michigan
Dave Karpf, George Washington University
Karolina Koc-Michalska, Audencia University, France
Julien Labarre, UC Santa Barbara
Dan Lane, UC Santa Barbara
Shanshan Lu, UC Santa Barbara
Nancy Molina-Rogers, UC Santa Barbara
Hannah Overbye, UC Santa Barbara
Lisa Parks, UC Santa Barbara
Rob Patton, University of Utah
Andrea Römele, Hertie School of Governance, Germany
Rajkamal Singh, New York University
Galen Stocking, Pew Research Center
Jessica Timpany Feezell, University of New Mexico
Brian Weeks, University of Michigan
Magdalena Wojcieszak, UC Davis

Pending Participants
Francisco Brandão, Loughborough University, UK
Andy Chadwick, Loughborough University, UK
Joe Gardner, Gonzaga University
Kelly Garrett, Ohio State University
Sterling Lankford, UC Santa Barbara
Ilia Nikivorov, FLYR Labs
Cristian Vaccari, University of Edinburgh, UK

Suggested Hotels
We have special rates at the following hotels. We will reimburse participants for stays at these or comparably priced hotels (two nights for those coming from within the US, and three nights for those traveling internationally).

- **UCSB Guest House** (on campus)
- **Leta Hotel** (formerly Goodland in Goleta; use this link for the event rate, or ask for "UCSB Technology Society" discount)
- **The Upham Hotel** (downtown Santa Barbara; call and ask for the UCSB rate using the code "UCSB-CITS")

Organizing Committee
Meredith Conroy, California State University - San Bernardino | Lauren Copeland, Baldwin Wallace University | Jessica Feezell, University of New Mexico | Ariel Hasell, University of Michigan | Julien Labarre, UCSB | Bruce Bimber, UCSB

Financial Support
The retreat is sponsored by the Division of Social Sciences, the College of Letters and Science, the Center for Information Technology & Society, and the Department of Political Science at UCSB. It is also supported by the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.