

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute

AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



**FISCAL YEAR 2024
ANNUAL REPORT**





DEAR FRIENDS,

It is incredible to think that five years ago I was just joining the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and starting my position as the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute's inaugural director. From that time our community has grown, our work has deepened in scope and breadth, and our unique environment, designed to study and protect democracy, has been recognized throughout the world. I am proud to be part of this group and excited about our progress to date and our work to come.

We began the last year with the terrific news that SNF Agora won a \$6M federal grant to build out a civics education program for the 21st century. The funding is part of an effort by the U.S. Department of Defense's National Defense Education Program (NDEP) to bolster civics literacy. The grant is enabling us to grow our new Minor in Civic Life and our SNF Agora Academy—both of which had their first full run in the last academic year. Moving forward, we are excited to see what this expanded investment will yield in terms of innovative student projects, partnerships between faculty and students, and more.

Our work in supporting ideological diversity and encouraging substantive engagement across different viewpoints and backgrounds continues to expand in meaningful ways. One of our communities of practice, Creating a Conservative Pro-Democracy Agenda, united Republican election officials in several states in ongoing efforts to restore conservative trust in elections. The University Debate Initiative hosted seven debates in partnership with student groups where experts shared opposing views on thorny issues like affirmative action. And, through our many other events, we brought together diverse thinkers—Republican and Democratic, conservative and liberal, Jewish and Muslim, and more—to model civil dialogue and learn from each other.

Faculty from SNF Agora also continue to be on the forefront, and widely sought experts, for a variety of timely issues and topics including the war in Ukraine, political violence, and artificial intelligence. We are informing conversations and policy around these and more topics through publications, speaking engagements, research, and actionable solutions.

This year we grieved as a community for the loss of our friend and colleague, Catherine Pierre. Her insights, creativity, wit, and camaraderie are keenly missed—and honored daily through our continued work.

In the pages that follow, you will find snapshots of just a few of the highlight moments of our past year. Of course, they can only capture a small bit of the energy and resolve surrounding our work and community. I hope you are as inspired, curious, and excited as we are in sharing it with you.

Hahrie Han



Top: SNF Agora Director Hahrie Han and SNF Agora Fellow Scott Warren were a part of the GMF 2024 Brussels Forum.

Bottom: SNF Agora faculty are at the center of teaching and modeling civic engagement and civil discourse at Democracy Day (pictured) and throughout the year.

Front cover: An interactive art installation by Graham Projects, *Manifesting Civic Dreams: Baltimore*, was part of the Elijah E. Cummings Democracy and Freedom Festival this year. The installation featured a large floor map for participants to reflect on challenges, possibilities, and treasures in the many neighborhoods of Baltimore City.

OVERSIGHT

The SNF Agora Institute's community of scholars includes faculty and faculty affiliates, senior fellows, visiting fellows, student fellows, and many partners across the university, Baltimore City, the U.S., and the globe. Within its home at the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, the institute offers a robust academic environment, and this is reflected in our faculty's work. Their efforts are aimed at catalyzing transformative, multidisciplinary inquiry to understand factors that inhibit or enable pluralistic democracy and identify possible interventions.

SNF Agora faculty members were widely published during the past year, illustrating their role in informing scholarly and public debate and guiding thoughtful discourse. They offered their expertise throughout the world, including at the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, and the German Marshall Fund's Brussels Forum.

Eleven visiting fellows came to SNF Agora for the 2023-2024 academic year, bringing a variety of perspectives, experiences, and ideas to share with the university community. Eighteen faculty affiliates were involved with the institute's activities, reflecting diverse scholarly interests and hailing from Georgetown University, Oregon State University, University College London, and many departments throughout the Krieger School and Johns Hopkins University.

SNF Agora was also delighted to support 48 graduate and undergraduate students as student fellows, along with 10 postdoctoral fellows. Scholars assisted with research labs, served as teaching assistants, presented their own work through workshops, and participated in the events, courses, and outreach of the institute, adding tremendous value and scope to SNF Agora's efforts during the year. These young scholars, versed in the principles and practices of democracy and exposed to a range of scholarly perspectives, will enter their careers with a strong foundation in pluralistic thought.

DISCOVERY 2023-24

SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY



14 total tenure-line faculty;
11 visiting fellows; **18** faculty affiliates



48 student fellows &
10 postdoctoral fellows

CORE FACULTY IMPACT*

SCHOLARLY IMPACT



3 books



35 academic articles & book chapters



10 awards & fellowships received

PUBLIC-FACING OUTPUT



89 publicly oriented op-eds & essays in mainstream media



36 podcasts/ media appearances



64 media mentions** & **3.45B** potential news reach***



158 invited speaking engagements



171 expert engagements (strategy consultations, advisor invitations, etc.)

PUBLIC PARTNERS

A wide range of civil society and governmental organizations and leaders in the U.S., Asia, Australia, Europe, and Latin America sought expert advice and partnership with SNF Agora Institute faculty, including:



Windsor Castle



* Totals based on the work of 14 core faculty active in AY 2023-2024.

** Media mentions are for top 10 media outlets: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *The Economist*, *New Republic*, *Foreign Affairs*, *CNN*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Fox News*, and *Bloomberg*.

*** 3.45B potential news reach is based on audience counts for each news outlet, not actual clicks.

SNF Agora-RDI Dissident in Residence: Speaking out for global democracy

In Hong Kong, at the age of 16, Sunny Cheung started his fight for democracy. Who better, then, to provide insights and guidance to the young scholars of Johns Hopkins as they seek to understand the meaning and practice of democracy in the U.S. and around the world?

As the 2023-2024 SNF Agora-RDI Dissident in Residence, Cheung shared this foundational experience with Hopkins students, as well as his ongoing work in the use of civil disobedience for universal suffrage. In founding the Hong Kong Higher Institutes International Affairs Delegation, he mobilized hundreds of thousands of people to seek freedom and justice. In addition, Cheung has been named a Young Leader by the Pacific Forum, has testified before the U.S. Congress, the U.K. parliament, and the Taiwan Legislative Yuan; and has provided insights to media outlets that include *BBC World*, *Reuters*, *Al Jazeera*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Cheung's course, *The Last Stand—Hong Kong's Fight for Freedom Under China's Shadow*, enabled students to gain an understanding of the fight for democracy around the world, with insights unique to someone who experienced this struggle firsthand. Cheung also hosted and participated in events and classes throughout the university, including moderating a panel at the School of Advanced International Studies entitled “Economic and Political Prospects of Hong Kong.”

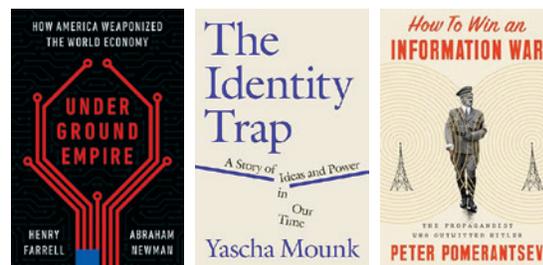
Through these many activities, as well as informal conversations across campuses, the SNF Agora-RDI Dissident in Residence role continues to illustrate SNF Agora's commitment to hosting dissidents from non-democratic societies, as well as providing platforms for dialogue across difference on campus.

SNF Agora faculty in the news, bookstores, and award lists

SNF Agora faculty are active researchers, educators, and practitioners making impacts in their fields. During the past year, their efforts received a number of honors. Martha S. Jones, PhD, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor, Professor of History, and a Professor at the SNF Agora Institute at The Johns Hopkins University, won the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin Fellowship. Lilliana Mason, PhD, SNF Agora Institute Associate Professor of Political Science, was honored with the Andrew Carnegie Fellowship. Monica Prasad, PhD, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Economic and Political Sociology, won the 2023 Siegfried Landshut Prize from the Hamburg Institute for Social Research. And Hahrie Han, PhD, inaugural director of the SNF Agora Institute, was invited to deliver the prestigious Tanner Lecture at Harvard University and the Vivek H. Murthy Distinguished Lecture for the National Institutes of Health.

The faculty continue to reach the public through pieces in major media outlets such as *The Atlantic*, *Business Insider*, *The Guardian*, *TIME*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. Their work was also accepted by prestigious academic journals including *Comparative Political Studies*, *Global Perspectives*, *Daedalus*, *Nature Human Behavior*, and *Modern American History*.

Three faculty produced well-reviewed books on topics that include the weaponization of the world economy, political information wars, and the role of identity in the contemporary battle of ideas.



Left to right: Henry Farrell (co-author), *Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World Economy*, 2023 (Henry Holt and Co.)

Yascha Mounk, *The Identity Trap: A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, 2023 (Penguin Press)

Peter Pomerantsev, *How to Win an Information War: The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler*, 2024 (Public Affairs)

Faculty grants use history and music to build democratic community

A screen in Athens shows a speaker describing ancient Acropolis paintings in American Sign Language (ASL) as visitors run their hands over replicated stone seats that may have once been at the historic site.

Oceans away, a Baltimore City band performs a classic Mexican song as immigrant neighbors come together to break bread and share local resources.

These are glimpses into two of the nine projects supported by the SNF Agora faculty grants program. The program funds discrete projects initiated by professors throughout the university; each project has its own unique focus and approach to exploring the question of democracy and how to build dialogue and community around it.

“An Archeology of Disability” was led by Jennifer Stager, PhD, an assistant professor in the Department of the History of Art and co-curated with David Gissen, professor of architecture and urban history at The New School, and Mantha Zarmakoupi, Morris Russell and Josephine Chidsey Williams Assistant Professor in Roman Architecture at The University of Pennsylvania. Stager’s faculty grant helped supported the creation of a research station that reconstructs elements of the Acropolis in Athens, using languages and tools developed by and for

contemporary people with disabilities to inform the past of this historic site. The station is an inspiring, inclusive experience, bringing together physical recreations of stone seats, ASL and Greek Sign Language translations of ancient paintings, and reimagining the original ancient ramp leading to the Acropolis.

“The Sound of Music through Democracy” was led by Richard Johnson, Associate Professor and Interim Director of Jazz at the Peabody Institute. This faculty grant supported a May 2024 event at the Esperanza Center in Baltimore City that featured local vendors, music lessons for children, a performance by the Juventud Latino Dancers, and live local bands performing songs from Central America. The event served as a critical space for immigrant community members of the neighborhood to come together and benefit from connection and support. Over 20 bags of food were provided for citizens, many of whom were affected by the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in March 2024.

Faculty grants continue to be an important way for SNF Agora to broaden impact—building connections across schools and departments and in communities beyond campus walls—and to model the multidisciplinary commitment of the institute.



“Today’s event was absolutely excellent. We had dancers, live music, great food—everyone was involved. We hope it helps the community and gives back to everyone who needs it.”

Richard Johnson, Associate Professor and Interim Director of Jazz, Peabody Institute, AY 2023-2024 Faculty grant awardee

Top: Part of Jennifer Stager’s grant-supported project is a reimagining of the ramp that once led to the Acropolis, a gallery of paintings, and various versions of stone seats found in ancient Greece.

Bottom: Richard Johnson’s faculty grant supported a community event that included a performance by Juventud Latino Dancers.

Visiting fellows share diverse experiences

Once again, SNF Agora brought together a diverse and dynamic group of scholars to serve as visiting fellows. The 11 visiting fellows sponsored during the 2023-2024 academic year spent their time at Hopkins advancing their own work while contributing to the larger missions of SNF Agora and Johns Hopkins. Through the duration of their fellowships, they hosted events, taught courses, and worked on projects that included books, films, reports, and more. They are founders of nonprofits and companies; scholars of history and art; and policy experts, activists, and authors. Bringing them together to work and learn at SNF Agora creates a critical nexus of talent, skill, and productivity.

REBECCA BROCATO,
former U.S. National
Security Council advisor
for legislative affairs



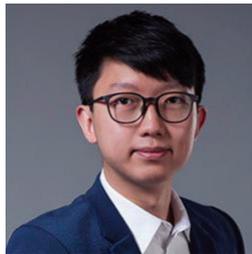
Brought leaders in federal government to the Homewood campus to instruct students about the role of the legislative branch in national security.

**PHILIPPA PHAM
HUGHES,** social
sculptor and
cultural strategist



Led a community workshop and taught a course at the Baltimore Museum of Art that used art to explore civil discourse.

SUNNY CHEUNG,
policy advisor for
Hong Kong Democracy
Council, SNF Agora-RDI
Dissident in Residence



Taught the course *The Last Stand—Hong Kong's Fight for Freedom Under China's Shadow*.

RONA KOBELL,
co-founder of the
Environmental Justice
Journalism Initiative



Worked on a book and pursued a film, *Eroding History*, about rural redlining on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

ROYA HAKAKIAN,
an Iranian American
journalist, and senior fellow
at American Purpose



Worked on a biography of Hajj Sayyah to increase understanding of how today's Iranian secularists view America and what their views cost them at home.

KEVIN LOKER,
director of strategic
partnerships and
research at the American
Press Institute



Convened editorial page editors from across the country to reimagine the concept of local newspapers' opinion sections as another type of agora for discourse.

SANJAY RUPARELIA,
the Jarislowsky
Democracy Chair at
Toronto Metropolitan
University and
co-chair of Participedia



Authored and
workshopped a short
book on autocracy in China and India; taught an
intersession course on democratic innovations.

DANIEL STID,
former leader of the
Hewlett Foundation's
initiative to strengthen
U.S. democracy



Researched and drafted a
report on the role
of philanthropy in
shaping democracy.

DAN VALLONE,
director of More
in Common USA



Researched and hosted
programming that
explored the civic role
of veterans.

HAMSE WARFA,
U.S. State Department
advisor for equity and
inclusive democracy



Led a community
workshop on promoting
inclusive democracy and
researched strategies for
building SNF Agora's Washington, D.C., impact.

EMILY WHITE,
founder and CEO
of #iVoted



Led a collaborative
research project on the
use of streaming music
data to activate concert
venues in ways that
increase voter turnout.

Local music data + local concerts = votes

Ever look around a concert, bass pumping and the crowd's enthusiasm shared by every fan in the venue—and wonder what an impact it could have if each person in that space voted, too? A voting bloc of this size often determines elections in competitive districts. Students, led by SNF Agora Fellow Emily White, explored this question at a spring 2024 community workshop examining how to use geocoded data from streaming music platforms to potentially impact civic engagement, no matter the political party for which they cast a ballot.

White is the founder of #iVoted, an organization that produces record-breaking events for fans who show a selfie from outside their polling place or at home with a blank and unmarked ballot; future voters enter #iVoted's events by sharing what election they will be 18 for, and non-citizens and those ineligible to vote enter by letting the organization know why they're excited to attend. #iVoted events have featured Billie Eilish, Run the Jewels, and hundreds more. In this way, White has harnessed the power of fan communities, and the influence of their favorite musicians, to increase voting and engagement.

The interactive workshop was moderated by White and her collaborator, Eliza O'Reilly, an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Statistics. Together with several JHU students, White and O'Reilly analyzed data on the top trending artists in key election locations to identify which artists may increase voter turnout the most. They have also built a tool that shows where any artist will increase civic impact the most. White, O'Reilly, and the students did so by comparing each artist's unique fan demographics with local voter files to show the artists with the most low-propensity voters in their audiences.

“Working with Professor O’Reilly and JHU’s brilliant students has been a dream! This project brought together everyone’s unique skills and strengths to build tools that are now being implemented throughout the music industry and civic space.”

Emily White, SNF Agora Fellow AY 2023-2024

Attracting young scholars from around the globe

SNF Agora included 58 young scholars in their work during the past year, including postdoctoral scholars, graduate students, visiting scholars from other institutions and countries, and undergraduates.

Offering these future academic leaders the chance to work alongside SNF Agora faculty and within the Krieger School community advances the institute's long-term goal of strengthening democracy research and impact. Through their time at Johns Hopkins, the scholars

participate in all the pillars of the institute—contributing to labs, advancing research, assisting with courses, and guiding dialogue.

While many of these scholars are already part of the Johns Hopkins community, the program also attracts individuals from other institutions and other countries. Two of these talented, international scholars are highlighted here.

ANDREINA THOMA, SNF AGORA ACADEMY, AY 2023-2024

Andreina Thoma had nearly completed her dissertation on the causes and consequences of political inclusion when she joined SNF Agora in 2023 as a visiting graduate scholar and part of the SNF Agora Academy. Her work has a particular focus on women's voting rights—something that did not occur until 1971 in her country of Switzerland.

Coming to Baltimore to work at the SNF Agora Institute allowed her to benefit from new perspectives and ideas; take part in a dynamic learning environment; and contribute her own perspective and scholarly approach to the work of others. She worked closely with Dawn Teele, PhD, SNF Agora Institute Associate Professor of Political Science, who provided valuable insights into her dissertation. She also participated in courses led by Consuelo Amat, PhD, SNF Agora Institute Assistant Professor of Political Science, and Bryce Corrigan, SNF Agora senior statistician and lecturer.

A highlight of her time were the regular workshops she attended as part of the SNF Agora Academy. Each workshop had a scholar presenting their work and then fielding questions and feedback from the other participants. "I benefited a lot from their perspectives and ideas," Thoma shared. "It was great to receive feedback from the community, especially from different fields and from those involved in research as well as practice." Thoma notes that this experience helped her focus her research further and opened new areas to highlight in her dissertation.



Thoma was inspired by the focus the SNF Agora community places not only on exemplary research but on applying it in real life. "It was very inspiring to see dialogue between researchers and people from practice. In academia you don't always get to talk to people from practice or to see whether your insight makes sense to other people in the real world."

The collaborative and supportive environment at SNF Agora was also something Thoma enjoyed—and something she plans to carry forward in her future. "I learned to appreciate a research environment with people from different backgrounds and research interests. I hope to be a part of this kind of setting in the future—or take the initiative to create it myself."

LUCA VERSTEEGEN, VISITING SCHOLAR, AY 2023-2024

Luca Versteegen is a political science research fellow at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. He came to the SNF Agora Institute as a visiting scholar. Below, he shares thoughts on his time at SNF Agora.

What brought you to SNF Agora and what did you work on here?

I was curious to work somewhere in the U.S. for a few months, and my advisor suggested Lilliana Mason would be a great fit, topic-wise, for my dissertation work. And then I started learning about SNF Agora and I was thrilled to join. During my time at SNF Agora, I worked on my dissertation, trying to understand how identities and emotions motivate radical right support and political polarization. Dr. Mason and I started developing a few other projects. One is a chapter in a handbook on affective polarization (AP), another tries to make some conceptual progress on AP. A third project tries to find novel, apolitical explanations for AP. We recently got new data that I'm currently analyzing—so my visit was just a start to a lot of ongoing work.

What is it like being part of the SNF Agora community?

I immediately felt included—people seemed interested in what I do and have to say. As a junior scholar from abroad, getting this experience in this distinguished environment was a gift. I also liked being in Baltimore—running the city-wide marathon in October, passing the construction site to the new institute building, I felt like I was in touch with the vibes of the city and this “workplace” simultaneously. This was a beautiful feeling.



How did your time impact your work?

I'm used to academic work, but I loved learning how this can be connected to policy advising, engagement with real-world problems, and interactions with citizens. I feel we as scientists often do not take this seriously enough, and SNF Agora is truly in touch with the real world.

What are your plans for the future?

I have started a new position at the Department of Government at the University of Vienna. I hope to stay in touch with Dr. Mason and all my connections at SNF Agora. The most direct impact of my time there will be the reminder to make my research relevant to everyday life and the broader community.

DESIGN

The design function of the SNF Agora Institute is focused on translating research into usable knowledge—and testing that knowledge for real-life application. Through the work of seven faculty labs, four communities of practice, and continued efforts to create tools and reports for public use, SNF Agora is impacting many current issues facing democracies.

SNF Agora’s faculty labs are reinvigorating debates about politics, economics, and culture; looking into history to better guide our future; studying political violence in an effort to prevent it; and mapping civic organizations to illuminate where opportunities for greater engagement exist.

The communities of practice run through and by the SNF Agora Institute involve deep partnerships, diverse participants, and a focus on actionable results. Through their work this past year, SNF Agora is building international resources, convening conservative leaders across the U.S. to defend our electoral process, and working to improve health through understanding what democracy means for patients in Baltimore and beyond.

SNF Agora reports and outputs in scholarly journals take these findings and make them available and useful to all—democratizing the flow of information and inspiration. Thus, these results can be used to inform classroom discussions, college coursework, local engagement, national policy, and global understanding.

DESIGN 2023-24

FACULTY LABS



7 Ongoing Labs

The Arena Project

Business Innovation
and Governance in Asia
(in development)

Center for Economy and Society

Hard Histories Lab

Mapping the Modern Agora

P3 Lab

Political Violence Lab
(new in 2023-24)

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE



4 Ongoing Communities

CLIMB/Global Commonwealth
Leaders Institute

Creating a Conservative
Pro-Democracy Agenda

Health and Democracy

New Pluralists Collaborative

Focus On: CREATING A CONSERVATIVE PRO-DEMOCRACY AGENDA



8 states visited in
AY 2023-2024



267 attendees



5 Gallup State Polls conducted



28 government
offices represented



8 future convenings
currently planned

Focus On: POLITICAL VIOLENCE LAB



100 experts surveyed



8 pillars of
democracy studied



3 surveys conducted
(November, March, June)



5 levels of impact assessed
by the Violence and
Democracy Impact Tracker

A new lab seeks to understand and address political violence

Incendiary graffiti. Threatened election workers. An armed protestor. Attempted kidnappings and assassinations. These are all instances of political violence, and they are on the rise in the U.S.

The newly formed Political Violence Lab, led by Lilliana Mason, SNF Agora Institute Associate Professor of Political Science, seeks to identify how and to what extent political violence is interfering with American democracy—and what can be done about it. Working with the organization Protect Democracy, the lab created and published the Violence and Democracy Impact Tracker (VDIT), a resource that calculates the impact of political violence on eight distinct pillars of democracy in the U.S. The first VDIT was published in November 2023; it was based on a July 2023 survey of more than 100 experts in political violence around the world. The report has been followed up with survey-based updates in March and June 2024.

VDIT's findings have been coupled with policy recommendations to reduce political violence, like passing legislation to protect election workers and establishing closer coordination between law enforcement and election administrators to understand and protect against potential threats. As the lab continues its research and builds on the results of its surveys, it will continue to proactively suggest solutions to these threats and to American democracy.

“Political violence is occurring, and it comes in waves. Hopefully, this report and future data collection can put it in context. Where do experts think we are right now? Where is the threat to American democracy currently? Without knowing the full landscape, it’s difficult to know which concerns to prioritize.”

Lilliana Mason, as quoted in the HUB Nov 7, 2023

Hard Histories Lab: From Baltimore to Paris to Berlin

This year, the Hard Histories Lab at Hopkins launched a new phase of its research, inviting its lab members and partners to think about the practice of hard history through a comparative history lens. Hard Histories' work is to examine the role that racism and discrimination have played at Johns Hopkins University and in Baltimore City. Exploring how other cities and institutions have interrogated their own histories resonated with the project participants, opening new collaborations, understanding, and insights.

Members of the Hard Histories Lab traveled internationally to Berlin and Paris, where they hosted workshops, colloquia, and conferences in partnership with Germany's Institute for Advanced Study and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in France. They visited museums and monuments to examine how they are incorporated into the hard histories landscape; heard works in progress from scholars of France, Germany, and the U.S.; and reflected together on how to remember and memorialize the past in the present.

Hard Histories Lab scholars are already at work considering how to use the lessons learned from the spring in Europe to inform efforts on the Homewood campus to actively honor, remember, and learn.

“I wondered how Johns Hopkins might be able to apply some of these ‘monumental’ lessons from Berlin to its own reckoning of history. Members of the research lab have begun sketching answers to these questions.”

Malaurie Pilatte, Hard Histories predoctoral fellow, on the Hard Histories Substack



Left to right: Lauren Feldman, a Johns Hopkins University doctoral scholar in history; Ben Gerstein, from UCLA School of Law; and Martha S. Jones, Director of the Hard Histories at Hopkins Lab at SNF Agora, at a workshop in Berlin in March 2024.

SNF Agora reports explore critical questions of democracy

SNF Agora scholars span many different disciplines, perspectives, and approaches to democratic change. Coming together under the umbrella of the SNF Agora Institute, they have produced a diverse range of research and educational materials that elucidate many aspects of democracy—its past, its current practice, and its future. This includes reports published by the institute as research comes to fruition.

Several institute research collaborations yielded new insights that SNF Agora was pleased to share through original reports. *Understanding Youth Perceptions Towards Authoritarianism* uses new polling and qualitative interviews to explore whether youth are becoming more inclined to look towards autocratic leaders to provide results. *Dynamic Polycentrism* delves into the identities of digital spaces and their ability to foster pluralism in perspective based on the people involved, the network as a whole, or a combination of factors. And the report *Searching for a New Paradigm: Collective Settings*, discusses the importance of creating and nurturing collective settings, or spaces where people with different points of view and backgrounds can come together in dialogue, in order to strengthen democracy.

“By investing in collective settings, we hope to develop the muscles for democracy that people and communities will need to seek, identify, and implement shared solutions that do not accept the world as it is but instead create the world they need.”

from *Searching for a New Paradigm: Collective Settings*

SELECTED REPORTS

Assessing the Effect of Political Violence on American Democracy

November 7, 2023

In partnership with Protect Democracy

by Lilliana Mason, SNF Agora Associate Professor of Political Science, and Jennifer Dresden, Policy Advocate, Protect Democracy

Searching for a New Paradigm: Collective Settings

December 5, 2023

In partnership with More in Common

by Hahrie Han, Director, SNF Agora Institute, and Dan Vallone, SNF Agora Visiting Fellow AY 23-24

Understanding Pro-Democracy Conservatives

March 1, 2024

by Lilliana Mason, SNF Agora Institute Associate Professor of Political Science, and Scott Warren, SNF Agora Fellow

Dynamic Polycentrism

March 3, 2024

In partnership with New_Public

by Hahrie Han, Director, SNF Agora Institute; Milan De Vries, Associate Research Scholar, SNF Agora; Stephen Ruckman, Managing Director of SNF Agora; Jae Yeon Kim, P3 Research Fellow, SNF Agora; Peter Pomerantsev, SNF Agora Senior Fellow; and coauthors at New_Public

Understanding Youth Perceptions Towards Authoritarianism

June 12, 2024

In partnership with International Republican Institute

by Meryl Miner, Senior Manager, Youth and Inclusion, Center for Global Impact, International Republican Institute, and Scott Warren, SNF Agora Fellow

Reaching across aisles, listening to learn, acting to understand

Central to the mission and work of SNF Agora is its commitment to fostering civil dialogue and focused learning across differences, backgrounds, and ideologies. SNF Agora fulfills this commitment in many ways, with the primary one being modeling—its community is one that is highly skilled in active listening, motivated to learn from all opinions, and capable of applying this new understanding to complex issues facing democracies.

Below are just a few illustrative examples of this work, occurring through all pillars of the SNF Agora Institute:

• **RESEARCH:** In a report called *Dynamic Polycentrism*, Hahrie Han and colleagues at the institute and New_ Public offered insights on how digital communities can sustain healthy difference without domination.

• **PUBLIC INITIATIVES:** During the past academic year, the institute hosted or co-hosted seven debates as part of the University Debate Initiative. Topics included whether higher education should be free, whether

TikTok should be banned, whether universities still need race-based affirmative action, and whether social media is working for democracy.

• **TARGETED GATHERINGS:** A two-day convening hosted by SNF Agora Visiting Fellow Kevin Loker, “Reimagining Local Opinion Journalism: Philanthropy’s Role,” fostered innovative thinking around how opinion pages in leading newspapers can create a pluralistic space for discourse.

• **DIVERSE PROGRAMS:** Throughout the year, SNF Agora hosted speakers with a range of views and approaches to policy questions, including Brad Raffensperger and Sarah Godlewski, the Georgia and Wisconsin Secretaries of State, respectively; liberal and conservative think tank scholars, school board members, and advocates; and journalists and filmmakers covering modern democratic complexity, such as Frank Langfitt, Global Democracy correspondent at *National Public Radio*.

“In the research I conducted on college campuses across the country, students’ appetite for debate is drastically diminishing. In order for vigorous debate to thrive, universities have to engineer it. That’s what SNF Agora and Johns Hopkins are successfully doing with this initiative.”

**Amy Binder, SNF Agora Institute
Professor of Sociology**

“The fact that Johns Hopkins has debates in general, open, and accessible, allows us to strengthen freedom of speech and freedom of expression. It allows us to be more open to new ideas.”

**First-year student quoted
in the HUB after seeing the 2023
Democracy Day debate**



The debate on affirmative action included: **Natasha Warikoo**, a sociology professor at Tufts University; **Jonathan Feingold**, an associate professor of law at Boston University; **Richard Kahlenberg**, an economist and public policy scholar at Georgetown University; and **Mike Gonzalez**, a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation.

The University Debate Initiative held seven debates during the last year, drawing audiences from across campus to be part of civil, dynamic discourse in action.

FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA: TRUST IN DEMOCRACY

The SNF Agora community of practice, *Creating a Conservative Pro-Democracy Agenda*, illustrates this bridging work in action. Led by SNF Fellow Scott Warren, the effort is focused on convening disparate and diverse pro-democracy actors across the country. The goal is to define and consolidate a pro-democracy agenda for the conservative movement in the U.S. The method is threefold: to convene groups of conservative experts and officials at the local and national level to discuss, explore, and codify a pro-democracy agenda; to conduct original research to provide data-based analysis to inform that agenda; and to catalyze these efforts to create working groups and action items.

In partnership with the R Street Institute, the *Creating a Conservative Pro-Democracy Agenda* group spent the last year traveling the nation to gain understanding, build trust, and collect information. They traveled to twelve states and Washington, D.C., to hold convenings to accomplish this work—candid, off-the-record, and public gatherings that brought together election officials, advocates, and scholars working in the democracy and election sphere.

The conversations resulted in a set of three guiding principles to enable conservative leaders to shore up confidence in American elections. These principles focus on affirming the security of elections, using public outreach to reassure voters of this, and championing

policy changes to build trust in the election system. A fall 2023 public event, held at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center in Washington, D.C., brought more than 80 leaders of the project together to share the agenda and principles that resulted from the work. In the spring, the initiative focused on bringing together state election officials and leaders, traveling to nine states, and leading to concrete technical and strategic solutions to build trust in the 2024 election. The work will continue, looking to codify, explore, and build a broader conservative pro-democracy agenda.

“Shoring up the foundations of American democracy requires a trans-partisan effort designed to protect the basic parameters, rules, and institutions of the American republic.”

Scott Warren, SNF Agora Institute Fellow, as quoted in the HUB, November 2023



The *Creating a Conservative Pro-Democracy Agenda* community traveled the country during the last year, including a trip to Idaho (above) that convened a group to build trust in voting procedures.

AGORA

The dialogue function of the SNF Agora mission is where the knowledge generated and the tools designed come together. Through dialogue activities, SNF Agora is able to widely disseminate its work to students, colleagues, and the public, strengthening citizens' capacity for productive participation and leadership in democracy.

SNF Agora's dialogue work takes many forms. As a part of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, SNF Agora leads and facilitates many undergraduate and graduate courses focused on democracy. This classroom dialogue is a critical piece of the mission, particularly now with the new minor in civic life. With a full complement of institute faculty and visiting fellows, SNF Agora offered 22 courses during the 2023-2024 academic year that enabled students to explore democracy through a variety of lenses—comparative, economical, historical, political, sociological, and psychological.

Public events are also an essential component of SNF Agora's dialogue work. The institute put on 57 public events and was involved in dozens more, actively engaging the public. Events highlighted the work and ideas of SNF Agora and scholars and brought in figures from other departments, sectors, organizations, and backgrounds to inspire and inform audiences.

And through annual tentpole events like the Elijah E. Cumming Democracy and Freedom Festival and the university-wide Democracy Day, SNF Agora brings large crowds together to actively model and practice inclusive dialogue, civic engagement, and active civic life.

DIALOGUE 2023-24

EVENTS



57 public events &
40 other events



2,747 in-person &
virtual attendees



3,241 YouTube views



134 speakers

Focus On: UNIVERSITY DEBATE INITIATIVE



7 debate events

140 questions asked

583 audience members
engaged on the
interactive platform

88% reported
that watching the debates
made them more open
to listening to opposing
viewpoints in the future

Focus On: ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM FESTIVAL



227 Demfest attendees

9 from legislative or government offices

33 from civic & nonprofit organizations

25 speakers & presenters

76% said the festival was valuable
because they learned from experts and practitioners
about how to participate in local democracy

80% said they were able to dialogue with
people outside of their usual circles

WEBSITE



130,200 page views



48,049 users



47,344 new users



ACADEMIC YEAR 2023-2024 COURSES

Fall 2023

- The Administrative State in Crisis (graduate)
- China and the World
- Democracy by the Numbers
- Directed Readings: Research Methods and Perspectives on China (graduate)
- Engaged Research with Community Organizations (graduate)
- First-Year Seminar: Democracy, Diversity, and Identity
- First-Year Seminar: Democratic Erosion
- First-Year Seminar: The Psychology of Mass Politics in the U.S.
- Introduction to Civic Life
- Populism and Politics
- Science and Democracy

Intersession 2024

- Democratic Innovations
- Frontlines of Freedom

Spring 2024

- AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Data Methods in History
- Civic Life Capstone
- Civic Life Seminar
- Data Analysis for Social Science and Public Policy I (graduate)
- Data Analysis for Social Science and Public Policy II (graduate)
- Engaged Research with Community Organizations (graduate)
- Frontiers of Empirical Political Science
- Knowledge, Evidence, and Democracy
- Social Entrepreneurship and Democratic Erosion
- We Should Talk: Using Art and Culture to Repair the Social Fabric of Our Country (SOUL)
- The Last Stand—Hong Kong's Fight for Freedom Under China's Shadow

The art of dialogue

For five weeks in spring 2024, nine students gathered weekly at the Baltimore Museum of Art. They were there for the course *We Should Talk: Using Art and Culture to Repair the Social Fabric of Our Country*, taught by SNF Agora Visiting Fellow Philippa Pham Hughes.

The course focused on teaching students to use art as a tool for understanding themselves, our society and where we belong in it, and how we engage in civic life. The museum and the art creation space served as an entry point through which they could enter meaningful and relational dialogue.

Hughes is a social sculptor and cultural strategist who leads the project “We Should Talk: A series of Art Installations and Programming Powered by Asian American Women.”

“At the end of the day, if we can’t be in a relationship with each other, if we can’t care about each other, we undermine our democracy. At the core of my art is an art practice called relational aesthetic. The idea is to create space for relationships to thrive and occur, and the art piece becomes complete when those relationship-building conversations start happening.”

**Philippa Pham Hughes,
as quoted in the fall 2023
*Peabody Magazine***

SNF Agora helps European leaders address AI's electoral influence

AI is correcting our grammar, anticipating our online shopping, and learning to drive our cars. So, what is it doing to our democracies, particularly our elections?

In April 2024, three SNF Agora scholars traveled to Brussels to participate in the German Marshall Fund's annual Brussels Forum to explore this topic of global significance. The forum is designed to build and nurture a global network of thought leaders focused on action through a democratic and alliance-based lens; its focus this year was on Atlanticism in Action.

As part of the event, SNF Agora Director Hahrie Han and SNF Fellow Scott Warren led a convening of a high-level group of European Union and U.S. government, civil society, campaign, policy, and tech leaders. The discussion centered around "AI and Elections: A Transatlantic Take" and explored the different ways AI may impact elections—both positively (validating voter rolls) and negatively (spreading disinformation).

The next day, SNF Agora Senior Fellow Peter Pomerantsev took to the Brussels Forum main stage to share his insights on rebuilding the public's trust in information during the age of AI. Throughout the discussion he offered context and insight into the use of AI in disrupting

democracy, pointing out specific examples of its impact on the 2016 election. He also suggested exploring three areas for solutions: regulating with the premise that users have a right to know what is behind their information; designing online environments to encourage more citizen engagement; and competing with those who are working to spread doubt about election credibility.

"It means a new type of media where the people who create it get up in the morning and ask how are they going to reach readers who have become skeptical....We are in a race to understand audiences and engage them better."

SNF Senior Fellow Peter Pomerantsev, speaking to the Brussels Forum, 2024

SNF Agora Senior Fellow Peter Pomerantsev was featured on the main stage of the German Marshall Fund's Brussels Forum.



Democracy Day

Most first-year Hopkins students come to campus mindful that they are about to experience their first dorm, their first college professors, and perhaps their first time living in a new city. Less on their minds is that, for many, their undergraduate years will also bring their first time voting in an election.

The annual Democracy Day programming is targeted at this group—incoming scholars who have yet to practice the civic responsibilities that come with adulthood—to ensure that they have the resources, skills, and insights needed to start their journey and navigate the complexity of pluralistic democracy. Democracy Day is about voting, but it is also much more than that.

The third annual Democracy Day was held in August 2023, as part of new student orientation. Programming included remarks by JHU President Ron Daniels and Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, and pop-up seminars with SNF Agora and other JHU faculty members on problems democracy faces, such as corruption, barriers to participation, and creeping authoritarianism.

The day ended with a community engagement fair that featured local community organizations and student groups, a meet-and-greet with SNF Agora faculty and fellows, and assistance for students registering to vote in their home states, offered by Hopkins Votes.

New to the 2023 programming was a live debate between political science professors Steve Teles and Lester Spence on whether higher education should be free. Students were able to hear multiple sides of the issue and, most importantly, witness and learn from informed, respectful disagreement in action.

An educational and social student fair is part of Democracy Day, matching students with organizations and resources to assist in their civic journeys.





A festival focus on civics education

Birds aren't real. Peter McIndoe, the keynote speaker of the annual Elijah E. Cummings Democracy and Freedom Festival, spent four years traveling the country making this argument. He was making a point about disinformation and its flow through media and communities. But along the way he also learned something about civics education and community—how much both are needed to truly nourish democracy and to authentically dispute disinformation.

A highlight of the SNF Agora, Johns Hopkins, and Baltimore City year, the Democracy and Freedom Festival brings together faculty and students with practitioners across the city and country, to celebrate democracy, participate in active learning, and engage deeply with topics surrounding how we teach, learn, and practice democratic skills.

This year's theme, civic education, explored how and where civics education should occur, and how to strengthen civics in action. Opening remarks by festival creator and the president, CEO, and founder of Global Policy Solutions, Maya Rockey Moore Cummings, PhD, provided a meaningful and inspirational start to the day. And an opening plenary with leaders from media, education, and civic institutions provoked festival goers to think about all the ways they learn to engage.

The day's events also included several breakout sessions that invited participants into smaller discussions of interest, led by local leaders and practitioners. Sessions included: "School Boards as Civics Decisionmakers," "Local Opinion Sections and Civics," and "Equity and Civics." The day ended with all coming back together for a shared meal guided by The People's Supper and a capstone debate on the roles and responsibilities of social media companies in democracy.



Top: Maya Rockey Moore Cummings was one of the featured speakers at the festival she founded in honor of her late spouse.

Bottom: Peter McIndoe, creator of the "Birds aren't Real" satirical campaign, was the keynote speaker for this year's festival.

21st century civics education gets a big boost

Students graduating from institutions of higher education today will be the citizens who build bridges, heal societies, and lead their communities in economic, technological, and educational advances. It is therefore a prime responsibility of educators today to ensure that tomorrow’s leaders have the skills and context they need—beyond the technical mastery of their chosen profession—to engage as effective citizens of modern, pluralistic, democratic communities.

The SNF Agora Institute was awarded a \$6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense’s National Defense Education Program to do just that. The grant will support the institute’s efforts to develop and deliver 21st century civics education that integrates curricular programming,

community-facing work, and training programs for Johns Hopkins University students.

The approach is multipronged and includes the development and full launch of the minor in civic life aimed at undergraduates, particularly from STEM backgrounds; the SNF Agora Academy directed at graduate and postdoctoral trainees doing research related to pluralistic democracy; courses, trainings, and events that give students the opportunity to connect directly with practitioners; and faculty development, which will build a pipeline of scholars equipped to teach civics at Johns Hopkins, on other U.S. campuses, and around the world.

“The new minor in civic life is a fitting and timely addition to the SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins curriculum. Preparing students for success as active and engaged citizens no matter what professional field they may choose is necessary as we seek to strengthen our democracy and address global problems beyond the university.”

**Christopher S. Celenza,
James B. Knapp Dean, Professor of
History and Classics, Krieger School
of Arts and Sciences**



Minor in Civic Life

TEACHING CIVICS FOR LIFE

The SNF Agora-run undergraduate minor in civic life—an important output from the federal grant—completed its first full academic year. Four students have already declared the minor, and many more students enrolled in the minor’s three courses—Introduction to Civic Life, the Civic Life Seminar, and the Civic Life Capstone—and its approved electives.

INTRODUCTION TO THEORY AND HISTORY

The foundational course for the minor is Introduction to Civic Life. Taught by Lilliana Mason and Consuelo Amat for the 2023-2024 academic year, the course introduces students to the theory and practice of civic life and the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship. This is accomplished through examining the history of and struggles for freedom, inclusion, and civic participation; the role of information, deliberation, and free expression in the public sphere; and the threats and opportunities for global democracy.

MAKING CIVICS RELEVANT TO EACH STUDENT

Each student is charged with selecting three electives to fill out the requirements of the minor—and there are many compelling choices. Electives include: Introduction

“Modeling and teaching the habits and skillsets of deliberation and reasoned dialogue and debate is a formal goal of the university. The aim is to find ways to reach common ground, even in the face of disagreement.”

**Bryce Corrigan,
Senior Statistician and Lecturer
at SNF Agora, as quoted in the HUB,
September 2023**

“As students, we are going to graduate from Hopkins and go on to work in different fields, whether in medicine, law, the humanities, you name it. But no matter what we end up doing, it is crucial to learn skills that prepare us to contribute to the pluralistic society and liberal democracy in which we live.”

**Neel Godbole,
KSAS molecular and cellular
biology major, as quoted in the HUB,
September 2023**

to Moral Philosophy; Environmental Justice Workshop; Democracy by the Numbers; Thinking Organizationally about Politics; China and the World; Truth, Evidence, and Influence: Case Studies in Public Health; Community Based Learning – Practicum Community Health Care; and Pay: The Economics of the Workplace.

The minor’s capstone course is one that excites students and turns their learning into action. Guided by SNF Agora faculty, undergraduates connect with mentors in an area that interests them and then design a project to engage directly with their subject—whether studying an election in a country they want to visit, starting a community board for their apartment building, or creating an art installation to inspire others to vote. Whether students choose a career as a physician, scientist, artist, teacher, or engineer, any profession they choose and path they travel will be enriched by these thoughtfully managed courses.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Reflecting on the last year brings to mind many highlights and significant progress in our fundamental mission to advance civil discourse and promote civic engagement. Through our discovery pillar, faculty and scholars are uncovering and sharing important information worldwide. Within our design pillar, our labs and communities of practices are putting ideas into action to discover on-the-ground solutions. And, through our dialogue pillar, we are creating unique programming to engage and inform community members of all kinds. Throughout Hopkins campuses, around the city of Baltimore, across the nation, and around the world, the SNF Agora Institute is disseminating knowledge and thus power to all.

As we look to the future, it is clear the work must continue, and that it will evolve in new and necessary ways. 2024 is a major year for global democracy, and its many elections are bringing to the forefront the importance of SNF Agora's work to increase understanding, dialogue, and community. It is with great pride and responsibility that we take on this effort and embrace the opportunities and challenges it presents.

SNF Agora's commitment to its core mission will not waver. In our new, soon-to-be-opened building on the Homewood campus, we will be able to explore, edify, and organize around the needs of modern civic life. Our educational, research, and public-facing programs will continue to push democracy forward, creating a new generation of leaders who will be ready to take on the mantle of inclusive citizenship and change the world for the better.

Opposite: The completed art installation at the Elijah E. Cummings Democracy and Freedom Festival illustrates how important community voices and engagement are to the work of SNF Agora.



Manifesting Civic Dreams
BALTIMORE

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