TRUMPISM, POST-TRUTH, AND THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE[1]

By: Edwin Kent Morris, Ph.D.
Radford University
Department of Political Science
CHBS 5302, P.O. 6945
Radford, VA 24142
Phone: 540-831-6598
Fax: 540-831-6599
ekmorris@vt.edu

AUTHOR DETAILS

EDWIN KENT MORRIS holds a Ph.D. in Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought from the ASPECT (i.e., Alliance for the Social, Political Ethical, and Cultural Thought) interdisciplinary doctoral program at Virginia Tech. He has been published in the *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* (IRASM), and has published five articles in the ASPECT online journal *SPECTRA*. He has presented papers at the International Studies Association and the Western Political Science Association. As an instructor at Virginia Tech, he received recognition for excellence in teaching and research, including a 2014 "Thank a Teacher" by the Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research (CIDER), and has been a recipient of the 2012 "Favorite Faculty Award" by the Virginia Tech student association, and the 2011 "Best Master's Thesis Award" by the Virginia Tech Department of Political Science. He is currently an adjunct faculty member with the Department of Political Science at Radford University.

---

[1] I assume like many folks in this line of work that we all felt compelled in some way to 'respond' to the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. This paper began the day after that election and was 'finished' September 2017 (that is, I grew weary of working on it and had other projects and matters to attend too). The time span of this paper is roughly the first 100 days of the Trump administration. Examples and points made throughout this essay could be reaffirmed by what has happened since then, but I think what is contained here will suffice. In the course of writing it, I ended up with well over a 100 pages, so what is presented here is a condensed version of that work. The 'conclusions' are largely tentative, as I end the paper previewing a 'sequel' project I am working on now looking back at the work of Sheldon Wolin in light of the posthumous collection of essays *Fugitive Democracy*. More importantly, the discussant should know this paper was written during the throws of divorce from my wife of 5+ years and difficulties associated with adjusting to post-Ph.D. life, working as an adjunct, and increasingly bleak view of my future in academia and my life for that matter. For my mental and emotional well being, I respectively request not to be eviscerated publicly at this conference in regards to this paper. Besides presenting a truncated version of this paper to undergraduate students at Radford University's 'Poli-Sci Days' in fall 2017, you my friend are the first to read it. I am not sure how I feel about this paper. It kept me occupied after completing my Ph.D., being something I wanted to talk about, but I have my doubts about the significance of it, if any. Yet, I would like to think there is something of value to it, something that might have the potential to inform or educate anyone reading it. Ideological and problem orientation are blurred here. My intention at the conference is not so much to go through this paper point by point, but discuss how this paper remains, in my view, an accurate depiction of Trumpism with an element of foresight to it, the potentially fascist tendencies of Trumpism, as well as offer some further insights about post-truth. Otherwise, I look forward to your comments and seeing you at the conference.

I. Introduction

This paper is an analysis of what we (as in 'we' scholars, journalists, critics, and the like) are calling Trumpism and the challenges it, perhaps, presents to political life in the United States. This study engages American politics through the lens of political theory, considered here to be "a critical engagement with collective existence and with the political experiences of power to which it gives rise."[1] As such, this paper is a reflection on the *political* in contemporary American politics concomitant to the ascendancy of Trumpism.[2] Drawing from reputable journalism and scholarly literature, this essay explores the following: what are we saying when using Trumpism in speech? Is Trumpism altogether 'new,' and does Trumpism signal a 'crisis' for political science and political life in the United States?[3] By 'crisis,' this study means someone or some thing that "indicates insecurity, misfortune, and test, and refers to an unknown future whose conditions cannot be sufficiently elucidated."[4] This study proceeds by way of a critical and interpretive approach, the latter meaning one possible way of thinking about Trumpism.[5] By 'critical,' this study means a perspective on the present "as something to be changed."[6]

Trumpism is not the crisis of political science or political life in the US, but is instead a sign or symptom of the crisis. The crisis concerns the authority, legitimacy, or credibility of political science in a general sense and extends to all that the study and practice of politics is linked to and informs, from academic knowledge production to 24/7 news media representations of political reality.[7] Specifically, the crisis concerns the alleged decline in the salience of 'fact's in American politics: what constitutes 'facts,' how we acquire them, and why 'facts' are important to political life. Facts are considered here information "that can provide stable reference points that everyone – no matter what their politics – can agree on."[8] The crisis, then, is a question of what we are calling 'post-truth' (including here 'alternative facts' and 'fake news')

which refers to a socio-political condition where "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."[9]

If political science is "concerned with developing and using a common, objective language to describe and explain political reality,"[10] then it is the discourse and 'facts' used to describe and explain political and social reality that are in jeopardy in the face of Trumpism and post-truth. To borrow from Michel Foucault, what is at stake in this paper and for US politics, then, "is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself."[11] For example, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published a piece suggesting that "many in academe feel that everything they stand for – the value of expertise, the authority of science, the pursuit of truth, or even the possibility that it might exist – is under siege."[12] For political scientists and thinkers, the crisis is perhaps more exigent.[13] Trumpism has upended many so-called 'facts' about American politics, from 'getting good press,' what counts as 'statesman like conduct,'[14] and significantly, the predominant means of studying politics in the academy: quantitative political analysis.[15] In terms of the latter, consider the failure of election forecasting models and the analysts who generate them to take seriously the likelihood of Trump winning the 2016 presidential election.[16]

This paper is significant for it shows that what we are calling Trumpism is not 'new.' For instance, populism has a long history in the American political experience, as post-truth is just another way of saying 'lies' or 'deception' in politics.[17] Knowing how and why this is the case might provide insights for similar studies on these matters and offer, perhaps, strategies aimed at resisting Trumpism. This paper also illuminates the problem of semantics (or operationalization) in regards to explaining Trumpism and the crisis in question: defining and knowing, precisely, the meaning of political concepts and the discourse we use to describe and understand the political world. As politics is largely experienced by citizens through the constructed spectacle of

the 24/7 news media, the meaning of political concepts and political life often becomes misconstrued, generating among citizens confusion, apathy, or fear,[18] and these aspects are suggested to have played a role in the rise and appeal of Trumpism.

The first half of this essay breaks down Trumpism to six components: populism, nationalism, anti-intellectualism, charisma, potentially fascist tendencies and post-truth/fantasy, offering an analysis of each and how they function within Trumpism. This analysis informs the second half of this essay, which attempts to offer a rough sketch of the political subjectivity of the typical Trump voter. Larry George writes that political subjectivity is the "collective self-image with which the people of a nation identify the position, status, and role of each subject within that imagined community, and the sense of commonality engendered by various practices through which that collective self-conception is reproduced."[19] Political subjectivity is one part ontological (that is, the study of being, the basis of reality and knowledge) and one-part axiological (that is, how subjects come to have, make, and evaluate values, morals, decisions, judgments). Political subjectivity is relatively synonymous to our social identity or "personality structure;"[20] as it is a fundamental part of politics, or in this case, how and why Trump won the 2016 presidential election and the rise of Trumpism.[21]

II. What is Trumpism?

Trumpism's roots date back to the Jacksonian era and the Progressive-Populist movement of late 19th and 20th century. Trumpism shares similarities with the conservative populist faction that splintered from the progressive movement around the end of World War I, as a reaction to "the changing [racial] complexion of America" and "the looser morality of the cosmopolitanism cities."[22] With the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952, conservative intellectuals and politicians broke off into two camps: the Old Right and the New Right. The New Right was

spearheaded publicly by William F. Buckley, Jr – founder and long-time editor of *National Review* which took the reigns of mainstream conservatism during the 1950's and 1960's, working to quiet the voices of the Old Right, such as the John Birch Society, the KKK, and white nationalists.[23]

The Old Right evolved into the paleoconservative movement that persisted in the ensuing decades at the margins of American politics. The most notable paleoconservative was Pat Buchanan.[24] In his presidential bids in the 1990's and as the Reform Party candidate in 2000, Buchanan advanced a platform strikingly similar to that of Trumpism: 'America first' business policies, relative isolationism globally, and strengthening law and order. In this way, Trumpism might be considered a 'rebranding' of paleoconservative thought. Three things contributed to paleoconservatism's 'rebranding' into Trumpism: first, 9/11 and the ensuing Global War on Terror (GWOT), second, the 2008 global financial crash and subsequent Great Recession, and third, the US becoming an increasingly multiracial, polyglot society.[25] The worldwide web and social media also contributed to the rise of Trumpism; in particular, Alternative-Right (Alt-Right – see below) websites such as *Breitbart* and online forums like 4chan and Reddit.[26] All of these factors helped cultivate a far right-wing coalition representing substantial "differences with the establishment right on trade, foreign policy, immigration, and race."[27]

The Alt-Right movement consists of mostly millennial white men that show little or no interest in Republican Party politics of the modern era. The Alt-Right is "a loose movement, mostly online, that includes people who are dedicated to 'white identity,' but because there is no formal structure, there are a lot of different types of people and ideas within the group…the group's main focus is 'white identity' and to preserve 'western civilization,' but how they go about calling for that is broad."[28] The top priority of the Alt-Right is "preserving America's

status as a white-majority nation," goals of which the Trump administration has attempted to enact including, "extreme immigration plans…such as deporting…undocumented immigrants and banning Muslim immigration."[29] The Alt-Right cannot be disassociated from Trumpism, regardless if President Trump disassociates himself away from the movement, including the Trump administration's most conspicuous Alt-Right influence, Steven K. Bannon, whom Trump fired in August 2017.[30] The influence of the Alt-Right can be seen in President Trump's remarks about the Civil War in April 2017,[31] or more egregiously, Trump's ineffectual response to the violence that erupted in Charlottesville, VA in August 2017.[32] Additionally, Trump's own family and business history shows affinities with the Alt-Right.[33] To be sure, Trumpism is not a full manifestation of Alt-Right ideology. As President Trump's April 2017 order to fire 59 Tomahawk missiles into Syrian air space attests to, the Alt-Right is willing to criticize, if not abandon, Trump altogether.[34] Nevertheless, this does not mean Trumpism does not have the Alt-Right in mind in its political goals. This paper now turns to the components of Trumpism.

<u>Populism</u>

Populism refers to policies or discourse that emphasize the role and place of ordinary people in political life. Populism emerged in the US as "a larger trend of thought stemming from the time of Andrew Jackson, and crystalizing after the Civil War…that expressed the discontents…with the economic changes of the nineteenth century."[35] Trumpism evokes an anti-elite *ethos* as Trump during the 2016 campaign went after "elites of both parties."[36] As Victor Davis Hanson accurately notes, "by elites, Trump certainly did not mean plutocrats like himself or…[who] he has appointed to his cabinet."[37]

Scholars have long noted America democracy has been for decades "the domain of corporate and governmental elites whose overriding ambition is to perpetuate their own quasi-

oligarchical status."[38] This point was demonstrated in one of the early Republican primary debates where Trump stated the following: "I give to everybody. When [politicians] call, I give…You know what? When I need something from them two years later, three years later, I call them and they are there for me."[39] What is surprising is how Trump was able to 'invert' this statement into a populist appeal. This was done by Trump claiming he would be different from the corporate-political shills of either major political party, coupled with Trump's campaign promise of 'draining the swamp,' that is, ridding Washington D.C. of corporate influence. The Trump campaign was able to use these inverted populist appeals to convince roughly 63 million voters that to 'restore' US democracy to 'the people' they should vote for Trump: a symbol and living embodiment of corporate power and business interests. The populism Trumpism champions is not really populism at all, but an inversion of it. Trumpism is populism for the few and to the benefit of those crony capitalists that Trump attacked on the campaign trail. Trumpism co-opts populist rhetoric to pursue policies that will ultimately undermine the best interests of 'the people,' many of which voted for Trump.[40]

Nationalism

Nationalism means a "devotion to the interests of one's own nation over the interests of other states."[41] A nation is taken here as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[42] Nativism denotes policies of the state protecting the interests of native inhabitants against immigrants, migrants, or any group of people perceived as a threat or 'the other.' Nationalist appeals are often wholly subjective claims about the status or strength of the state or nation as a unit, such as exaggerated dangers wrought by immigration or the sanctity of sovereign borders.

Trump's 2016 campaign rhetoric was loaded with nativist, dog-whistled subtext of racism and implicit scapegoating of immigrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities for economic troubles and exaggerated concerns over federal government spending. One of Trump's earliest campaign speeches said as much: "when Mexico sends its people…They're sending people that have lots of problems…They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."[43] Trump's nativist rhetoric was popular with his supporters, leading to the 'build the wall!' chants at Trump's campaign rallies, 'the wall' being Trumpism's solution to the issue of illegal immigration and southern border security in the US.

There is a particular vacuousness in relying on such an archaic means of securing state borders.[44] Walls in and of themselves are no match for nuclear or biological weapons, airborne bacteria, cyber attacks, an air force, or weaponized drones. In fact, walls or fences do a poor job at keeping illegal immigrants in or out. The buildup of security along the 1,933 mile long US-Mexico border over the last few decades, for instance, has not curbed the rate of illegal immigrants, illegal drugs or migrant deaths significantly, nor has it made the US any more secure on its southern border.[45] President Trump, nevertheless, intends to build 'the wall,' claiming throughout his 2016 campaign that Mexico would pay for its construction,[46] even as it appears the American taxpayer will be paying for the wall if funding for it passes in Congress.[47]

Internationally, Trumpism's nationalism is a rejection of globalization and the cosmopolitanism that informed post-World War II global relations.[48] The US pulling out of the Paris Agreement in June 2017 is a good example of this.[49] Trumpism also distinguishes itself from US foreign policy 'doctrines' of the past. Trumpism claims to be critical of the Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive war and the handling of the GWOT.[50] Trumpism also rejects the ambiguous Obama Doctrine of negotiation and collaboration, dismissing it as weak and

indecisive.[51] Whatever the 'Trump doctrine' is or might become, the foreign policy ambitions of Trumpism already seem precluded.[52] Trump has already "squandered a genuine opportunity to put American foreign policy on a more solid footing and has managed to unite and empower opposition at home and abroad," by insulting the US's closest allies, generating uncertainty in global economics, and by giving enemies of the US "powerful new arguments with which to embarrass, delegitimize, and undermine America's image and reputation."[53]

Nationalism is also expressed domestically as a form of economic nationalism, particularly in its "unapologetic deference to 19th century muscular labor and those who employ and organize it."[54] Trump's desire to 'make America great again' includes building back-up manufacturing industries from drilling, steel, construction, farming, mining, and logging. While laudable, Trumpism's economic nationalism is anachronistic in the face of automation, environmental degradation, and globalization. For example, coal-mining communities throughout the Appalachian regions of the US whole-heartedly backed Trump because he promised to bring back coal mining jobs that have been in decline for decades. The solution Trumpism offers is rolling back federal environmental regulations designed to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate their effects.[55] However, it has not been tax burdens or environmental regulations that have stymied American coal production. Instead, it is has been shifting dynamics in the global market for coal, alongside "the shale gas revolution, which has eroded coal's price advantage; cost reductions in renewable energy technology; the overall flat demand in the power sector…and declining coal mine labor productivity," all of which have contributed to the coal industries decline.[56]

Another example of Trumpism's economic nationalism is the pre-inaugural hyping of Trump's 'Carrier deal' (i.e., Carrier, a subsidiary of United Technologies or UTEC). *Newsweek*

writes: "Trump and Vice President-elect Mike Pence rewarded Carrier with $7 million in tax incentives only after the company threatened to send 2,000 jobs overseas…it appears that [Trump's] plan in practice is to line companies' pockets as these companies continue to lay off their workers."[57] This action did save roughly 850 to 900 jobs at that single Indiana Carrier plant, but less than the 1,100 jobs Trump claimed the deal would save, as some UTEC employees will still lose their jobs as they are shipped off to Mexico. The Carrier deal is an example of crony capitalism that Trump rallied against during his campaign: policies mutually advantageous to business leaders and government officials. On the one hand, the deal was a great public relations opportunity for the president-elect, showing Trump 'getting things done' before coming into office. On the other hand, UTEC is still able to downsize the number of employees at the Indiana Carrier plant and conduct its business elsewhere.

In short, the nationalism of Trumpism appears a lot like the populism of Trumpism: rhetoric aimed not to improve the livelihoods of the many, but to line the pockets of the few. The nationalism evoked by Trumpism appears largely as a discursive strategy used to mobilize Trump's base of support based on misleading concerns manipulating citizens deeply entrenched feelings of patriotism and national pride for political purposes.

Charisma

Trump is not the first celebrity to run for or win a political office. Fred Thompson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sonny Bono, Al Franken, and Jesse Ventura, are all examples of celebrities who have won, held, or hold state or federal offices throughout the US. The most famous celebrity to run for higher office, of course, was Ronald Reagan, who had been a Hollywood actor back in the 1940's. In the early 1950's, Reagan began to play an active role in Republican politics and would eventually be elected twice as Governor of California. These

credentials gave Reagan credibility as a presidential candidate and as POTUS. The same cannot be said for President Trump.

Charisma is not the same as celebrity, but they do inform one another. Celebrity is being a famous person in a society's popular culture. Charisma is a compelling attractiveness that can inspire devotion. Max Weber describes charisma as "the authority of the exceptional, personal 'gift of grace,' or charisma, the entirely personal devotion to, and personal trust in, revelations, heroism, or other qualities of leadership in an individual."[58] Timothy Luke writes, "charisma is not a personal trait or an attribute of personality. Rather, it is…a mode of subjective legitimation, born…of a belief in the mysterious gift of one man which that man shares with those who follow him."[59] The charismatic qualities Trump is said to have (or says he has) are bestowed upon him by the people that believe he has them, when, in fact, he may not possess those attributes at all.

The function of charisma is 'selling' the Trumpism 'brand' of far right-wing politics vis-a-vis Donald Trump who serves as Trumpism's celebrity spokesperson. Charisma helped Trump, and therefore Trumpism, appeal to the masses – "masses" in Hannah Arendt's definition of the term, meaning "politically indifferent people who never join a party and hardly ever go to the polls."[60] Trump's charisma enabled him to reach potential voters who might normally ignore politics altogether, perhaps restoring for some of these people their faith in the American political process, as well as affirming their political subjectivity.[61]

Anti-Intellectualism

Anti-intellectualism in the United States is not new.[62] Richard Hofstadter defines anti-intellectualism as "a resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life."[63] Intellect is what anti-intellectualism is opposed to. Intellect is "the critical, creative, and

contemplative side of mind…intellect examines, ponders, wonders, theorizes, criticizes, imagines…and looks for the meanings of situations as whole…a unique manifestation of human dignity, is both praised and assailed as a quality in men."[64]

Anti-intellectualism in the US is the result of, first, religious faith, namely Christianity. Concomitant to this is, second, primitivism: an attitude associated with phrases like our 'God-given nature' and trusting one's 'gut feeling' when making decisions. Third, and most crucially, is business culture.[65] Business and intellectualism have always been in opposition to one another, as business has always been "stigmatized by most American intellectuals as the classic enemy of intellect" because of the "inherent dissonance between business enterprise and intellectual enterprise: being dedicated to different sets of values, they are bound to conflict; and intellect is always potentially threatening to any institutional apparatus or to fixed centers of power."[66] The intellectual, however, is justified in being critical of the power possessed by wealthy elites, the intellectual "well aware of the elaborate apparatus which the businessman uses to mold our civilization to his purposes and adapt it to his standards."[67] It should not be surprising, then, that a wealthy businessman such as Donald Trump is the namesake for a set of principles imbued by anti-intellectualism. As Hanson points out, "in the next four years [under the Trump administration] expect a continual war on intellectuals and academics."[68]

The function of anti-intellectualism within Trumpism is similar to that of charisma, specifically in Trumpism appealing to "a large group of anti-intellectual, conspiracy minded and alienated malcontents, the same type of voter that backed third party Presidential candidate Ross Perot and George Wallace, as well as Senator Joseph McCarthy."[69] More importantly, the anti-intellectualism of Trumpism speaks to the importance of an educated citizenry in regards to the

practice of democracy in the US. Quoting Wendy Brown, Trumpism potentially signals that the idea of "educated citizens oriented toward problems of public life is left in the dust."[70]

Education has always been a site of political contestation in the US, but with Trumpism, the stakes now appear considerably higher.[71] The 'battles' over education today might be described, superficially at least, as "between the ignorant and the informed, between those who have information and can extrapolate from it and those who do not and cannot."[72] Ignorant is not equivalent to identifying as conservative, as many Trump supporters are more educated than the average American.[73] Being informed is not equivalent to identifying as liberal, either. Instead, ignorant denotes individuals or groups who would be adverse, maybe even hostile, to hearing evidence or 'facts' contrary to what they already believe in. An informed individual or group would likely be the opposite of this. If Trumpism is to endure, then efforts to keep the public as ignorant as possible would be a wise political strategy. Such a strategy is perhaps taking place with Trump's pick to head the US Department of Education, Betsy DeVos. As Secretary of Education, DeVos' intends to divest federal funding from public schools towards funding school voucher programs and charter schools.[74] Such policies may cause the US to have varying levels of educational quality, as these discrepancies will only further exacerbate the divide between citizens over the nature 'facts' and their importance to political life.

Potentially Fascist Tendencies

Fascism is about building "the ideal national community living and thriving in an ideal nation-state;"[75] presenting "a picture of individuals and classes merely as cells in a larger, all-embracing organism – the society or state – which can be strong only when all the parts unite behind a single party and a supreme leader."[76] With fascism, greater political consciousness can be achieved by becoming "a powerful, dominant nation united behind a heroic absolute leader to

rule its own destiny."[77] Fascism is often brought about by movements claiming to stand up for the 'little guy' or 'forgotten man,' touting protective policies against abstract, misunderstood and distant forces such as modernity, science or globalization. Depending on the fascist movement, fascism is not opposed to promoting massive (socialistic) public works projects to improve a nation's quality of life, values, or defense against external and internal threats.[78]

Theodor Adorno and colleagues in the 1950's noted some of the conditions that need to be present for fascist movements to emerge:

> Fascism, in order to be successful as a political movement, must have a mass basis. It must secure not only the frightened submission but the active cooperation of the great majority of the people…it favors the few at the expense of the many…It must therefore make its major appeal, not to rational self-interest, but to emotional needs…Why are they so easily fooled? Because, it may be supposed, of their personality structure; because of long-established patterns of hopes and aspirations, fears and anxieties that dispose them to certain beliefs and make them resistant to others. The tasks of fascist propaganda…is rendered easier to the degree that anti-democratic potentials already exist in the great mass of people.[79]

Applied to Trumpism, take for instance the following. Trump has a mass basis. Roughly 63 million Americans voted for him, as Trump is perhaps more popular than many liberals, pollsters, or media pundits realize.[80] Trump was able to tap into a number of voter anxieties through discourses built on themes of desperation, destruction, degradation and the dangers of the proverbial 'other' (this is not to forget the concerns raised over Hillary Clinton's emails). In this respect, Trump's coalition was arguably 'frightened into submission.' As noted above, Trumpism favors the needs of the few over the many in its populism and domestic, economic nationalism. Additionally, Trump's rhetoric largely aims at 'emotional needs,' appeals that target the political subjectivity of his base and conservatives, such as standing for the National Anthem at NFL football games or 'winning' the alleged war on Christmas. Furthermore, consider the striking similarity between Trump and Mussolini, a man whose power "was defined by a special

sort of pageantry…a self-styled outsider who railed against the political system," a quote that

could easily describe the nature of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.[81] While the US is not

anti-democratic *per se*, democracy in the US has always been relatively restrained, as anti-

democratic practices continue to exist in the United States.[82]

Adorno and colleagues suggested that many US citizens are "potentially fascistic,"

meaning that some citizens "would readily accept fascism if it should become a strong or

respectable social movement," as these individuals are more susceptible to fascist propaganda.[83]

The characteristics of the 'potentially fascistic' individual (provided by Douglas Kellner via

Adorno, et al.,) are listed below and are accompanied by brief examples:

a. *Conventionalism* – Rigid adherence to conventional, middle-class values

Trump's appeal to predominantly white middle-class people.[84]

b. *Authoritarian submission* – Submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral
authorities of the in-group

Trump's pro-business, Wall Street, Fortune 500 CEO authorities and placating to
the religious right.[85]

c. *Authoritarian aggression* – Tendency to be on the lookout for, and to condemn, rejects,
and punishes people who violate conventional values

President Trump's hostility to immigrants or 'the other.'

d. *Anti-intraception* – Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-minded

Trumpism is characterized by rampant anti-intellectualism (see above).

e. *Superstition and stereotyping* – The belief in mystical determinants of the individual's
fate; the disposition to think in rigid categories

Trump's claim that only 'he' can combat the dystopian nightmare that has become
American life.[86]

f. *Power and toughness* – Preoccupation with the dominance –submission, strong-weak, leader-follower dimension

Trump's nationalist, law and order rhetoric and proposed military buildup.[87]

g. *Destructiveness and cynicism* – Generalized hostility, vilification of the human

Trump's paranoia regarding the 24/7 news media.[88]

h. *Projectivity* – The disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world; the projection outwards of unconscious emotional impulses

Again, Trump's use of Twitter, but also his claim about American "carnage."[89]

i. *Sex* – Exaggerated concern with sexual 'goings-on.'[90]

"Grab'em by the pussy."[91]

Crucially, and to avoid being carried away, not all Trump supporters or Republicans possess these attributes. Additionally, the United States has not become a fascist country with the election of Donald Trump. However, Trumpism and those who voted for Trump are, at least by the standards above, potentially fascistic, whether those individuals are cognizant of this or not.[92] Claims of Trumpism being fascistic are not unwarranted or exaggerated. This does not mean that Trumpism is fascistic, but that 'fascism' is as approximate to describing this particular aspect of Trumpism that our current political language affords, illuminating the problem of semantics in conjunction to the crisis of post-truth.

Post-Truth/Fantasy

Post-truth signifies that as a society and culture, the United States has moved from a time where 'truth' mattered, to a time where 'truth' is in decline or no longer relevant.[93] Importantly, 'post' does not signify a time that has passed completely: we are still informed by figurative 'leftovers' or remainders of the previous era. As Brown puts it, the prefix 'post' "signifies a

formation that is temporally after but not over that to which it is affixed…we use the term 'post' only for a present whose past continues to capture and structure it."[94]

Trumpism utilizes post-truth, for example, when Trump or members of his administration cite 'alternate facts' or deny observable political reality in order to cultivate the image of President Trump 'winning' in some form or another. Quoting Francois Debrix, exercises in post-truth are an attempt to create Trumpism's "own rules of evidence, its own historical events, and its own truth."[95] An example of post-truth was witnessed the day after President Trump was sworn into office. Trump sent his first press secretary, Sean Spicer, to address the press over a story of no political consequence: the number of spectators at Trump's inaugural. The National Parks Service 'tweeted' a photo on the social media platform Twitter comparing the crowd size of President Obama's inaugural in 2009 to Trump's. If you are to believe your eyes, there are considerable differences between the two inaugural crowds on the National Lawn. Spicer told the press "the protective covering on the grass created 'defective highlighting' [and] made the crowd appear smaller than it was in actuality."[96] The following day on NBC news *Meet the Press*, hosted by Chuck Todd, Trump campaign advisor, Kellyanne Conway engaged in post-truth, stating that the Trump administration was using 'alternative facts' to back up its claims of the inaugural crowd size. However, Todd made clear to Conway what 'alternate facts' really are: "alternative facts are not facts. They're falsehoods."[97]

Post-truth is not new to politics.[98] Antecedents of post-truth are evident in texts describing the Sophists of ancient Greece: those skilled in teaching the arts of political rhetoric or tactics of persuasion for aspiring politicians.[99] The Sophists taught that people make (political) decisions based on subjective considerations of what the individual feels is 'true' instead of facts. Post-truth is also seen in Plato's *Republic* in the passages concerning the "noble lie" Socrates and his interlocutors discuss as crucial to founding their city-in-speech Kallipolis. Socrates

compares the 'noble lie' to a "Phoenician story," legends or myths used by storytellers to persuade people one way or another that are not necessarily true.[100] Machiavelli also speaks of post-truth. In certain situations, to his or her advantage, Machiavelli advises leaders to lie or "not keep [their] word when it would be to [their] disadvantage."[101] The point to make is that lying or post-truth in politics has been around for quite some time.

The first use of 'post-truth' appears to date back to a 25-year-old essay published in *The Nation* magazine written by Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich in January of 1992.[102] Tesich writes that after Watergate, Americans "began to shy away from the truth. We came to equate truth with bad news and we didn't want bad news anymore, no matter how true or vital to our health as a nation. We looked to our government to protect us from truth."[103] Ralph Keynes continues Tesich's history of post-truth: "by the time of Monica Lewinsky and weapons of mass destruction, the mood had changed…Dishonesty has come to feel less like the exception and more like the norm."[104] Keynes uses 'post-truth' to describe how we "come up with rationales for tampering with truth so we can dissemble [truth] guilt-free," and in turn, create a reality that is more comforting than the real one we are living or experiencing.[105]

Instead of asking what post-truth is, the better question to ask perhaps is why post-truth (inasmuch as Trumpism) is considered something 'new' in the first place. Why have we forgotten the role of lies and deception in our politics, with emphasis on 'forgetting'? Jenny Edkins writes "forgetting is essential because for 'politics' to take place, the way in which the current political structures came into being must be overlooked."[106] If political life requires citizens to forget the politics they experience, then post-truth is a means to achieve 'forgetting,' the objective being for citizens to fall for the "trick" that liberal capitalist democracy produces the outcomes it purports it does, when in fact, that is not always the case.[107] Post-truth functions, in part, by way of what psychologists call "motivated ignorance," a concept that explains why

18

"we find inconvenient political facts to be genuinely unpleasant."[108] Rather than considering evidence contrary to our beliefs or confronting uncomfortable situations, Americans today seem to intentionally and willfully ignore those things to begin with. President Trump is no exception to this. As Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont stated on a CNN Town Hall on May 16, 2017, "there has never been a president or even candidate that has lied all the time."[109]

Post-truth has far reaching implications for US politics, society and culture, particularly when a corollary of post-truth, 'fantasy,' becomes a predominant part of political life. Kurt Anderson puts forward American's have descended into what he calls 'fantasyland,' a tongue-in-cheek (but wholly serious) concept signaling that "our whole social environment and each of its overlapping parts – cultural, religious, political, intellectual, psychological – have become conducive to spectacular fallacy and make-believe."[110] From Columbus and the search for gold in the New World, the Great Awakenings of the 19th century, to the idea of 'relativism' that holds sway in particular academic and cultural circles, the United States might be taken, on the one hand, as being a political experiment of governing a multitude of fantasies; or on the other hand, at the very least, a country on a gradual trajectory of becoming further enveloped by fantasy. For Anderson, this is largely because "being American means we can believe any damn thing we want, that our beliefs are equal or superior to anyone else's, experts be damned."[111]

Fantasy speaks to the fervency of (Christian) religion in the US, New Age mysticism, to Walt Disney World and the hyperreality of American political, easily seen in the tabloidized sensationalism of 24/7 news media representations, hype and the 'larger-than-life' braggadocio that Trumpism exudes.[112] Fantasy in American life is not just a matter of people's credulity, but of "people assembling make-believe lifestyles as well," from Civil War reenactments, so-called cos-play, and people immersing themselves in online, digital, virtual realities and effectively,

blocking out 'reality' beyond their immediate periphery.[113] Post-truth/fantasy reflects, perhaps,

the deteriorating quality of political, social, cultural and economic experience in the United

States, one gradually slipping into "disarray and decline" due to our unwillingness to face the

harsher aspects of our political and social reality.[114] 'Fantasy' is post-truth felt, lived, and

experienced in everyday, ordinary, political life. Trumpism is perhaps, in part, a result of this.

Post-truth is considered the crisis political science because post-truth seems to touch upon

several distinct crises US politics faces in the present moment. Post-truth is a crisis of the critical

faculties of individuals in terms of making decisions, being citizens and practicing democracy.

There appears little to no desire among the masses to break away from the escapism that post-

truth/fantasy affords them. Post-truth appears to confirm what political and social critics have

long recognized: Americans are more receptive to reassuring lies than inconvenient truths about

themselves, their society, or the world. Tesich's conclusion to his 1992 essay encapsulates this

point, demonstrating the linkage of Trumpism to post-truth, suggesting that:

> we are rapidly becoming prototypes of a people that totalitarian monsters could only
> drool about in their dreams. All the dictators up to now have had to work hard at
> suppressing the truth. We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary, that
> we have acquired a spiritual mechanism that can delude truth of any significance. In a
> very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in
> some post-truth world.[115]

III. Trumpism, Education, Democracy

Trump supporters voted for Trump because of their social identity, which is taken in this

paper as synonymous to one's political subjectivity. William Connolly writes identity "is a

relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized…Identity is thus

slippery…[and] stands in a complex, political relation to the differences it seeks to fix."[116] By

identity, this study means essentially one's sense of self. Education is considered here to be the

key to understanding the appeal of Trumpism, how and why Trump won the 2016 election, and importantly, the political subjectivity of Trump voters.[117] Development of these subjectivities is contingent on the value afforded education throughout distinct "life worlds" in the US.[118] Education is assumed here to have some effect on individual and group political subjectivity and therefore, political efficacy, that is, how citizens think and perceive their role in the American political process. This is why Trumpism and post-truth are linked to the prospect of an educated citizenry in respect to the practice of democracy in the United States.

Although fallible, exit polls from the 2016 election show that among those with a 'high school education or less' comprised 51 percent of Trump's coalition, compared to Clinton's 46 percent. Those with 'some college' voted for Trump by 51 percent compared to Clinton's 43 percent. College graduates overall preferred Clinton by 5 percentage points. Clinton won 49 percent of college graduates who voted, compared to Trump's 44 percent of these voters. Those with a postgraduate education went 58 percent for Clinton to Trump's 37 percent. The most shocking statistic is this: 66 percent of white people without a college degree voted for Trump. Clinton got only 29 percent of these voters. In terms of white people with a college degree Clinton received 45 percent of these voters, compared to 48 percent for Trump.[119]

The conclusion one might reach is that Trump appealed to less educated members of the American electorate, specifically less educated white people. This is not to say that only uneducated people voted for Trump. Indeed, white college graduates typically trend Republican by a few points.[120] This conclusion does not discount that the majority of Trump's base are middle and upper middle class white people, most of which, presumably, have a college degree.[121] Nevertheless, the contrast between non-college and college educated white people and whom they voted for is too considerable to ignore. It is with some reservation that this study puts

forward the following: did Trump win because voters are ignorant? Data and similar assertions

by scholars and commentators answer this question in the affirmative. David Rothkopf writes:

> [Trump] won power because his supporters are threatened by what they don't understand,
> and what they don't understand is almost everything. Indeed, from evolution to data
> about our economy to the science of vaccines to the threats we face in the world, they
> reject vast subjects rooted in fact in order to have reality conform to their worldviews.
> They don't dig for truth; they skim the media for anything that makes them feel better
> about themselves. To many of them, knowledge is not a useful tool but a cunning barrier
> elites have created to keep power from the average man and woman. The same is true for
> experience, skills, and expertise. These things require time and work and study and often
> challenge our systems of belief. Truth is hard; shallowness is easy.[122]

Jason Brennan remarks, "never have educated voters so uniformly rejected a candidate. But

never before have the lesser-educated so uniformly supported a candidate."[123] What Brennan and

Rothkopf are suggesting is that Trump won the election because American voters are essentially

'uninformed,' which does not mean that people are ignorant or stupid. Instead, American culture

and, crucially, the nature of democracy in the US creates "bad incentives."[124] Democracy in

America allows eligible and non-eligible voters alike to "indulge silly, false, delusional beliefs –

precisely because such beliefs cost them nothing…as a result, individual voters tend to vote

expressively, to show their commitment to their worldview and team," or as noted above, their

social identity and, thus, their political subjectivity.[125]

Political Science for decades has rested on assumptions about how and why (eligible)

people vote: people vote in terms of rational self interest, as voters are "utility maximizing actors

who [have] consistent and externally determined preferences along some uni-dimensional left-

right spectrum."[126] Rational self-interest suggests that when people make choices about what to

buy or who to vote for they look at all the facts and information available to them. However, not

everyone's rationality is the same nor does everyone seek out a variety of information in making

consumer choices or deciding one way and not the other on policies and candidates to vote for.

This assumption of rational self-interest generates a persistent myth about "the wisdom of popular judgments by informed and engaged citizens."[127] This paper calls this the myth of the rationally informed voter.

Voter turnout in the US has never been what scholars and critics have said it ought to be.[128] As Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky note, "Americans are noted for their lukewarm levels of participation as compared with voters in most Western European democracies."[129] From 1972 to 2000, voter turnout in US presidential elections stayed roughly 50 percent (in non-presidential election years, voter turnout drops into the lower 40 percent range), suggesting that roughly half of all eligible voters in the US do not care about voting or taking the time to do so.[130] Robert Dahl, Reinhold Niebuhr and Walter Lippmann all noted decades ago that "the great majority of citizens pay little attention to politics."[131] What Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels add to these observations is that "even the most informed voters, typically make choices not on the basis of policy preferences or ideology, but on the basis of *who they are – their social identities*. In turn, those social identities shape how they think, what they think, and where they belong in the party system."[132] Achen and Bartels conclude that:

> election outcomes are mostly just erratic reflections of the current balance of partisan loyalties in a given political system. In a two-party system with competitive elections, that means that the choice between the candidates is essentially a coin toss. Thus, the picture that emerges is not a 'portrait of citizens moved to consider decisions as they play their solemn role of making and unmaking governments.' Rather, elections are capricious collective decisions based on considerations that ought…to be largely irrelevant – and that will, in any case, soon be forgotten by the voters themselves… group and partisan loyalties, not policy preference or ideologies, are fundamental in democratic politics.[133]

None of this should be surprising. Recall Socrates' discussion of 'democracy' in Book VIII of Plato's *Republic*. Democracy is second to the last of the political constitutions Socrates discusses. Democracy is considered the best of the worst by Socrates because, first, the origins of democracy are violent in nature: the poor kill the former oligarchy and then fill the offices of the

former oligarchy with themselves; and second, because the value most cherished in a democracy is freedom, meaning the freedom to pursue one's individual interests. However, freedom also means having the liberty of doing nothing at all, politically or otherwise.[134] For Socrates, the love of 'freedom' in a democracy can potentially lead to a democracy's demise because the freedom loving democrat will likely be ignorant on how to govern effectively. Furthermore, due to so much freedom, the incentives to be informed and participate in politics may not be fully cultivated for citizens to want to participate in politics. When a democratic society is faced with crises, Socrates suggests democratic citizens will be susceptible to the worst kind of political regime, tyranny, falling for demagogic appeals and grandiose promises of resolving political, social or economic problems.

Democracy in America has never implied a politically virtuous citizenry suited to the responsibilities a democracy demands. Democracy requires a citizenry educated in matters of civics, participates in public elections and puts a high premium on citizenship.[135] Considering the level of voter turnout in US election cycles, Americans too often fail to live up to the requirements of a democracy, not because we are stupid, but because that is the nature of what democracy in America entails. The problem is not democracy but the participants, which is, in part, a reflection of the political education of citizens and the value we afford the social sciences and humanities as a whole.[136] The myth of the rationally informed voter obscures the fact that most Americans are not informed when it comes to voting, as it reifies the impression that American democracy is not considerably flawed. This is not to say that votes do not count or the system is 'rigged.' The myth of the rationally informed voter informs aspects of how and why Trump won the 2016 election and the ascendancy of Trumpism. Considering the level of fear, apathy, and motivated ignorance circulating up to and throughout American life in 2016, as

linked to the spectacle of politics generated by the 24/7 news media, it is no wonder, then, that Trump and thus, Trumpism, was able to rise so quickly to power.

IV: Conclusions: Trumpism and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism

In the final analysis, Trumpism is a loose and amorphous set of principles, at best. Trumpism appeals to a particular segment of the American electorate: the white 'mass' of Trump voters from the lower class to the affluent, but predominantly the white middle and upper middle classes.[137] Many (but not all) of these voters are less educated and angry at the direction the country is heading, and seem to show a greater willingness to accept potentially fascistic policies. Trumpism is appealing not because of Trump's vision, political acumen, or wisdom. Trumpism is appealing because it offers quick fixes to alleged problems in the form of bankrupt, narrow-minded and anachronistic solutions lacking nuance or depth which complex political, social, cultural, and economic issues require if they are to be mitigated or resolved.

It remains debatable whether Trumpism is an ideology. On the one hand, if Trumpism is just a rehash of paleoconservative thought, then perhaps the argument can be made that Trumpism is an ideology: a repackaging of hard line conservative ideas, but ideas made more accessible thanks to Trump's 'rebranding' and charisma. On the other hand, Trumpism is perhaps not an ideology at all. As the *National Review* put it, perhaps there is no "such thing as…Trumpism to begin with."[138] As this paper has attempted to show, Trumpism is an *ad hoc* approach to politics, one that is often intentionally misleading, contradictory, ambiguous, and confused. In other words, Trumpism seems to be, more or less, 'made up' as President Trump goes along, Trumpism appearing wholly "consistent with the attributes of [Trump] himself: unpredictable, instinctual and undisciplined."[139]

The crisis of political science today may be generalized as the crisis of post-truth, one tied to the problem of semantics and linked to the prospect of a politically educated citizenry and the practice of democracy in American political life. How can we cultivate an educated citizenry, good citizenship, and practice democracy if we no longer can agree on the basic premise of what 'facts' are, much less the discourse we use to describe politics? To be sure, much of our political language is still, for the most part, accurate. Nevertheless, our political vocabulary appears inadequate to fully assess the implications of Trumpism, or for that matter, enable civil discussion that might persuade and inform. Political Science and all that it informs now confronts a politics where previous facts, assumptions, and precedents have gone topsy-turvy. We can reject 'facts' at will based on our 'beliefs,' and no amount of hard data or theory is likely to change anyone's mind on anything politically substantive or important. One solution to this crisis is enriching citizens political education: prioritizing civics and the humanities throughout public and higher education in hopes of cultivating subjectivities with a greater appreciation for political life and, importantly, 'facts.' This solution is not as some critics claim today that would 'brainwash' ostensibly conservative students turning them into liberals. Instead, this political education would emphasize constructing logical arguments based on fact, adhering to philosophical, theoretical, ideological and historical tenants of American politics, regardless of respective political party identification.

As a tentative conclusion, then, and to be taken up in another essay, Trumpism and the crisis of Political Science might better be understood within the analytical framework offered by Sheldon Wolin's 2008 *Democracy Incorporated*. Wolin argues the United States is becoming an "inverted totalitarian" state, the product of what Wolin calls "managed democracy" and "superpower."[140] Inverted totalitarianism denotes "the political coming of age of corporate power

and the political demobilization of the citizenry" in the US.[141] This demobilization directly refers

to the political education of citizens. For Wolin, Trump would symbolize the US's first "CEO-

president."[142] Trump's cabinet picks, such as former CEO of ExxonMobil Rex Tillerson and

former Goldman Sachs executive Steven Mnuchin all lend support to this 'coming of age of

corporate power.'[143] Wolin's thesis offers an analytical framework to understand the nature of

Trumpism and the implications it poses for American political life and the political and social

conditions in which post-truth thrives. 'Inverted' compensates for the imprecision of our political

discourse to describe a kind of politics that is not quite democratic but not quite fascistic either.

Trumpism and post-truth are deceptively more insidious than many might realize. Trumpism and

the crisis of Political Science attests to is a citizenry that is increasingly oblivious to the

difference between political fact and fiction, as well as a citizenry that does not seem to

recognize, nor does it care to understand, why this is problematic in the first place.

NOTES

[1] Sheldon S. Wolin, *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 1.

[2] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 11. Generally, the political can be considered what is common to the whole community, society, or state. It pertains to questions that are of a genuine political nature and relevance (e.g., quality of political life, effectiveness of political rule, the dispensing of justice), not to be decided by or confused with other 'spheres' or 'domains,' (such as economics) that exist in civilized society.

[3] Sam Kriss, "Liberals On the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/liberals-on-the-edge-of-a-nervous-breakdown-214727 (Accessed February 2, 2017).

[4] Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner and Others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 236.

[5] David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 17.

[6] Patricia Mooney Nickel, *Public Sociology and Civil Society: Governance, Politics, and Power* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2013), pp. 14-15.

[7] Douglas Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 16. By 24/7 news media the study uses Kellner's definition: an "ever-shifting, evolving, and contested site in which numerous and sometimes contradictory interests, views, agendas, discourses, resistances, objectives, and non-objectives are fought for."

[8] William Davies, "How Statistics Lost Their Power – and Why We Should Fear What Comes Next," theguardian.com https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jan/19/crisis-of-statistics-big-data-democracy (Accessed February 2, 2017).

[9] Susan B. Glasser, "Covering Politics in a 'Post-Truth' America," brookings.edu, https://www.brookings.edu/essay/covering-politics-in-a-post-truth-america/ (Accessed December 16, 2016).

[10] Craig Leonard Brians, Lars Willnat, Jarol B. Manheim, and Richard C. Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods* – Eighth Edition (Boston: Longman – Pearson Education, 2011), p. 2.

[11] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 133. This study is not concerned with philosophical questions of truth (e.g., what is truth). This essay assumes that there is truth in the world, and that we humans have useful, but fallible, heuristics that help to distinguish fact from fiction, and that human beings are capable of knowing the difference.

[12] Beckie Supiano, "Uncharted Waters for Higher Education in the Trump Era," chronicle.com, http://www.chronicle.com/article/Uncharted-Waters-for/238889 (Accessed January 17, 2017).

[13] Fernanda Zamudio-Suarez, "After Trump's Election, Political Scientists Feel New Urgency," chronicle.com, http://www.chronicle.com/article/After-Trump-s-Election/238703 (Accessed January 8, 2017).

[14] Peter Baker, "Trump White House Tests a Nation's Capacity for Outrage," nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/24/us/politics/attorney-general-bush-trump.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news (Accessed July 25, 2017).

[15] Jason Blakely, "Is Political Science this Year's Election Casualty?" theatlantic.com, http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/11/is-political-science-another-election-casualty/507515/?utm_source=twb (Accessed November 25, 2016).

[16] Nathan J. Robinson, "What This Means, How This Happened, What To Do Now: Dealing With The Election of Donald Trump," currentaffairs.org, https://www.currentaffairs.org/2016/11/what-this-means-how-this-happened-what-to-do-now (Accessed December 19, 2016).

[17] Jonathan Freedland, "Don't call it post-truth. There's a simpler word: lies," theguardian.com, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/16/not-post-truth-simpler-words-lies-aleppo-trump-mainstream (Accessed December 20, 2016).

[18] Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 1. Edelman states: "the spectacle constituted by news reporting continuously constructs and reconstructs social problems, crises, enemies and leaders and so creates a succession of threats and reassurances. These constructed problems and personalities furnish the content of political journalism and the data for historical and analytic political studies."

[19] Larry N. George, "American Insecurities and the Ontopolitics of US Pharmacotic Wars," in *The Geopolitics of American Insecurity: Terror, Power, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Francois Debrix and Mark J. Lacy (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 36.

[20] Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), p. 10.

[21] Thomas Dumm, *A Politics of the Ordinary* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 1. Following Dumm, ordinary life is considered in this study to include the customs, habits, rituals, artifacts, arts and so on that constitute "the life world, the everyday, the quotidian, the low, the common, the private, the personal…[it] is what everybody knows."

[22] David Greenberg, "An Intellectual History of Trumpism," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/trumpism-intellectual-history-populism-paleoconservatives-214518 (Accessed December 27, 2016).

[23] Alvin Felzenberg, "How William F. Buckley, Jr., Changed His Mind on Civil Rights," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/05/13/william-f-buckley-civil-rights-215129 (Accessed May 13, 2017).

[24] Tim Alberta, "The Ideas Made It, But I Didn't" politico.com, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/22/pat-buchanan-trump-president-history-profile-215042 (Accessed May 8, 2017).

[25] Haya El Nasser, "Whites projected to become a minority," aljazeera.com, http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/25/whites-on-target-to-become-a-us-minority.html (Accessed February 16, 2017).

[26] Dale Beran, "4chan: The Skeleton Key to the Rise of Trump," medium.com, https://medium.com/@DaleBeran/4chan-the-skeleton-key-to-the-rise-of-trump-624e7cb798cb (Accessed May 13, 2017).

[27] Greenberg, "An Intellectual History of Trumpism,"

[28] Eliza Collins, "9 things you need to know about the alt-right movement," usatoday.com, http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2016/11/22/alt-right-trump-white-nationalist-clinton-breitbart-spencer/94273282/ (Accessed February 16, 2017)

[29] Zack Beauchamp, "What the alt-right actually wants from President Trump," vox.com, http://www.vox.com/world/2016/11/28/13716038/alt-right-policy-platform-trump (Accessed February 19, 2017).

[30] Josh Dawsey, "Bannon out as White House chief strategist," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/18/bannon-out-as-white-house-chief-strategist-241786 (Accessed August 18, 2017).

[31] Julie Alderman, "White Nationalists Knew Exactly What Trump Was Saying About The Civil War," mediamatters.org, https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2017/05/02/racists-slavery-apologists-and-white-nationalists-knew-exactly-what-trump-was-saying-about-civil-war/216241 (Accessed May 2, 2017).

[32] Joe Heim, Ellie Silverman, T. Rees Shapiro and Emma Brown, "One dead as car strikes crowds amid protests of white nationalist gathering in Charlottesville; two police die in helicopter crash," washingtonpost.com, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/fights-in-advance-of-saturday-protest-in-charlottesville/2017/08/12/155fb636-7f13-11e7-83c7-5bd5460f0d7e_story.html?utm_term=.c11d89ded5dc (Accessed August 13, 2017).

[33] Rick Perlstein, "I Thought I Understood the American Right. Trump Proved Me Wrong," nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/11/magazine/i-thought-i-understood-the-american-right-trump-proved-me-wrong.html (Accessed April 12, 20017). Perlstein states: "Trump's connection to this alternate right-wing genealogy is not just rhetorical. In 1927, 1,000 hooded Klansmen fought police in Queens in what The Times reported as a "free for all." One of those arrested at the scene was the president's father, Fred Trump…In the 1950s, Woody Guthrie, at the time a resident of the Beach Haven housing complex the elder Trump built near Coney Island, wrote a song about "Old Man Trump" and the "Racial hate/He stirred up/In the blood pot of human hearts/When he drawed/That color line" in one of his housing developments. In 1973, when Donald Trump was working at Fred's side, both father and son were named in a federal housing-discrimination suit. The family settled with the Justice Department in the face of evidence that black applicants were told units were not available even as whites were welcomed with open arms."

[34] Jesse Singal, "It Makes Perfect Sense for the Alt-Right to Start Abandoning Trump," nymag.com, http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/04/it-makes-sense-for-the-alt-right-to-start-abandoning-trump.html (Accessed April 12, 2017).

[35] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 4-5.

[36] Victor Davis Hanson, "What Exactly Is Trumpism?" nationalreview.com, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/443667/trumpism-tradition-populism-american-greatness-strong-military (Accessed January 13, 2017).

[37] Ibid.

[38] Carl Boggs, "Social Crisis and Political Decay: The Contemporary American Malaise" *New Political Science*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1998): 304; and Gary Ulmen, "Introduction" in *Confronting the Crisis: Writings of Paul Piccone*, ed. Gary Ulmen (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2008), xxiii. Quoting Piccone: "representative democracy falls prey to private interests able to finance and indirectly control the political system it tends to increase the distance between representatives and those allegedly being represented, resulting in an ever more undemocratic…regime."

[39] Andrew C. McCarthy, "The 'Anti-Establishment' Candidate Boasts about His History of Bribing Politicians," nationalreview.com, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/430266/donald-trump-bribes-politicians-and-boasts-about-it (Accessed January 7, 2017).

[40] Martha C. White, "Trump Voters Stand to Suffer Most From Obamacare Repeals and a Trade War," nbcnews.com http://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/trump-voters-stand-suffer-most-obamacare-repeal-trade-war-n717491 (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[41] Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations* – Sixth Edition (Boston: Pearson, 2013), p. 114.

[42] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

[43] Michele He Yee Lee, "Donald Trump's false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime," washingtonpost.com, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/?utm_term=.66fe27292461 (Accessed April 13, 2017).

[44] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

[45] Reed Karaim, "Border Security" in *Global Issues: Selections From CQ Researcher* (Los Angeles: Thousand Oaks, 2015), pp. 83-85.

[46] "Immigration Reform That Will Make America Great Again," donaldjtrump.com, https://www.donaldjtrump.com/positions/immigration-reform (Accessed April 7, 2016).

[47] Manu Raju, Deirdre Walsh, and David Wright, "Trump Asking Congress to Pay For Border Wall," cnn.com, http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/05/politics/border-wall-house-republicans-donald-trump-taxpayers/ (Accessed February 4, 2017).

[48] Hanson, "What Exactly Is Trumpism?"

[49] Edward-Issac Dovere, "Trump's nationalism wins again," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/story/2017/06/01/trump-nationalism-climate-decision-239042 (Accessed June 1, 2017).

[50] "2003 clip backs up Trump on Iraq War opposition," foxnews.com, http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/09/27/2003-clip-backs-up-trump-on-iraq-war-opposition.html (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[51] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," theatlantic.com, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/ (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[52] Derek Thompson, "The Potemkin Policies of Donald Trump," theatlantic.com, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/06/donald-trump-economic-policies/529554/?utm_source=atlfb (Accessed June 25, 2017).

[53] See: Stephen M. Walt, "Trump Has Already Blown It" foreignpolicy.com, http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/03/trump-has-already-blown-it/?utm_content=buffer35e8c&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer (Accessed February 7, 2017); and Jon Finer, "Trump Has No Foreign Policy" politico.com, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/trump-has-no-foreign-policy-214797?cmpid=sf (Accessed February 18, 2017).

[54] Hanson, "What Exactly Is Trumpism?"

[55] Tom DiChristopher, "Trump signs executive order to roll back Obama-era climate actions, power plant emissions rule," cnbc.com, http://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/27/trump-to-roll-back-obama-climate-actions-power-plant-emissions-rule.html (Accessed March 30, 2017).

[56] Ben Wolfgang, "Trump's promise to revive coal industry will be tough to keep after Obama assault," washingtontimes.com, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/dec/29/donald-trumps-promise-to-revive-coal-industry-will/ (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[57] Angel Hanks and Kate Bahn, "Donald Trump's Carrier Deal is a Scam," newsweek.com, http://www.newsweek.com/trump-carrier-deal-fraudulent-scam-528620 (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[58] Max Weber, "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," in *Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 311-312.

[59] Timothy W. Luke, *Screens of Power: Ideology, Domination, and Resistance in International Society* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 133.

[60] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Publishing Company, 1976), p. 311.

[61] Diane Rubenstein, *This Is Not a President: Sense, Nonsense, and the American Political Imaginary* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), p. 17. Rubenstein states: "For the president is less a symbol or a sign than…a master signifier, a locus for projections and desires that constitute our identity."

[62] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 6. Hofstadter states anti-intellectualism is "older than our national identity [with]…a long historical background."

[63] Ibid, 7.

[64] Ibid, 25.

[65] Ibid, 49-50.

[66] Ibid, 233.

[67] Ibid, 235.

[68] Hanson, "What Exactly Is Trumpism?"

[69] David Edward Tabachnick, "The Four Characteristics of Trumpism," thehill.com, http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/presidential-campaign/264746-the-four-characteristics-of-trumpism (Accessed December 27, 2016).

[70] Wendy Brown, "The End of Educated Democracy," *Representations*, 116:1 (Fall 2011): p. 21.

[71] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 129-130.

[72] Leonard Pitts, "In Trumpworld, being ignorant is OK," miamiherald.com, http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/article133497824.html (Accessed February 20, 2017).

[73] Jeet Heer, "Minutes," newrepublic.com, https://newrepublic.com/minutes/133447/donald-trumps-supporters-idiots (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[74] PBS Newshour, "What will Betsy DeVos' focus on school choice mean for public education?" pbs.org, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/will-betsy-devos-focus-school-choice-mean-public-education/ (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[75] Aristotle Kallis, *Genocide and Fascism: The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 2.

[76] Terence Ball and Richard Dagger, "Fascism" in *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader* – Fifth Edition, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Dagger (New York: Pearson, 2004), p. 295.

[77] Craig Parsons, *Introduction to Political Science: How to Think for Yourself about Politics* (Boston: Pearson, 2017), p. 81.

[78] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 349.

[79] Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, p. 10.

[80] Steven Shepard, "Donald Trump Might Be More Popular Than We Think," politico.com http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/donald-trump-popularity-polling-234630 (Accessed February 6, 2017).

[81] Jonathan Blitzer, "A Scholar of Fascism Sees A Lot That's Familiar with Trump," newyorker.com, http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/a-scholar-of-fascism-sees-a-lot-thats-familiar-with-trump (Accessed December 5, 2016).

[82] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*: *Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 101.

[83] Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, 1.

[84] Jesse A. Myerson, "Trumpism: It's Coming from the Suburbs," thenation.com, https://www.thenation.com/article/trumpism-its-coming-from-the-suburbs/ (Accessed May 24, 2017)

[85] Josh Dawsey and Ben White, "Trump Turns to CEO's amid White House turmoil," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/donald-trump-steven-schwarzman-ceo-white-house-advisers-237168 (Accessed May 24, 2017).

[86] James Fellows, "American Carnage: The Trump Era Begins," theatlantic.com, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/american-carnage-the-trump-era-begins/513971/ (Accessed February 20, 2017).

[87] Julie Herschfeld Davis, "Trump's Budget Cuts Deeply Into Medicaid and Anti-Poverty Efforts," nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/22/us/politics/trump-budget-cuts.html?_r=0 (Accessed May 22, 2017).

[88] Jeet Heer, "How Donald Trump Plans to Crash Through Media Gate Keepers," newrepublic.com, https://newrepublic.com/article/133527/donald-trump-plans-crash-medias-gatekeepers (Accessed May 18, 2017).

[89] Fellows, "American Carnage: The Trump Era Begins,"

[90] Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 116.

[91] Ben Mathis-Lilly, "Trump Was Recorded Bragging About Grabbing Women "by the Pussy," http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2016/10/07/donald_trump_2005_tape_i_grab_women_by_the_pussy.html (Accessed June 26, 2017).

[92] Media Matters Staff, "Yale Historian Compares America To Nazi Germany, Calling Bannon's Media Interactions A Major Sign Of The Threat," mediamatters.org, https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2017/02/13/yale-historian-compares-america-nazi-germany-calling-bannon-s-media-interactions-major-sign-threat/215328 (Accessed February 20, 2017).

[93] Jonathan Freedland, "Don't call it post-truth. There's a simpler word: lies," theguardian.com, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/16/not-post-truth-simpler-words-lies-aleppo-trump-mainstream (Accessed December 20, 2016).

[94] Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, p. 21.

[95] Francois Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*: *War, Culture, and Geopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 7.

[96] Javier E. David, "White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer rips media, but facts contradict his arguments," cnbc.com, http://www.cnbc.com/2017/01/21/white-house-press-secretary-sean-spicer-rips-media-for-false-reporting-of-inauguration-day-crowd.html (Accessed January 31, 2017).

[97] David Graham, "Alternate Facts: The Needless Lies of the Trump Administration," theatlantic.com, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/the-pointless-needless-lies-of-the-trump-administration/514061/ (Accessed February 2, 2017).

[98] Rune Møller Stahl and Bue Rübner Hansen, "The Fallacy of Post-Truth," jacobinmag.com, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/12/post-truth-fake-news-trump-clinton-election-russia/ (Accessed December 20, 2016).

[99] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 29-35; and Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004), p. ix.

[100] Plato, *Republic*, trans. C.D.C Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2004), pp. 99-100.

[101] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Constantine (New York: Random House, 2008), pp. 81-82.

[102] Richard Kreitner, "Post-Truth and Its Consequences: What a 25-Year-Old Essay Tells Us About the Current Moment," thenation.com, https://www.thenation.com/article/post-truth-and-its-consequences-what-a-25-year-old-essay-tells-us-about-the-current-moment/ (Accessed December 20th, 2016).

[103] Kreitner, "Post-Truth and Its Consequences"

[104] Ralph Keynes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), p. 12.

[105] Ibid, 9-10.

[106] Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 229.

[107] Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* – Third Edition (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 126. Weber states: "Liberalism forever attempts to fulfill the desires it creates for individual by offering them substitutes…the trick of liberalism is to delay any sense of disappointment its subjects experience when economic desires fail to satisfy personal desires. Capitalism does a very good job in helping liberalism to succeed on this score because the message of capitalism is that economic enjoyment can equal personal fulfillment so long as one keeps consuming."

[108] Brian Resnick, "I just choose to not listen": why Trump supporters are tuning out the scandals," vox.com, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/5/18/15659394/trump-supporters-motivated-ignorance (Accessed May 19, 2017).

[109] http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/05/17/bernie-sanders-john-kasich-town-hall-donald-trump-liar-sot.cnn (Accessed May 23, 2017).

[110] Kurt Anderson, *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire – A 500 Year History* (New York: Random House, 2017), p. 8

[111] Ibid, 7

[112] See: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (Cambridge: Semiotext[e] – The MIT Press, 1983), Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, 22-23; and Timothy W. Luke, "Hyper-power or hype-power? The USA after Kandahar, Karbala, and Katrina," in *The Geopolitics of American Insecurity: Terror, Power, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Francois Debrix and Mark J. Lacy (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 20.

[113] Anderson, *Fantasyland*, 9.

[114] Ibid, 437.

[115] Kreitner, "Post-Truth and Its Consequences"

[116] William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* – Expanded Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 64.

[117] Nate Silver, "Education, Not Income, Predicted Who Would Vote For Trump," fivethirtyeight.com, http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/education-not-income-predicted-who-would-vote-for-trump/ (Accessed February 7, 2017).

[118] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crises*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 4-5. Habermas states: "Social systems are seen here as *life-worlds* that are symbolically structured."

[119] http://edition.cnn.com/election/results/exit-polls (Accessed January 7, 2017).

[120] Harry Enten, "Trump May Become The First Republican In 60 Years To Lose White College Graduates," fivethirtyeight.com, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-may-become-the-first-republican-in-60-years-to-lose-white-college-graduates/ (Accessed January 21, 2017).

[121] Jesse A. Myerson, "Trumpism: It's Coming from the Suburbs," thenation.com, https://www.thenation.com/article/trumpism-its-coming-from-the-suburbs/ (Accessed May 24, 2017).

[122] David Rothkopf, "The Shallow State," foreignpolicy.com, http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/22/the-shallow-state-trump/ (Accessed February 22, 2017).

[123] Jason Brennan, "Trump Won Because Voters Are Ignorant, Literally," foreignpolicy.com, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/10/the-dance-of-the-dunces-trump-clinton-election-republican-democrat/ (Accessed January 8, 2017).

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Lee Drutman, "Ballot Pox," chronicle.com, http://www.chronicle.com/article/Ballot-Pox/238131 (Accessed December 31, 2016).

[127] Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, *Democracy For Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 16.

[128] Brad Plumer, "Why More than 80 Million Americans Won't Vote on Election Day," vox.com, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/7/13536198/election-day-americans-vote (Accessed May 9, 2017). Reasons for this include: first, voter registration and the act of voting in the US is often more inconvenient than in most other liberal democracies (e.g., must vote in a specific polling location, register to vote by mail, elections are held on Tuesdays, voter ID laws). Second, the US has more (local, state, federal) elections than other countries creating a political 'burnout' effect diminishing participation and enthusiasm among voters. Finally, many Americans think the act of voting or their individual vote is inconsequential to the outcome of elections, a point on display in 2016 with Trump's claims of a 'rigged system.'

[129] Nelson W. Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics* – Twelfth Edition (Lanham: Roman and Littlefield, 2008), p. 5.

[130] Ibid, 7.

[131] Achen and Bartels, *Democracy For Realists*, 1.

[132] Ibid, 4. Italics added for emphasis.

[133] Ibid, 16-18.

[134] Plato, *Republic*, pp. 251-262.

[135] Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy And Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 97. Dahl states: "democracy can be justified only on the assumption that ordinary people are, in general, qualified to govern themselves."

[136] Eitan J. Hersh, "The Problem With Participatory Democracy is the Participants," nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/29/opinion/sunday/the-problem-with-participatory-democracy-is-the-participants.html (Accessed June 29, 2017).

[137] Naomi Klein, *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), p. 88.

[138] Jane Coaston, "What If There is No Such Thing as Trumpism?" nationalreview.com, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/446641/donald-trump-ideology-trumpism-alt-right-syria-steve-bannon-populism (Accessed April 12, 2017).

[139] Peter Baker, "The Emerging Trump Doctrine: Don't Follow Doctrine," nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/08/us/politics/trump-doctrine-foreign-policy.html (Accessed April 11, 2017).

[140] Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*, pp. 47 and xxi. Wolin states: managed democracy "is democracy systematized; it is the application of managerial skills to the basic democratic political institution of popular elections; the expansion of private (i.e., mainly corporate) power and the selective abdication of governmental responsibility for the well being of the citizenry." Superpower is the "the projection of power outwards; it is indeterminate, impatient with restraints, and careless of boundaries as it strives to develop the capability of imposing its will at any time and place of its own choosing."

[141] Ibid, xxiii.

[142] Ibid, 103. Wolin states: "Like shareholders [the people] can vote out their own CEO, the president, or their board of directors, Congress, but mostly they want to be assured that the CEO-president is heading the country in the right direction."

[143] Kaitlyn Burton and Kelsey Tamborrino, "Trump's Cabinet picks: A rundown of upcoming hearings," politico.com, http://www.politico.com/blogs/donald-trump-administration/2017/01/trumps-cabinet-hearings-schedule-233213 (Accessed January 7, 2017).