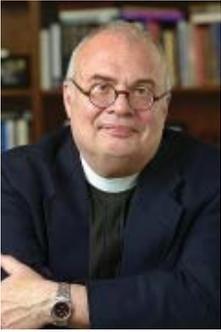


BOISI CENTER REPORT



VOL. 21 NO. 1 • DECEMBER 2020

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Friends:

We at the Boisi Center wish you all good things in 2021, and hope that both you and we will be as busy and engaged as we have been this past fall (along with a fervent hope that the

pandemic will pass and permit us to see all of our friends again “in person”).

Despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic, the Center has been an extremely busy place this fall. We joined with the New Hampshire Institute of Politics (NHIP) and the Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College Hartford to present three webinars in September on “The Church and Catholic Voters in the 2020 Election.” On September 15, I hosted an all-star panel composed of Cardinal Joseph Tobin (Archdiocese of Newark), M. Cathleen Kaveny (BC Law School and department of theology), and Michael Sean Winters (National Catholic Reporter (NCR)) to talk about the “big picture” of how Catholic voters were approaching the presidential election. On September 22, Neil Levesque (executive director of the NHIP) hosted a panel addressing “The Republican Party and Catholic Voters in the 2020 Election.” Neil did a wonderful job of shepherding a smart panel composed of Mark Rozell (dean of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University), Heidi Schlumpf (executive editor of the NCR), and John H. Sununu (former governor of New Hampshire and one-time White House Chief of Staff). Finally, on September 29, Mark Silk (director of the Greenberg Center) convened a lively panel addressing “The Democratic Party and Catholic Voters in the 2020 Election,” composed of Shaun Casey (director of Georgetown University’s Berkley Center

for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs), Tim Matovina (chair of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame), and Joseph Tomás McKellar (co-director of PICO California). The three webinars were watched by hundreds of viewers, and the Boisi Center received many emails in response, deeply appreciative of the smart conversations that took place.

Also in September, the Boisi Center partnered with America Media for a webinar entitled, “Faith and Citizenship: Catholic Perspectives on American Citizenship.” M. Cathleen Kaveny hosted a robust panel discussion in which Matt Malone, S.J., Sam Sawyer, S.J., and Kerry Weber (all three editors at America Media) offered insightful commentary on the “larger picture” of Catholic involvement in the public square, especially on Catholic participation in politics.

The Boisi Center also partnered with the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning (ably led by Dr. Ruth Langer) in sponsoring a series of online seminars for BC faculty entitled “Religious Resources to Combat Racism.” The seminar itself was envisioned as one component in the campus-wide Forum on Racial Justice in America initiated by BC’s President William P. Leahy, S.J. in August and directed by Vincent Rougeau. Over the course of three online seminar meetings during the month of October, a succession of very smart speakers led faculty conversations on the ways in which BC, as a Jesuit and Catholic institution, might address the terrible sin and injustice of racism. Speakers included Dean Vincent Rougeau (BC Law School), Drs. Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones and Joshua Snyder of BC’s theology department, Rabbi Benjamin Samuels of Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, Dr. Theresa O’Keefe of BC’s School of Theology and Ministry, and Yavilah McCoy, CEO of Dimensions, Inc. The seminar meetings were a great success,

and the participants requested that we continue to meet in the coming spring semester.

Also in October, the Boisi Center hosted an online conversation about Pope Francis’s most recent encyclical, entitled “Pandemic, Politics, and Solidarity: A Discussion of *Fratelli Tutti*.” I convened a wickedly smart assembly of commentators: Meghan Clark (St. John’s University), Massimo Faggioli (Villanova University), David Gibson (director of Fordham University’s Center on Religion and Culture), and Damon Silvers (policy director and special counsel for the AFL-CIO). This conversation, as well as all our events, can be accessed on our YouTube channel. You can find the link on the Boisi Center website.

The Boisi Center has also commenced work on the first episode of its new podcast, “Religion and American Life.” Our first interview was with Mark Galli (former editor of *Christianity Today* and recent Catholic convert) in which we discussed his now-famous editorial calling for President Trump to leave office as well as what drew him back to the Catholic Church. That episode is in post-production and will be available soon from all of your favorite podcast hubs.

In addition to all of these events, Mark Silk and I began an “inter-institutional faculty conversation,” composed of seven participants from Boston College and seven from Trinity College Hartford. Meeting four times over the course of the fall semester during lunchtime (BYOL) over Zoom, we discussed the religion-infused writing of Marilyn Robinson, the theologically-inflected song lyrics of Leonard Cohen, and the state of church-state relations in the Republic of Ireland. It was wonderful to have extended conversations

(Continued on page 2)

with faculty and staff of another superb educational institution, and we'll continue those conversations this spring too.

The Boisi Center's new undergraduate minor—Religion and Public Life—is flourishing with a raft of very talented sophomores, juniors, and seniors. I'll be convening the (required) minor seminar this spring, and I very much look forward to it.

Lastly (and by no means least), the Boisi Center's website has received its long-awaited facelift. The Boisi Center's administrator, Susan Richard, worked tirelessly with Brock Dilworth and Jesse Potts from the Office of University

Communications transferring all of the materials held on our previous site to their new home—truly, no small feat. The address remains the same: www.bc.edu/boisi. We encourage you to check it out!

None of this would be possible without the excellent skills of the Boisi Center staff: Susan Richard, administrative assistant of the Center; Zac Karanovich, our graduate research assistant; and our newest colleague, Dr. Ann McClenahan, formerly director of the Boston Theological Institute. To all three I owe a debt I cannot repay but only acknowledge.

My very best wishes for a happy and healthy new year.

~ Mark Massa, S.J.

Director, Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life



Boisi Center minors in Religion and Public Life at the fall gathering speaking with Mark Massa, S.J. and Dean Gregory Kalscheur, S.J..

THE CHURCH AND CATHOLIC VOTERS IN THE 2020 ELECTION

The first session of "Catholic Voters and the 2020 Election."

The Boisi Center kicked off its fall events with a three-part webinar series titled, "Catholic Voters and the 2020 Election." The first session asked how the Catholic Church would frame the issues for the 2020 election and how this will influence the votes of the faithful. This ad intra discussion featured M. Cathleen Kaveny, professor of law and theology at Boston College; Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Archbishop of Newark; and Michael Sean Winters, columnist at the *National Catholic Reporter*.

The panel's moderator, Mark Massa, S.J., the Boisi Center's director, first asked which issues were of greatest concern for Catholics in this election. Tobin noted three key issues for his own diocese: the pandemic, immigration, and economic issues.

Kaveny argued that we vote, not for issues, but for a person we think can handle the issues that arise. No one voted for Bush to handle 9/11, for example. Building upon San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy's recent article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, she noted that we should be looking at the "Four Cs": the candidates' competence, character, ability to collaborate, and connections to particular specialists and advisors. As well, voters must distinguish between important and urgent issues.

Winters was asked about the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) document, *Faithful Citizenship*, and the new position of abortion within



Kaveny, Tobin, and Winters (L-R).

that document. Winters noted that this recent version saw abortion rendered "the preeminent issue," which was not without its controversy, especially since Pope Francis noted (and the bishops quoted) other issues that were also life issues, such as racism and the environment.

Tobin, asked about faith and political life, described a dinner party he attended at which the woman next to him asked what the most pressing issue facing the Church is today. He answered, "The chasm between faith and life." Our faith cannot be only an hour a week, but should inform our political lives and aid in our call to holiness. The worst that can happen is the instrumentalization of religious identity for political gain.

Massa asked Kaveny about intrinsic evil, which she distinguished from mortal sin. Not every intrinsic evil is gravely wrong or violative of justice. As such, the term does not help Catholics in their political discourse because we do not criminalize intrinsically evil acts, like lying. Tobin added that it would be better to use the categories of formal and material cooperation for the faithful to better understand how their participation in public life can be done faithfully even if imperfectly.

Massa then turned more specifically to abortion. Kaveny noted that, generally, Catholics are not single-issue voters. While abortion gets more press, that excitement does not often trickle down to the faithful.

Massa asked Tobin more directly whether a Catholic can vote for Biden. Tobin acknowledged that neither party represents fully the Catholic moral tradition, but that we should vote. To do so in good conscience requires prudence—weighing everything in light of the common good. A single issue is inadequate. Catholics must start connecting issues with faces—real human experiences. To remove the faces renders heinous acts more acceptable. He noted that "a person in good conscience could vote for Joe Biden," but in his opinion, he would have "a more difficult time with the other option."

The audience then asked questions: regarding social media, Winters replied that the concern is less social media and more those times that the "craziness" crosses into the mainstream. For example, when EWTN picks up Fr. Altman's controversial video, that message reached millions of Catholics. Regarding Pope Francis's input, Tobin responded that we must remember that Pope Francis is a teacher, not a prophet. The panel ended with Tobin encouraging conscience formation via familiarity with the word of God, mindfulness of the complexity of moral dilemmas, and affirming the "seamless garment" theory by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. And on forming priests in this matter, Tobin cited St. Alphonsus Liguori: a problem in the Church is when confessors do not study and when professors do not hear confession.

A NOTE FROM DR. ANN MCCLENAHAN

The former director of the Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium has been volunteering her time and talents.

In September, having completed six years as the executive director of the Boston Theological Interreligious (BTI) Consortium, I asked the Boisi Center's director Mark Massa, S.J. if there might be a way I could make a volunteer contribution to this important Boston College program. He said yes, and it's been a delight.

Quick background: I have twenty-years of experience in advertising and marketing, followed by MDiv and ThD degrees from

Harvard Divinity School, and a strong interest in contemporary religion in American public life. It is no surprise that I find the work and programming at the Boisi Center to be so relevant and compelling.

My experience at the BTI engaged me in inter-religious dialogue and relationships. One thing I have found fascinating is the relatively recent academic development of programs focused on American Muslim leadership. I am excited that the Boisi

Center, with my help, will be hosting an online panel on this topic in early March. For me, this is a timely exploration of the words of Pope Francis, who recalled in his most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, that with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, they declared that "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters."

—Dr. Ann McClenahan

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND CATHOLIC VOTERS IN THE 2020 ELECTION

The second session of "Catholic Voters and the 2020 Election."

The Boisi Center's three-part webinar series on Catholic voters continued on the topic of Republicans with Mark Rozell, dean of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University; Heidi Schlumpf, executive editor at the *National Catholic Reporter*; and John H. Sununu, the former Governor of New Hampshire and White House Chief of Staff.

In their opening remarks, Schlumpf noted that the "Catholic vote" is important but not monolithic, as polls show. Rozell agreed, noting that Trump won the Catholic vote in 2016 after doing a lot of outreach to Catholics, as opposed to Clinton. In 2020, there is a conscious effort on the part of both campaigns to reach out to Catholics. Sununu considers the Catholic vote "as a Catholic vote" a small vote, but it often decides national and state elections, citing Reagan and his own elections. Both appealed to certain conservative values of certain typically-Democratic populations as an entrée to other aspects of the platform. Sununu is convinced that this will continue to be a trend for those who might not have been exposed to the Republican platforms.

Neil Levesque, moderator and executive director of the New Hampshire Institute of Politics, then asked how the Supreme Court nomination will influence the campaign. Sununu argued that liberals have developed an "art form of equivalency," with which they make equivalent certain issues to abortion. He foresees that happening in this Supreme Court appointment, thinking Democrats will craft an equivalency to discredit the likely Catholic female candidate. Schlumpf added that there is a growing understanding of what constitutes a "life issue," considering the death penalty. Typically, a Supreme Court nomination favors conservatives because

of the potential of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, but this time is different, especially given that polls reveal that abortion is not a top priority.

Levesque noted that in Catholic churches, priests do not typically tell their parishioners who to vote for. Schlumpf said that the outreach to religious voters is higher than in 2016, as both were on display at the respective conventions. What happens on social media, with individuals saying a Catholic can or cannot be of a particular party is common, but not in churches themselves.

Sununu returned to the Supreme Court issue, arguing that if the nominee is examined on their Catholicism, the defense would come from many different religious groups because one is entitled to have a religious opinion. Audience questions continued on this point, asking if it was permissible to raise a nominee's religion if they are, for example, a Catholic integralist and concerns come up about their interpretation of law from that position. Schlumpf thought it would matter, adding that this nomination's timing prohibits a free and open debate on the candidate's appropriateness for the Court as all eyes are on the election.

When asked to compare Catholic and Evangelical voters, Rozell noted that white Evangelicals are much more Republican than white Catholics. For Evangelicals, the appointment of a Supreme Court justice is the issue, but that is not the case for many Catholics. While there has been some drop off in support for Trump, that does not seem to be coming from white Evangelicals.

Sununu was asked whether other issues of concern for Catholics—immigration, concern for the poor, and the likes—have driven some Catholics away from the



Trump administration. Sununu said anecdotally that it is his belief that once immigrants favor Republicans at 51%, immigration will no longer be their policy issue.

Abortion was raised, asking if the USCCB would be more favorable to Democrats if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. Rozell offered an alternative: If *Roe* is overturned, its availability returns to the decision of the states, many of which will legalize it, and campaigns will focus almost solely on that. Sununu said that he did not believe *Roe* would be overturned, but that brighter lines would be drawn instead.

Asked about Catholic identity's impact on the election, Rozell did not think it carried the importance today as it did during Kennedy's campaign. Catholics are concerned with policies. As to Biden, Rozell added, it is possible that it will make a difference on the margins, though only if the election is close.



Rozell, Schlumpf, and Sununu (L-R).

The last session of “Catholic Voters and the 2020 Election.”

The final session of the Boisi Center’s webinar on Catholic voters concluded with a conversation on the Democratic party, featuring Shaun Casey, the director of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University; Timothy Matovina, chair of the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame; and Joseph Tomás McKellar, the co-director of PICO California.

Mark Silk, director of the Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College, moderated the panel and opened by asking about the significance of Biden’s Catholicism and the expectations for the 2020 Catholic vote. Casey noted that Biden would be only the second Catholic president in history, that he may win with a majority of Catholic votes with the Hispanic Catholic vote, and it would mark the end of the attempt at a Catholic-Evangelical allied political domination.

Asked about the role of Latinx voters, Matovina noted that in 2016, Clinton garnered 70-79% of the Hispanic/Latinx vote, and Trump just 18% to the high 20s. If the high number for Clinton was 79%, it is unlikely that Biden could add to that. If it is the low 70s, however, it is possible that more Latinx voters will come out for Biden. The Latinx vote, however, is not monolithic.

Speaking to the distinctions between Democratic and Republican Latinx voters, McKellar pointed to two factors: 1) race and one’s proximity to whiteness and 2) proximity to the poor and excluded. How long the family has been in the United States, economic opportunity, legal status, etc. all influence these. A central concern among Latinx voters is belonging: Who matters? Who belongs? Who deserves a share in our prosperity? Unfortunately, the current political narrative is that we are safer the more segregated we are, and the Catholic Church has not done much to challenge this narrative.

Casey noted that the pandemic has not allowed traditional methods of outreach to faith-based groups. Democrats, in particular, have gone fully virtual with little religious outreach. Instead, they argued that this is a character election, Biden versus Trump.

Silk asked what could drive turnout. Matovina noted the structural causes for



Casey, Matovina, and McKellar (L-R).

poor Latinx turnout: the electoral college and voter suppression/gerrymandering. If Latinx voters live in Texas, California, or New York, their incentives to vote are lessened as they know the results. The same is true if it is a majority Latinx district. Organizers need to focus on voter registration and fighting gerrymandering—external and internal factors.

McKellar added that recent polling shows that, among influences on Latinx voters, religious leaders still hold sway, even as religious practice declines. Narratives that do not work are those appealing to partisanship or fuel polarization. Narratives that resonate enhance belongingness and family values. While some Latinx voters favor expanded criminalization and public safety measures through policing, much of that is an “imagination gap,” regarding other ways that public safety can be affected. “Encuentro,” or encounter, is the main message McKellar believes to be most effective for overcoming political exploitation and dualistic binaries.

The possible appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court and overturning *Roe v. Wade* was raised. Casey noted that while abortion is an important matter, it is the primary concern for few Catholic voters. Democrats should focus instead of showing that under Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, abortions declined by the largest numbers compared to their Republican counterparts. If

we embrace these policies on an agenda of Catholic social teaching, like employment, livable wage, and healthcare, the goals of both parties could be realized. But this will need to come from a Democrat to keep pro-choice advocates on board. For Latinx voters, Matovina argued that many are pro-life, but few see abortion as a primary issue. McKellar agreed. He asked further that an important question PICO has been asking in parishes is whether faith informs politics of vice versa. This is an important question for reflection, he argues, because political parties mandate a purity—maintaining the party line despite one’s own beliefs. Instead, he said, parties should be groups in which people can coexist without agreeing on everything. Catholic social teaching certainly does not jibe well with this purity.

Turning to audience questions, some asked more about abortion. Casey noted that while some groups are on the extremes, the majority are not concerned in the same way. The audience also asked about Cardinal Raymond Burke advocating for denying Biden communion. Casey thought it might actually help Biden. Like Kennedy, when one is perceived a victim of anti-Catholic bias (or anti-religious bias, more generally), sympathy can be garnered. McKellar argued that denying communion would be unappealing to the Latinx population who favor inclusion. And social media was raised. McKellar noted that while Latinx Catholics do use social media, it is to maintain social connections and community. But the algorithms of social media produce division and polarization, not changed minds. Casey thought, however, that social media could be used to tell a story about the country in a way that counters the narratives of division discussed earlier.



A lively and informative panel discussion on Pope Francis's recently published encyclical.

Pope Francis's newest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, was the subject of the Boisi Center's discussion with the all-star panel, featuring: Meghan Clark, professor of theology and religious studies, St. John's University; Massimo Faggioli, professor of theology and religious studies, Villanova University; David Gibson, director, Center for Religion and Culture, Fordham University; and Damon Silvers, director of Policy and Special Counsel, AFL-CIO.

Mark Massa, S.J., opened by asking Clark to situate *Fratelli Tutti* within the

of populism, nationalism, and economic models is one that could be applied broadly around the world, the U.S. certainly is one of the principle objects of that critique.

Massa asked if the solidarity central to the encyclical's argument is a resonant message with labor organizations and workers, or if it is too theological. Silvers said much of the message accessible. Francis is asserting, Silvers argued, that the two primary destructive forces in the world are populism and market fundamentalism. While it is a call for

speculate on the bishops' silence on this encyclical. Clark noted that Francis does not have the political edge that the USCCB does. While some bishops express more radical views, illustrative of a bad ecclesiology, the other bishops' silence is a result of a good ecclesiology. As such, there is no counterweight to the outspoken bishops because, until now, Francis's comments have mostly taken the form of speeches, interviews, etc. But now the form adds weight. Faggioli believes this silence is the result of the single-issue mentality that applies to papal teaching. If the encyclical touches on the issue of the pastor, the pastor will likely say something, and everything else is "non-binding." Gibson said the bishops have become too concerned with doctrinal apologetics, whereas this encyclical is an apologetics of action. Because of the centrality of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Francis is calling readers to go and do.

The audience then asked questions, first on the encyclical's longevity, then about about Francis's self-citing. Finally, a question was raised about the role of social media and whether that will affect the encyclical's reception of the encyclical, especially since the pope's legitimacy and orthodoxy are often called into question. While many of the panelists expressed concern, they noted that social media is a world of its own. Gibson said that on social media, "everyone is their own pope and CDF," and Faggioli added that on Catholic social media, alive and well is "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus."



Clark, Faggioli, Gibson, and Silvers (L-R).

larger papal tradition of social teaching. She noted that Pope Francis's decision to expand the audience to include everyone on the planet is illustrative of the document's themes: fraternity and social friendship. She added that the second chapter is the encyclical's theological key, as through the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the pope—in an Ignatian way—draws the reader into discernment on the question, "Who is my neighbor?"

Massa noted the centrality of the criticism of trickle-down economics and free-market capitalism and asked what that might mean. Faggioli noted that there is little new in the encyclical (the criticism of capitalism was shared by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI), but the context makes the difference. Our current environmental, health, and economic situation, makes it more difficult to ignore Francis's message. The genius of Pope Francis is his spiritual insight of the moment, leaning into this context by reasserting the tradition of the Church, putting the Church on the side of the poor and marginalized, and denying neutrality.

Neither the United States nor Trump were mentioned, though the issues Pope Francis has taken up seem to gesture this way, Massa inquired of Gibson. Gibson agreed that while the criticism

governments to act, it also communicates to everyone a new psychological model for reforming their worldview.

Clark addressed the feminist critiques of the encyclical, noting that while the title, "Brothers All," is obviously problematic, the document is also devoid of women's voices or activities. This is particularly problematic because women's communities do much of the migration, peacebuilding, and human trafficking work.

Faggioli continued on the flaws, noting that the footnotes make it easy for some factions to dismiss as it frequently cites the pope's own words and does not ground the document in more traditionally theological documents, like those of Vatican II. Gibson added that he believes that Francis continues to quote himself as a way of concretizing his papal teaching—often considered "merely" pastoral.

On the topic of polarization and Francis's refusal to occupy either extreme, Massa asked whether the encyclical successfully draws readers someplace new. Silvers applauded Francis's vision, but thought that he was not as political (in its narrowest sense) as he could have been, which would have been a sharper criticism.

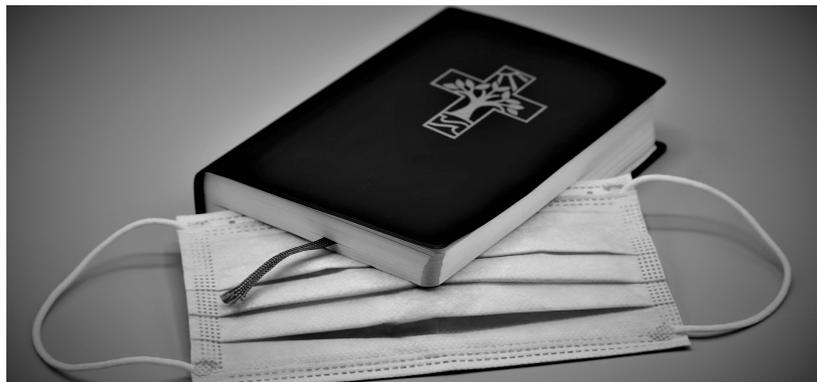
Massa then asked the panelists to

“PANDEMIC & RELIGION” GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

The Boisi Center will host its first graduate student conference virtually on February 27th.

Among other things, the Boisi Center’s graduate research assistant is responsible for planning the annual “Graduate Symposium on Religion and Politics,” which has historically taken the form of a semester-long, interdisciplinary reading group. This year our graduate research assistant, Zac Karanovich, has planned the Boisi Center’s first Graduate Student Conference titled, “Pandemic & Religion.”

On February 27th, graduate students from sixteen universities across the country will present papers from a variety of disciplines addressing a broad number of topics at the intersection of religion and pandemic. The conference will be held exclusively online and is free and open to the public. Register on our website: www.bc.edu/boisi.



UPCOMING SPRING EVENTS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2021 2-3PM EST

U.S.-VATICAN RELATIONS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM REAGAN TO BIDEN

WEBINAR PANEL, FEATURING: CHARLES GALLAGHER, S.J., PETER MARTIN, AND OLIVER RAFFERTY, S.J.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021 8:45AM-3:30PM EST

PANDEMIC & RELIGION

VIRTUAL GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021 3-4PM EST

THREE PIECES OF ADVICE TO PRESIDENT BIDEN FROM CATHOLICS IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

WEBINAR PANEL, FEATURING: E.J. DIONNE, MASSIMO FAGGIOLI, BISHOP ROBERT McELROY, AND AMY UELMEN

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2021 4-5PM EST

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM LEADERSHIP IN THE U.S.

WEBINAR FEATURING: ZAIN ABDULLAH, NATANA DELONG-BAS, DAVID GRAFTON, AND SHABANA MIR

TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2021 7-8:45PM EST

VIEWING OF *THE SOCIAL DILEMMA*

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021 12-1PM EST

ENGAGING *THE SOCIAL DILEMMA*: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE POLARIZATION OF POLITICS AND PEWS

WEBINAR PANEL FEATURING: R. ZACHARY KARANOVICH, KRISTIN M. PETERSON, AND MICHAEL SERAZIO

FOR INFORMATION ON THESE AND ALL OF OUR SPRING 2021 EVENTS, PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE

www.bc.edu/boisi

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