

HGGS

HEIDELBERG  
GRADUATE SCHOOL  
FOR THE HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



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# THE SPECTRE HAUNTING ACADEMIA

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA  
IN THE RISE OF THE FAR-RIGHT



HGGS CONFERENCE, 03.09. AND 04.09.2022

#### **Responsible for content**

Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences

#### **The Organisers**

Armen Hesse, Jonathan Lench, Martina Marzullo, Pravin Prakash & Sona Prabhakaran

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## INTRODUCTION

**We are delighted to welcome you all to the HGGS and 4EU+ Alliance conference: “The Spectre Haunting Academia: Understanding the Role of Academia in the Rise of the Far-right”.**

The Far-right presents an imminent threat to Academia, to its freedom, its processes, and our production of knowledge that we value so highly. At the outset, we were four PhD candidates, each from different backgrounds, particularly interested in the complexity of the relationship between the Academy and the Far-right: culturally, politically, and in the functions of Academia itself. Therefore, we decided to embark on a project to gain greater clarity on this relationship: where Academia has succeeded in stemming the Far-right wave, where it has failed, and how the University looks once it has been overtaken by it.

We began as a small working group of interdisciplinary scholars within the HGGS, starting out with internal discussions on the topic, which was then opened up to the wider membership of the HGGS. At that point, it became eminently clear from these exchanges that there was a lot of space for robust debate on the topic. Hence, with the support of both the HGGS and the 4EU+ Alliance, we settled on organising a conference which could bring together as many like-minded scholars as possible in the hope that we can learn and debate such questions together.

We are delighted to see such wide-ranging interest from both international and inter-continental scholars who have largely affirmed our primary questions and themes, and we are excited to engage in this extremely important debate. Throughout this conference, we will explore a range of scholarly perspectives to discuss the complicated relationship between the Far-right and the Academy. From these discussions, we hope to better understand this rising problem with greater clarity and lay the groundwork for further research.

## PROGRAM

## DAY 1: 03.09.2022

- 10:00 – 10:15 **Opening Remarks**  
Martina Marzullo
- 10:15 – 10:45 **Keynote Speaker**  
Dinesh Narayanan
- 10:45 – 12:00 **FAR-RIGHT'S NARRATIVES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM**
- The Typology of Far-right's Narratives and the University's Place within them**  
Jonathan Lench
- The #OwnVoices Movement and Academia's Response to the Far-Right's Practices – Immigration Stories in Children's Literature**  
Cristina-Ruxandra Burghilea
- University Under Siege: Insights Into Indian Higher Education From Githa Hariharan's In Times of Siege**  
Nidhi Angurala
- 12:00 – 13:30 *Lunch Break*
- 13:30 – 14:45 **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FAR-RIGHT AND ACADEMIA**
- Political methodologies and the rise of the Far Right as an international entity: Its impact on Academia, both nationally and globally**  
Ahana Bhattacharjee
- How do Far-right governments impact Academia, both nationally and globally?**  
Antara Chakraborty
- Cross-border partnership of the regimes on "disciplining" cultural educators and its impact on academia within postcolonial Kyrgyzstan**  
Kunduz Niiazova
- 14:45 – 16:00 **THE FAR-RIGHT IN POWER**
- Fascist State, Liberal Opposition, Left Academia: Critical Theory Perspectives and Development in Belarus and Russia**  
Diana Planida

**Creation of a committed academia, manufacturing of a national discourse**

Nancy Pathak

**The policy of the Ministry of National Education towards higher education institutions in Poland under the right-wing government**

Marta Maciejewska

16:00 – 16:45 *Coffee Break*

16:45 – 18:00 **CONFRONTING THE FAR-RIGHT**

**The rise of the far-right and legal education**

Przemysław Mroczkowski

**From Alternative to Mainstream: Reclaiming and Establishing The Dalit Voices**

Upasana Banerjee

**Hate-spin: Participative Hegemony and Vigilante Publics in Indian Universities**

Pravin Prakash

## DAY 2: 04.09.2022

10:00 – 11:15 **MEDIA & VISUAL POLITICS**

**Staging a "Battle for the Soul of America": The Fox News Channel's Use of Critical Race Theory in the Controversy over Narratives of U.S. National History**

Kieran Sommer

**Jordan Peterson, the Political Right, and the Aesthetics of Intellectualism**

Lukas Schutzbach

**Making the Politically Incorrect Publicly Appealing: The media and anti-intellectualism in Brazil**

João Henrique Roque de Almeida

- 11:15 – 12:30 **IDEOLOGIES AND INTELLECTUALS: PATHWAYS OFF THE FAR-RIGHT**
- Fragmentation, Fascism, and the Academy**  
Shaun Terry
- Free Speech and the Far Right – An Unholy Alliance?**  
David Schutzbach
- Intellectual New Right**  
Juliane Schwertner
- 12:30 – 14:00 *Lunch Break*
- 14:00 – 15:15 **CASE STUDIES ON THE FAR-RIGHT AND ACADEMIA**
- How does Big Data and data analytics affect populist sentiment?**  
Karolina Oleksińska-Grabowska
- Methodological issues of far-right groups. Case study of the University of Warsaw**  
Jan Szczepański
- Legal instruments of impact of far-right governments on the academic community in Poland**  
Karolina Wojciechowska
- 15:15 – 16:00 *Coffee Break*
- 16:00 – 17:15 **THE FAR-RIGHT, ACADEMIA AND THE STATE**
- Know Thy Enemy: Federal Security Intelligence, Academia, and the Far-Right**  
Faith McGlothlin
- Academia as Propaganda – the far-right's impingement on intellectual dissent in India**  
Ashwinii Selvaraj
- Academia and the political space**  
Ishaan Teotia
- 17:15 – 18:00 **Closing Remarks**  
Pravin Prakash & Jonathan Lench

## ABSTRACTS

### FAR-RIGHT'S NARRATIVES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

#### The University in the Typology of Far-right Narratives

*Jonathan Lench*

The Far-right distinguishes itself as a political entity for its ability to produce counter-narratives to traditional political methodologies: narratives that divide populations and stories that bring answers to those that feel left behind by the political systems that the Far-right seeks to usurp. Empowered by this narrative, the Far-right poisons public discourse, tears apart social cohesion and makes grotesque marionettes of public institutions as they build power and popular support, which in the story of the Far-right, is framed as a revival of national dignity and the reversal of societal degeneracy. This story, despite taking on various contextual inflections dependent on the nation, seems to have a common narrative structure; a common typology. This typology is one where the nation ails, and this is the call to action that beckons the Far-right to power. This typology has various moving parts, a vital part of which is the University. To the Far-right, the University is one of the heads on the hydra of Liberal society, a centre of 'perverse' knowledge production that has rotted the fabric of society, and one that must be purified and brought under the control of the Far-right to be utilised by the Far-right, and thus the nations', ends to validate the nihilistic uprooting of institutions and social fabric that the Far-right engages in. The narrative structure of the Far-right is complex, but by applying narrative theories to the narrative modus operandi of the Far-right, we can begin to discover their pressure points that make their narratives successful, as well as how to counter them effectively, beginning with the institution of the University.

#### The #OwnVoices Movement and Academia's Response to the Far-right's Practices: Immigration Stories in Children's Literature

*Cristina-Ruxandra Burghilea*

The story of the hero crossing borders to unknown lands, undergoing hardships that lead to transformation and/or maturation, and then ending in either returning to the native land or remaining in the newly discovered one, is the outline of a fairytale that has gained different meanings and functions in today's world. As history shapes the way in which Academia works, the urgency that society faces nowadays is the rise of extreme right groups, whose agenda is to shape the world according to values and principles detrimental to individuals who do not fit into certain standards. One of the most unfortunate categories of individuals repressed by these groups is represented by long-term and temporary immigrants. They experience discrimination since they do not belong to and, most importantly, are not allowed to integrate into new communities by those who deem them as a threat to the stability of their environment which might never truly welcome them. Compromise and tolerance are suspended when

it comes to the rights of these people, and the most important lesson that Academia teaches is that respect ought to be granted to anyone irrespective of their background. Seeing how rights are being denied to immigrants, Academia fights back with the tools it has, and the focus of this presentation is on the manner in which Humanities is responding to the injustice proliferated by far-right advocates. The movement in literature called #OwnVoices attempts to bring to scholars and the wider public narratives written by marginalised authors who have experienced the stories they have written. Either a clumsy response to the pressure Academia feels, or an effective mechanism that renders narratives a plus of authenticity and verisimilitude, the issue is up for discussion. The chosen medium is children's literature, in which the hero of a contemporary fairytale may teach the reader the compassionate way of looking at their immigrant peers.

### **University Under Siege: Insights Into Indian Higher Education From Githa Hariharan's In Times of Siege**

*Nidhi Angurala*

Githa Hariharan's novel, *In Times of Siege*, revolves around a History professor's contentious chapter on a 12th century Indian poet and reformer. The professor, Shiv Murthy, is hounded by a local Hindu watchdog group called Itihas Suraksha Manch as well as the group's supporter and Shiv's colleague, Arya. As the lesson garners media attention, it is withdrawn by the department Head at the fictional Kasturba Gandhi University, to avoid controversy. At home, Shiv is taking care of Meena, the daughter of Shiv's childhood friend, who happens to be a spirited student leader and a student at another fictional university. The fractal occurrence of the Hindu Right's intervention in the education sector in India, the consequent legitimization of such an invasion through the circulation of the "hurt" through media is evident in Hariharan's novel which, one can argue, anticipates the 2016 crisis that took place in Jawahar Lal Nehru University in India. I will argue that the Itihas Suraksha Manch's denunciation of the lesson composed by Shiv and the reconfiguration of the operations of the department is tied to the group's political clout and amounts to a siege of the ideas of academic freedom and autonomy underpinning the university. I will also engage with globalisation and its paradoxical relationship with rising Hindu nationalism at the turn of the century since the latter was found to be besieging the university's foundational principles. My study will recount the Hindu Right's affective responses and its mechanism and also contextualise the Hindu "hurt" expressed by the Hindu outfit in the novel and trace it to a "fear" of imagined and concrete forces.

## **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FAR-RIGHT AND ACADEMIA**

### **Political methodologies and the rise of the Far Right as an international entity: Its impact on Academia, both nationally and globally**

*Ahana Bhattacharjee*

The rise of the Far-Right as a pedagogic and epistemic force, effecting Academia in a globalized world order, can be traced to the beginning to the Independence struggle of the erstwhile colonies, following years of European hegemony, whereby the dominant language of the coloniser was responsible for aggravating the socio-economic and cultural fissures existent in these societies. This paper will attempt to trace such terms as liberal internationalism, liberal modernity, Common Marketization, homogenization/hybridization, panopticism and so on to deconstruct the ideological state apparatus in the 21st-Century. Karl Mannheim's in his *Ideology and Utopia* explained that, owing to the complicated character of contemporary society, political parties find it necessary to develop pedagogic training in accordance to their party line. Thus, in postcolonial "liberal" democracies, statist paradigms with Far-Right tendencies will attempt to mould the thinking of the masses with a revisionist and reactionary dichotomy of education vis a vis lived experience. This paper will deliberate on the rise of political methodology in the 19th century, to trace how, through ideological violence, liberalism superseded the remnants of absolutism, bolshevism and fascism in the 20th century. The scope of the paper will be interdisciplinary, with an ethnographic approach, and will take principal reference from Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*; E.F Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*; Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* and Yoshihiro Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man*. Therefore, the central inference will be a contextualized reading of the Far-Right as an international entity with the ability to censure, and alter syllabuses, dictate research directions, and attack academic freedom in the name of political gain to indoctrinate and radicalize a new generation through the usurpation of Academic Institutions.

### **How do Far-right governments impact Academia, both nationally and globally?**

*Antara Chakraborty*

Civil, press and academic freedoms have reduced drastically under the leadership of India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and his Hindu-nationalist government. Since assuming power in 2014, Modi has been accused of systemically destroying the secular, democratic foundations of India and transforming the country into a strictly Hindu nation. This includes persistent efforts to silence intellectuals and dissenters with alternative viewpoints, especially within academic spaces. Established academics and student activists who have challenged Modi's authoritarianism have faced targeted harassment from Hindutva agents and even incarceration. At a legislative level,

the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) approved the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) outlining its vision for India's education system, in July last year. NEP met with widespread backlash as it undermines the federal nature of the educational structure and BJP's rhetoric around NEP further reveals the extent of Hindutva's growing influence on India's academic institutions. This essay examines government suppression of academic freedom – in particular, political, and constitutional interference. The paper will also critique BJP's direct – appointments of politically linked Vice Chancellors and, indirect involvement by the way of silently endorsing of the aggressive, often militant presence of its young wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), on campuses. By exploring the abovementioned case studies in detail, I argue that these instances negate the essential concept of universities as autonomous and democratic spaces. These occurrences reflect the bleak state of academic freedom in India and can be viewed as part of a larger pattern of state assault on the democratic rights of the people. With the Indian government's shift from a secular government to an authoritarian Hindutva polity and the eventual systematic breakdown of constitutionally preserved freedoms, it is becoming evident that the space for intellectual free-thinking is also shrinking.

### **Cross-border partnership of the regimes on “disciplining” cultural educators and its impact on academia within postcolonial Kyrgyzstan**

*Kunduz Niiazova*

The Gulen movement and its “representative” Orhan Inandy who run the Sapat schools in Kyrgyzstan made the breaking news in 2021 when his Kyrgyz citizenship was revoked and he was delivered back to Turkey by the special Turkish forces as the result of the governmental deal with Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government under the President Sadyr Zhaparov refused the civil society's claims on breaching the law in which educator is a bargain of the Turkish government's interests and simply argued that his acquiring of Kyrgyz passport was illegal. Yet, the Sapat schools and all other educational institutions run by the Turkish nationals in most of the Central Asian countries, particularly in Kyrgyzstan are suspected and accused by the Turkish government constantly till now and even by Turkey funded Kyrgyz-Turkish University named Manas makes open and official statements in media about the danger of Gulen movement members both to Kyrgyz and Turkish medias by not denying its direct dependency from the Turkish regime. But the most interesting phenomena is that Kyrgyzstan's establishment preferred agreeing to the demands of Turkey and maybe sympathize in the face of the new government under Zhaparov's rule, Erdogan's rightist inclinations and using its power even in academia. The whole civil society was shocked by the sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan and moreover the academia has become an unsafe place for educators for their different opinions who can be chased back by

special forces over the cross-borders. In this paper, I will try to analyze to which extent the changing political Kyrgyz elite's favoring the examples of the different countries as Turkey in which academia needs to be in accordance with the political establishment's direction especially in the context of the Ukraine-Russian war and post-colonial re-traditionalization trends.

### **THE FAR-RIGHT IN POWER**

#### **Fascist State, Liberal Opposition, Left Academia: Critical Theory Perspectives and Development in Belarus and Russia**

*Diana Planida*

The problem of strengthening the far-right movement in cooperation with academic institutions is particularly acute in the post-Soviet space. The neo-fascist regimes of V. Putin and A. Lukashenko have a predominantly right-wing liberal and neoliberal opposition. The left-wing political movement, marginalized by the contradictory discourses of Soviet nostalgia, is instead associated with conservative forces and gains little support outside the academy, leading to a disconnect between left-wing liberal institutions and day-to-day politics. Public universities in Belarus and Russia have pursued self-censorship policy as a preventive measure as governmental discourse transmitters. Thus, three leading private leftist ideological institutions of Belarussian and Russian origin studying critical theory operated in the region before the recent military conflict in Ukraine: European University at Saint Petersburg (Russia), Smolny College (Saint Petersburg, Russia), European Humanitarian University known as «Belarusian university in exile» (Vilnius, Lithuania). However, in the context of increased censorship amid military invasion leading to the disrapture of diplomatic relationships with the West, the existence of left private universities has also been called into question. This report will tackle the following questions: Should leftist intellectuals support the right-wing opposition to the neo-fascist state? What are the opportunities for reimagining the socialist project in light of Soviet nostalgia and the Russian and Belarussian governmental use of Soviet narratives in modern interventionist politics? May the uprising of a right-wing opposition be naturally connected with the interruption of the historical developmental phases in the Marxist theory of history by the emergence and collapse of the Soviet Union in an attempt to go back to the advanced capitalism stage prior to communism? What are the region's perspectives on critical theory research, teaching, and development? This report is supposed to be based on the sociological analysis and interviews with the leading professors in critical thought from the above mentioned institutions.



**Creation of a committed academia, manufacturing of a national discourse***Nancy Pathak*

As the tolerant centrist politics gave way to the ultra-Hindu right-wing regime in Delhi in 2014 the nature of the academic conferences and talks in the central universities of the country have also been forced to mutate. The paper will be undertaking a detailed case study of various academic events organized at JNU from 2010 to 2022. The pattern of the events organized shows that the already practicing academics have tried to not directly contradict the right-wing internal politics of the country, thus even Departments of Political and social systems studies have tried to organize events on international relations or abstract theoretical debates. This strategy can be called as the aversive technique to avoid direct conflict with the regime. Professors who do not associate with the ideology of the current regime are resorting to this strategy. Newly recruited group of academics to the university are all inclined towards the ideology of the new regime. They majorly support and endorse schemes, ideas and missions proposed by the ruling government. It is a means to get educated validation for these policies in the national space. This technique can be classified as endorsement technique, and mostly professors from management and technical studies are following it. Academic discourses seem to have acquired an unprecedented character in India. Academia has started looking at the Hindu mythological scriptures as epistemological evidence and is further looking forward to forging national and international political thoughts based on these scriptures. Some academic events organized in the campus were essentially Pravachans by religious leaders. This is an attempt at hegemony creation by those committed to the idea of Hindu nation. The paper will prepare and study a color-coded chart that will segregate various conferences based on their ideological inclination. Drastic alteration of the JNU debates is being proudly displayed by Hindu right wing as an example of the fate of any alter-ideas in academic and national space.

**The policy of the Ministry of National Education towards higher education institutions in Poland under the right-wing government***Marta Maciejewska*

The influence of the far right will be presented on Poland, as a case study. The purpose of this paper is to present higher education reforms enforced by the Minister of National Education, Przemysław Czarnek. Minister of National Education in Poland, Przemysław Czarnek introduced the Academic Freedom Package, a draft amendment to the Law on Higher Education and Science to ensure academic freedom, in December 2020. According to the minister, there is not the slightest doubt that the condition for the development of science is full academic freedom, freedom of teaching, as well as freedom of academic debate. Reforms were introduced under PiS rule, an extreme right-wing party. The Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland noted that

there is no academic freedom deficit in Poland. At present, in order to defend academic freedom, it is not necessary to create special legal regulations. Most universities in Poland have already developed mechanisms ensuring academic freedom, which prevent discriminatory actions, including those based on philosophical grounds. They are being improved and expanded. The freedom in creating an educational program concerns the university and not a particular scholar.

**CONFRONTING THE FAR-RIGHT****The rise of the far-right and legal education***Przemysław Mroczkowski*

The paper reflects upon how legal education should change to tackle far-right populism and prevent it in the future. A starting point is the critical analysis of the curricula and practice of legal education in top legal departments in Poland. The choice is made due to Poland being an example of democratic backsliding (see e.g. Bucholtz 2019) due to far-right populism. Academicians have called to improve the quality of legal education ever since (Znamierowski 1925; Llevelyn 1935). Yet legal education is the powerful tool in shaping the politics and legal system (Wilson and Hollis-Brusky 2018). In the book *On Tyranny* Snyder (2017) argues that no breakdown of rule-of-law state and judiciary independence happened without lawyers, so they should remember professional ethics. This means that not enough was made when it comes to the legal education to prevent law graduates from partaking in hindering fundamentals of liberal democracy. The lawyers acting now were educated years ago when the paradigm of „the end of history“ was dominating (Fukuyama 1992) thus legal education was primarily focused on day-to-day legal business. Same phenomenon of lack of moral or ethical fundamentals is noticed in various parts of the world (Sari et al. 2021). Poland is a striking example of that. Being the first from the former Warsaw Pact to join NATO democratic champion experiences the unprecedented democratic backsliding. At the same time among ten top legal departments in the country hardly any has courses on ethics or rules of legal profession. In this paper I will argue that we need to rethink the model of legal education to match the challenges of today. In many countries the model of how law is taught has not changed for decades (Twining 2017). We firstly need to encompass ethics courses in all legal academic curricula. We need to take a firmer stance against all ethics breaches within academia. This refers to both students who e.g. cheat and academicians. Otherwise we do not lead by example. Modern legal education should be also more concerned about principles and rationales for legal institutions. If we limit ourselves to just state what the law is, we leave the students with the feeling that anything can be changed in any way, in-

cluding what is the backbone of the legal system. Lastly, we need to make sure that in the academic curricula there is a room for non-doctrinal subjects, such as philosophy, sociology, economics and politics, which will help law graduates assess the impact of the law on society (Bartl and Leone 2022).

### **From Alternative to Mainstream: Reclaiming and Establishing the Dalit Voices**

*Upasana Banerjee*

Casteism stands both as a political and social issue in the recent and contemporary Indian context. Dalits (people belonging to the lower stratum castes) have always been a victim of continuous societal oppression by the Upper castes without any mainstream media acknowledging this violence. In 1927, Mahad Agitation brought affirmative and assertive mass coverage of Dalit violence and oppression. With Mooknayak and Bahishkrut Bharat in 1927, Dalits' protests and stories of oppression were given a straight position in mainstream journalism. However, the rigidity of the upper castes in India with a conscious upper caste political structure has ensured strategic ways to subsidize Dalit voices that resulted in the suicide (political murder) of Rohith Vemula (a Ph.D. scholar at the University of Hyderabad) or the Unnao Rape case (minor Dalit girl raped by men in Uttar Pradesh). Without any proper punishment of the alleged criminals, it becomes transparent that Dalit Human Rights are largely ignored with a strong intervention of mainstream media journalism trying to cover these up. In this specific context, my paper explored the presence of Dalit media channels or journalism spaces to examine the present-day Dalit activism in India. To do so, I focus on five exclusively Dalit Youtube channels named Dalit Camera (Karnataka), The Shudra (Uttar Pradesh), Bahujav TV, and Samta Awaz TV. My research not only seeks to explore the possibilities of Dalit activism and Identity making through alternative media platforms that are used for transparent and anti-casteist journalism but investigate the digital platform like Youtube as a space to create awareness in the 21st century. Finally, my paper will analyze how this Youtube Journalism is helping Dalit voices to shift their alternative position to the mainstream media contributing to their activism through large-scale social awareness.

### **Hate-spin: Participative Hegemony and Vigilante Publics in Indian Universities**

*Pravin Prakash*

This paper assesses the increasing threat to academic freedom in India by focusing on the increasing levels of harassment, coercion and co-optation exercised by Hindu Nationalist groups in India. My argument begins with the contention that understanding the suppression of academic freedom in India requires us to look beyond the political and institutional hegemony of the Hindu nationalist movement. Instead, it wields a Gramscian lens on the rising ideological hegemony enjoyed by Hindutva in

India by exploring the proliferation of Hindu far right groups within Indian universities (and indeed the public sphere) and pays particular attention to the tactics employed by these groups. Through a comparative study of three distinct case studies in India since 2015, it is argued that by employing a strategy of hate-spin, far-right Hindutva groups have played an active role in creating vigilante publics that engage in a process that I refer to as participative hegemony. By actively employing hate spin's dual strategies of offence taking and giving in tandem, these groups strengthen Hindutva's rising hegemony in universities and wider society through the legitimization of violence and a legitimization through violence.

## **MEDIA & VISUAL POLITICS**

### **Staging a “Battle for the Soul of America”: The Fox News Channel's Use of Critical Race Theory in the Controversy over Narratives of U.S. National History**

*Kieran Sommer*

The clash over engagement with Critical Race Theory in the United States has reached a new culmination point in the last three years, with a multitude of conservative critics vehemently denouncing the movement and more than half of the US-American states proposing legislation to ban what they refer to as Critical Race Theory in schools and higher education, both of which can be considered a damaging assault on U.S. educational institutions and intellectual culture (Conway 2022, 10–11). The controversy was sparked and spearheaded initially by conservative activist Christopher Rufo, who in a series of posts and interviews created the association of Critical Race Theory with extremist anti-White and anti-US-American ideology (Wallace-Wells 2021, n.p.). In recent socio-political discourse, conservatives have routinely used the term Critical Race Theory as a buzzword to refer to any critical engagement with systemic racism and intersectionalities of discrimination that they deem to be endangering the assumedly neutral and colour-blind spaces of education, justice and cultural practice, while failing to recognise the actual focuses, methodologies and theories of this cross-disciplinary movement (Cohen 2021, n.p.). My talk will examine the framing and uses of the term in Rufos's exchanges with the Fox News Channel and in the subsequent videos the news network selected to be released on their YouTube channel between September 2020 and June 2021. It will explore how Rufo, the Fox News anchors and their guest speakers draw upon supposed national self-images as well as national heritage and history to discredit higher U.S. academia and critical engagement with racial discrimination, thus deepening a divide between proponents of the latter and purportedly nationally-oriented legitimacy of practice.



**Jordan Peterson, the Political Right, and the Aesthetics of Intellectualism***Lukas Schutzbach*

In her 2018 report of the same name, Rebecca Lewis describes the relationship between the internal dynamics of online spaces and right-wing radicalization as the effect of an “Alternative Influence Network” (better known as the “Alt-right Pipeline”). In her report, Lewis tracks the effects of cooperation and cross-pollination on the outreach, authority, and influence of certain thought- and opinion leaders in right-wing online spaces. Since then, YouTube and other platforms, claimed to have investigated and rectified some of the radicalising tendencies of their algorithms; but the phenomenon gained renewed traction with surges in the popularity of “alternative media” spreading Covid and vaccine misinformation. A particular phenomenon I want to examine closer in this presentation is the role of intellectuals and their academic capital (i.e. the perceived epistemic authority they possess qua their social position as part of an academic institution) in these spaces, specifically of more moderately conservative thinkers, who might not immediately be viewed as connected to more radical right-wing circles (e.g. the so-called Intellectual Dark Web, an assortment of loosely associated, self-proclaimed “academic outcasts”). At the core of my thesis lies the question of the interaction of (public) intellectual authority and expertise, codified by academic capital, and political positions openly undermining the credibility of the institutions ratifying this authority. Using the case of the former psychology professor Jordan B. Peterson as an example, this presentation will explore two connected questions: (1) How is it that Jordan Peterson garners such wide attention and support and (2) why is it that so much of this support comes from the political right, even far-right, without him espousing necessarily far-right ideas? My presentation will treat Peterson as the social figure of the contemporary (public) intellectual and interrogate the relationship of the public sphere, knowledge production, and political economy.

**Making the Politically Incorrect Publicly Appealing: The media and anti-intellectualism in Brazil***João Henrique Roque de Almeida*

The election of the Far-Right President Bolsonaro was a watershed moment for the Brazilian academy as it put unprecedented pressure on its research freedom and its economic survivability. Since Bolsonaro took office, the government and its anti-intellectual agenda repeatedly tried to constrain the intellectual independence of public universities and reduce their already meager budget. However, the siege against Academia did not begin with Bolsonaro, as intellectualism had repeatedly been assaulted by conservative and far-right movements and discredited by a sensationalist and neoliberal corporate media sine long before and took an especially toxic dimension during the Worker’s Worker’s Party (PT) government (2003-2016). The corporate

media, spearheaded by great media conglomerates such as the Grupo Globo and the Grupo Silvio Santos, in its campaign against PT, progressively adopted elements of the anti-intellectualism of the far-right movements as a way to foster anti-socialist feelings in its audience. A process that at the same time furthered the pre-existence gap between the Academia and the public, it also led to the elevation of controversial voices on the fringe of Academia to the central spotlight. A famous example being Leandro Narloch, a journalist and author of the book *Guia Politicamente Incorreto da História do Brasil* (Politically Incorrect Guide to the History of Brazil), a book that by adopting much of the vocabulary of the far-right, presented a factually incorrect and revisionist account of the Brazilian history, especially its military dictatorship (1964 – 1985). However, despite being rejected and harshly criticized by the Brazilian Academy, it became a best-seller thanks to the media’s divulgation of it and its anti-left-wing ideas. Moreover, this paper will look at the relationship between Brazilian Academia and the Far-Right through the lens of the anti-intellectualism movement before and after the coup against Dilma Rousseff and the place of media in these developments.

**IDEOLOGIES AND INTELLECTUALS: PATHWAYS OFF THE FAR-RIGHT****Fragmentation, Fascism, and the Academy***Shaun Terry*

We’ve been warned about colonization, consumerism, the spectacle, objet petit a, simulacra, deregulation, responsabilization, algorithmic culture, and even potential dangers inherent to identity politics. Recently, much of the academy has tended toward the multiplication of specializations, objects of study, epistemological standpoints, and so on. Today, people seem to increasingly live on ephemeral islands, and many academics appear to celebrate while they push this trend even further. I claim that many of the past half-century’s academic trends, on the one hand, reflect the conditions that have led to far-right movements’ popularization, and on the other hand, provide useful tools to far-right movements. Far-right thinkers such as Alexander Dugin and Richard Spencer claim that we live in a postmodern world devoid of grounds from which one can convincingly criticize ethnonationalism, and fascist propagandists have always propagated such relativistic thinking. There’s no friction between their demand for freedom from human rights constraints and the logical political ends that follow from standpoint theory’s emphasis on the partiality and situatedness of any truth claim. One may recall Frankfurt School warnings: modern social fragmentation can relate closely to the popularization of fascism. Modern fragmentation meets its opposite in national unification. Liberalism’s persistence necessitates forms of social synchronization like those found in nationalism. If fascism is the

outgrowth of nationalism's extremity, then the seeds of fascism are always present in liberalism's inherent nationalism. I suggest that social fractures can be partly overcome through a metapolitical principle like that given by the Zapatistas' "Un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos" ["A world in which many worlds fit"]. Rather than emphasize the many worlds, I'm interested in the "A world" or "One world." What can we learn from the Zapatistas about cohabitation? And how might meditation on cohabitation help us to reconsider our own scholarly and educatorly practices?

### Free Speech and the Far Right – An Unholy Alliance?

*David Schutzbach*

In a recent study, Revers & Traunmüller (2020) have declared free speech to be in danger on University Campuses – left leaning students of the social sciences and humanities seem to be at the heart of this problem, according to the authors. Traunmüller and his co-author claim to see themselves in a position of a value free science and want to shed light on Academia deemed unworthy of this self-proclaimed title of "objectivity". This paper wants to put the ongoing debate (Meier 2021; Revers/Traunmüller 2021; Celikates et al. 2021a, 2021b) into a wider perspective: can science, especially empirical social research, even be value free? Does it have to be? The thesis, that the diagnosis of an endangerment of free speech always comes close to a right-wing dog whistle, lays at the heart of this analysis. Traunmüller's survey would reveal itself to be hardly impartial then. Two thematic blocs intersect in this presentation in a search for answers. Firstly, the critique of positivism by prominent members of the Frankfurt School, most notably Adorno (Adorno et al. 1969), will go on to show the intricate web of claims and counterclaims surrounding the fight for a value-free Academia which was already prevalent in the 1960s. Secondly, derived from this will be a framework that posits the fight for free speech – and the one against its "enemies" on the far left – on a political and hence normative battleground (Bogner 2021), rendering a scientific approach to the debate about freedom of speech to be fruitless. A science that deems itself to be "objectivist" will then be revealed to be the exact opposite: biased and certainly ideologically unsavory.

### Intellectual New Right

*Juliane Schwertner*

In this paper, I am going to trace and later criticize the German New Right's discourse on the topic of the intellectual left. Background to this research interest is that the New Right is on the one hand ideologically influenced by the Conservative Revolution of the Weimar Republic and on the other hand strategically inspired by the New Left. Today, with their own media and organizations, the New Right aims at promoting itself as an alternative to liberal-democratic discourses. The IfS (Institut für Staatspolitik)

is the main focal point for far-right intellectuals and, claiming academic legitimacy, assembles authors and publishers. The New Right's aim to link the extreme and far-right discourse to other points on the political spectrum (which has already been successful punctually) should be dismantled by a critical political sociology. With the approach of critical discourse analysis, I will answer the question how the New Right discourse refers to theories, debates and intellectual metapolitics located on the political left. The magazine *Sezession* which is tied to the IfS provides the material with at least 25 articles for analysis. The first thematic selection has led to a rough categorization in four fragments of discourse (that might also cross each other in one article): 1. The discussion of specific ideas that are linked to intellectuals who are located on the political left. 2. The discussion of far-reaching ideologies connected to metapolitical efforts from the left. 3. The problematization of a topic that is perceived to be monopolized by left metapolitics. 4. Theoretic approaches to metapolitics from the left spectrum, including the reflection on strategies and their usefulness. As a critical discourse analysis that concentrates on this specific aspect of the New Right's discourse on the basis of articles from the *Sezession*, the descriptive part will necessarily rely on the meanings ascribed and formulated in this milieu. The basis of legitimate critique has to be built by the precedent analysis.

## CASE STUDIES ON THE FAR-RIGHT AND ACADEMIA

### How does Big Data and data analytics affect populist sentiment?

*Karolina Oleksińska-Grabowska*

Big data, or the processing of massive amounts of data, is entering more fields and industries - from physics research to economics, law, politics, or psychology. Combining this technology with artificial intelligence, data analytics, and the profiling process, it can be said that there is a specific method by which we can study public sentiment, as well as discover the preferences of individuals. Massive data analysis now makes it possible to predict social trends, as well as help influence society (e.g., the U.S. presidential election, where Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump were candidates or the Cambridge Analytica case). If the same auction process could be implemented on a smaller scale, such as in the academic community, then we could see the phenomenon of microtargeting. Through microtargeting, different people can receive different information that is best suited to them. A specific group of people with given preferences is identified, and the best content that works for them is prepared. Thus, modern technologies are used to profile content and then present it to the audience. From the perspective of populism, or the views of the far-right, this can lead to a reduction in dissenting messages. On the other hand, those of a right-wing nature,

properly described, can be conveyed to those with dissenting views to be able to influence them. Translating these issues to the academic level, it should be noted that similar mechanisms are also used in this environment. The consequence of this can be a strong political dependence of university authorities on central power centers or minimizing the processing of dissenting information. Therefore, the paper will aim to present and describe the aforementioned mechanisms, as well as indicate how they are applied in the academic environment.

### **Methodological issues of far-right groups. Case study of the University of Warsaw**

*Jan Szczepański*

The aim of the paper is to present the methodology of analyzing the activities of the extreme right in the case study of the University of Warsaw. After 2015, the activity of reactionary or Nazi circles increased at many Polish universities. Although there is little support for these ideas among students, it is not possible to eradicate this phenomenon from the public space. For example, there are cases from 2015, when students were expelled for spreading anti-Semitic content. Interestingly, these are not groups associated with the current ruling party, but 'theoretically' grassroots initiatives, such as (for example) anti-abortion and anti-vaccine movements. In addition to operating on the streets, many people and institutions operate within social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, spreading slogans of hatred. From a geopolitical point of view, they most often spread anti-EU, anti-American, often pro-Russian, and anti-Ukrainian slogans after 24 February. Although universities do not allow far-right demonstrations on the territory of the University, most pickets take place in front of the university's main gate, as well as by distributing their own materials. A high-profile campaign in 2018 was the case of the „Stormtroopers“, nationalists associated with the 'White Power' ideology, who sent out many leaflets at the University of the University with threats against people associated with left-wing groups. This has negative consequences, as the university ceases to be a safe place for people with a different than the extreme-right vision of themselves and the world. Moreover, extreme-right activity stimulates an equally dangerous activity on the far-left, with the risk that most students will be terrorized by extreme attitudes to life on both sides. The above-mentioned issues are multilayered and require context, drawing and theoretical setting, as many elements strongly resemble the postulates of fascist students from Poland in the 1930s.

### **Legal instruments of impact of far-right governments on the academic community in Poland**

*Karolina Wojciechowska*

On 29 May 2001, the brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński founded a political party called 'Law and Justice' ('Prawo i Sprawiedliwość', 'PiS'). Its political ideology can be

described as right-wing populist, nationalist, conservative and Eurosceptic. The party first held power in Poland between 2005 and 2007, before returning to government in 2015 and guiding Polish politics to this day. One of the reforms carried out by the "PiS" governments is the reform of higher education, called the "Constitution for Science". The authors of the changes describe it as a systemic reform of higher education and science. It is supposed to create conditions for the practice of scientific and didactic excellence, as well as ensure sustainable development of academic centres across the country. Among other things, the amendment introduced doctoral schools with a general scholarship system, or created the National Academic Exchange Agency. In order to increase the quality of scientific research, the Polish system of evaluation of science was also changed. The previous solution, in which universities presented only the best employees for evaluation, was replaced by a new instrument. It consists in introducing the obligation for each employee to submit for evaluation during the four-year evaluation period a maximum of four publications - two monographs and two articles. This is intended to reduce the phenomenon of 'punctosis' ('punktoza'), which is the pursuit of the largest possible number of publications with little impact on the development of scientific thought. Has the phenomenon of 'punctosis' really been eliminated? Which publishers are on the ministerial list? Are the legal solutions of the "Constitution for Science" not an instrument of the right-wing government's influence on the academic community? I will try to answer these questions in my speech.

## **THE FAR-RIGHT, ACADEMIA AND THE STATE**

### **Know Thy Enemy: Federal Security Intelligence, Academia, and the Far-Right**

*Faith McGlothlin*

This paper presents the synergistic relationship between academic research and undercover operations involving far-right groups in the United States. It presents a unique period of collaboration between academic scholars and the federal security state following the cataclysmic events at Waco, Texas, where seventy-six people died in 1993 while under siege by federal security forces. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created the Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) to deepen contact with academic scholars and a range of experts in the social sciences. Researchers of religion and the far-right acted as consultants, became expert witnesses, and provided the FBI with training. Famously, the political scientist Michael Barkun was credited with successfully negotiating peace between federal forces and the Montana Freeman Militia standoff in 1996. Broadly this paper theorizes how the emergence of the far-right as a threat to national security was intimately connected to state-building, the

development of federal agency capacities, and the transformation of security forces (the FBI in particular) into a sophisticated intelligence-gathering agency. It asks, in an effort to „know the enemy,“ how has academic research become absorbed into the massive security state edifice? What is the relationship between research and counterinsurgency tactics? Moreover, how has this history of collaboration shaped the field of far-right scholarship itself? A critical assessment of this partnership offers a keyhole view into a major shift within the U.S. security state as it sought out new political enemies and justified a rapid enhancement of its counterintelligence investigative techniques in the wake of the Cold War.

### **Academia as Propaganda - the far-right's impingement on intellectual dissent in India**

*Ashwinii Selvaraj*

Far-right governments around the world have debilitating consequences for Academia, given how academia often is both an important and influential source in terms of channelling criticism and discontent against far-right governments. This is especially the case in hitherto robust democracies which are now experiencing a process of democratic backsliding, with one such democracy in South Asia being India. The rise of the far-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power in 2014 led by Narendra Modi is unique, given how the BJP's political authoritarianism is supported by Hindu religious majoritarianism, which is evident from the ideology of Hindutva that the party proudly espouses in its efforts to build a "Hindu Nation". Additionally, the BJP's sweeping re-election to power in 2019 across the majority of Indian states is only evidence of the increasing acceptance of Hindutva as common sense amongst most voters and deepening marginalization of and discrimination against religious minorities, particularly the Muslims. Importantly, the push by the far-right towards Hindutva has been perilous for Indian Academia not just because of the explicit oppression and physical violence that has been unleashed against academics who resist the BJP's majoritarian tendencies, but also because of how the Academia has been co-opted as a legitimate tool of propaganda for the BJP to further its Hindu nationalistic goals. As such, this paper will examine the more implicit but subversive ways in which the BJP seeks to legitimise its majoritarian ideology through the Academia, for instance through its rewriting of Indian history in a way that undermines the role of Muslims or through sponsoring sub-par, pseudo-science research to prove the supposed scientific validity of religious myths and superstitions. Furthermore, the paper will also examine the broader socio-cultural and political implications of such indirect co-optation of the Indian Academia, and how such exploitation stifles the growth of the Academia as a standalone entity and subsequently, its ability to function as an effective channel of resistance in countering the hegemony of the far-right BJP in India.

### **Academia and the political space**

*Ishaan Teotia*

In the Indian subcontinent, Higher educational institutions provide a space to an individual to learn, develop, and articulate ideas and thought processes. The heterogeneity of pupils propels such endeavours further, moreover an institution provides not only physical space for interactions but a metaphorical space to mind to ponder and play with ideas. More recently, the far-right political torrent has penetrated all levels of academic existence. A force which inherently desires not only to curb heterogeneous exchanges but also does not seek to justify its measures. Debate and discussion are inherently considered redundant. It is the epistemic commitment of the far-right ideas that it must triumph over every other form of discourse, the space shrinks and ideas polarise. Any attempt to resist or counter such aspects results in complete marginalisation or worse, mob-justice. The practices of the far-right which makes the academic space a space of silence, may not be a consolidated political agenda but can be mere 'practices' as Todd May articulates in his paper 'Desire and Ideology in Fascism' that "practices are where knowledge and power takes place" The question then is what kind of knowledge can emerge from curbing down the arena of knowledge discussion? Are these practices going beyond the domains of the far-right, and turning into being fascistic? As Michael Foucault articulates in the preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, that "... Fascism in us all, in our head, and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us". It is the task of the paper to try to elaborate on the contemporary Indian educational apparatus in the light of perpetual onslaught from far-right ideological conflicts, furthermore, will try to evaluate the 'fascistic', far-right torrents and their resistance.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## MODERATORS

**Sona Prabhakaran** is a doctoral candidate in Anthropology, and her ethnographic project seeks to explore the nexus between sacred spaces and funeral rituals within the village pantheons of Tamil Nadu. She is a DAAD fellow at the South Asia Institute and a member of the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HGGS). Her other research and teaching interests lie in Caste and Dalit Politics of Contemporary India, Literary Theory and Criticisms, and Aesthetics of Deformity and Death.

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## NOTES

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## CONTACT

Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities  
and Social Sciences  
Heidelberg University  
Voßstraße 2  
69115 Heidelberg

Armen Hesse, Jonathan Lench, Martina Marzullo,  
Pravin Prakash & Sona Prabhakaran

## VENUE

CATS Seminar Building  
Room 010.01.05, Floor 1  
Voßstraße 2  
69115 Heidelberg

[www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de](http://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de)



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