



*Examining the history, health and functioning  
of democracy in America and abroad since 2001*

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**SSB AUDITORIUM & LIVE STREAMED**

**@ *STCHAS.EDU/DEMOCRACYDAYS***

# ***D DAYS '21 – Democracy if We Want It***

## ***Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> annual SCC Democracy Days!***

Thank you for joining us on campus and online for this event. This year's program features 16 sessions with faculty from nine academic disciplines including two sessions led by SCC students and 15 guests covering many of the most urgent issues of our time.

Democracy is our common heritage, the means to the ends that we all seek, regardless of whether we are right, left or center, am I correct? This is what I once thought. But the spirit of our age suggests otherwise. In word or in action, the theme “we are not a democracy” is repeatedly put before us.

Yes, technically the USA is a constitutional federal republic, a representative rather than pure democracy. And yet, it is democracy that will save the republic. The discourse on the technical distinctions between ‘republic’ and ‘democracy,’ and who seems most invested in downplaying the latter, is highly revealing of where we stand.

My fellow Americans, we broke a long and enviable streak of peaceful transfers of power, a hallmark of democracy, on January 6, 2021, when MAGA extremists broke into the US Capitol, using violence in an attempt to thwart the certification of the 2020 national election. This was an audacious attack on our way of life. Was the insurrection an aberration? Or will “J6” fit into our history the way the Beer Hall Putsch does in the timeline of Germany in the 1920s and 30s, when the Weimar Republic slid into a fascist state?

It is a sign of how deeply divided this nation is that we lack a common narrative about that ghastly day.

The American situation is laden with intense conflict but is not anomalous. Internationally, democracy is “under siege.” So says Freedom House, a nongovernmental organization tracking democracy, freedom and human rights globally.

So it is an essential good that we gather for reasoned discourse on the topics occupying the four days of this educational forum. Abundant thanks to everyone who is offering a presentation and participating in a panel. Many people have enabled these efforts, and they have my gratitude as well including AV systems engineer Nick Wallace, Sean Hook in Marketing & Communication, website specialist Harry Morris, administrative assistant Ginny Tiller, SCC Housekeeping, Department of Public Safety, the Copy Center and the SCC administration.

Michael Kuelker  
Professor (Emeritus) of English  
Democracy Days organizer 2001-present

# Monday, September 13, 2021

## **8:30      The U.S. Constitution and Major League Baseball**

Batter up! As the hometown team tries to make history yet again, come and see how our country's pastime compares to one of its other most prized traditions ... the United States Constitution. **Lisa Randoll** (Political Science) will game out exactly how various aspects of Major League Baseball compare and connect to our country's most integral founding document.

## **10            The Poetry & Prose of Protest**

The current political climate of the United States has created an environment that is rife for protest in its many forms: marches, picket lines, vigils, speeches. This panel examines another form of popular protest with a rich history: the written word. Following a brief history of the use of literature as protest, members of the Fall 2021 **Creative Writing II class** taught by **Joe Baumann** (SCC English) will present their protest writing and discuss their motivations and inspirations for writing, as well as what they hope the power of art and the written word can achieve in a time of turmoil and upheaval.

## **11:30      Signs of Life**

When push comes to shove, what are we willing to live with? From the death of George Floyd to the storming of the U.S. Capitol, recent events raise the question of what we're supposed to do when we can no longer run our moral lives on autopilot. Extraordinary situations like these seem to call for acts of ethical creativity, but how can this be accomplished while maintaining our integrity? Join **Charles DeBord** (SCC Philosophy) for an investigation of how the philosophical foundations of ethics can ground our understanding of right and wrong within a rapidly changing social landscape.

The growth and spread of democracies that defined the 20th century peaked in the early days of the 21st. Over the past decade, one in six democracies has failed. In countries around the world—places like Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and Venezuela—autocrats have slowly dismantled democratic systems, leaving governments that are for the most part democracies in name only.

*- ProtectDemocracy.org*



**REGISTER TO VOTE in Missouri at [sos.mo.gov](https://sos.mo.gov)**

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## Transgender Today: A Panel Discussion

Missouri leads the country in the number of anti-LGBTQ bills introduced, most of which target transgender youth. Fifteen such bills have recently made an appearance. On this panel to discuss these bills and other related issues: Rep. **Barbara Phifer** represents St. Louis County (District 90/Kirkwood) in the Missouri House of Representatives. She was a United Methodist pastor for 40 years and has a transgender grandchild. Rep. **Doug Clemens** represents St. Louis County (District 72/St. Ann) in the Missouri House of Representatives. He is the uncle of a gender non-binary individual. **Danielle Meert** is the parent of a transgender youth and an activist with TransParentSTL. **Sara Baker** is the Deputy Chief of Staff for St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones. **Oliver Spencer** is transgender and a self-advocate who studied at SCC from 2014-2017. Moderating the panel is **Tracy Bono**, adjunct faculty in the SCC business department.

### Transgender Rights and the ACLU

The ACLU champions transgender people's right to be themselves. We're fighting discrimination in employment, housing, and public places, including restrooms. We're working to make sure trans people get the health care they need and we're challenging obstacles to changing the gender marker on identification documents and obtaining legal name changes. We're fighting to protect the rights and safety of transgender people in prison, jail, and detention facilities as well as the right of trans and gender nonconforming students to be treated with respect at school. Finally, we're working to secure the rights of transgender parents. [See ACLU.org]

2:30

## Afghanistan in Focus: A Panel Discussion

The 20-year, U.S.-led coalition war in Afghanistan has concluded with shocking scenes of chaos, violence and Taliban rule. What happened and where do we go from here? Our panelists bring multiple perspectives. **Fahime Mohammad**, who came to the United States from Afghanistan in 1991, shares a riveting personal journey with his observations of government. He co-owns and operates Sameem Afghan Restaurant. The panel is rounded out by **William Baca Mejia** (SCC Economics) and **Ryanzo Perez**, a veteran of the U.S. Army who served in Afghanistan. **Paul Roesler** (SCC Political Science) moderates. **Bryonie Carter** (SCC English) provides an introduction.

### Afghanistan - The Thousands and the Trillions

The United States launched the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, as part of the broad "global war on terrorism." The Afghanistan war has encompassed four presidencies. The human cost: 2400 dead and 20,000 wounded (United States); on the Afghanistan side, in excess of 100,000 counting military police, national police and citizens. Additionally, 444 humanitarian aid workers and 75 journalists were killed. The number of anti-government opposition fighters killed during this time is estimated at 51,191 although the true number may never be known. The war has cost the US some two trillion dollars. (*Source: Suliman, Adela. "Nearly 20 years of war, 10 days to fall: Afghanistan, by the numbers." Washington Post. Aug. 20, 2021.*)

How much is two trillion dollars? This kind of money can buy a four-year private college education costing \$30,000/year for 16 million students. Two trillion dollars would more than cancel every student loan in America.

## JOIN THE EFFORT TO HELP REFUGEES and IMMIGRANTS in ST LOUIS



During Democracy Days, SCC's Service-Learning & Civic Engagement Program is sponsoring a donation drive for the **International Institute of St. Louis** and the **Immigrant Home English Learning Program (IHELP)** of St. Louis. The International Institute is collecting items for refugees and immigrants who are making their new homes in the Greater St. Louis area. [www.iistl.org/](http://www.iistl.org/)

IHELP is a volunteer program dedicated to "[empowering] foreign-born adults by providing individualized, in-home, English

language education and tools for effective navigation in our community." They are continually seeking donations of teaching supplies for their volunteer teachers and their students' families.

<https://ihelpstl.org/home>

Donations may be dropped off anytime during the week of September 13-17. Drop-off locations are during Democracy Days sessions in the SSB Auditorium, and/or during regular office hours in Humanities 203. Each location will host two bins, and each of those bins will be clearly labeled with the organization's name. Following the conclusion of Democracy Days, all donations will be delivered to their respective locations. See [stchas.edu/democracymdays](http://stchas.edu/democracymdays) for a list of supplies that are needed at this time!

## Tuesday, September 14

### **10 Medicaid in Missouri: A Panel Discussion**

The SCC Political Science department hosts a discussion on Medicaid expansion featuring two Missouri legislators. In 2020, Missourians passed Amendment 2, which changed the Missouri Constitution and required the state government to expand Medicaid to cover Missourians earning up to 133% of the poverty level. In 2021, the Missouri legislature refused to fund that expansion, but the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that the expansion could proceed. State Representative **John Weiman** (R) and State Senator **Jill Schupp** (D) will discuss their perspectives on Medicaid expansion and what happens next. **Gabe Harper** (SCC Political Science) will moderate the discussion.

### **11:30 Ordinary Equality: Why We Need the ERA**

A 2020 poll revealed a 75% majority of Americans support an equal rights amendment. By 2020, 38 states ratified the ERA and passed the 3/4 rule to become constitutional. So why is it not law? This discussion, led by **Grace Moser** (SCC History), **Dana Prewett** (SCC Sociology) and **Monica Swindle** (SCC Sociology), will address the history behind the amendment and what it means for American women today. Panelists will discuss the Constitution and its amendments regarding equal rights and explore other nations' constitutions with more specific protections already included.

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## 1 **Balancing Security and Accessibility in Elections**

**Kurt Bahr**, Director of Elections for St. Charles County, will discuss the competing yet complementary goals of voter access and ballot security in elections. State and Federal changes to election laws have proposed changing who and how voters access ballots as well as how those ballots are secured from fraud before and after they are cast. A look at Missouri's current laws on election verification, auditing procedures as well as the process for voter registration and list management will provide perspective on how those proposed state and national election laws will change our election system.



**Kurt Bahr** served as a Republican member of the Missouri House of Representatives (District 102, 2011-19) prior to becoming Director of Elections  
photo used by permission

## 2:30 **Critical Race Theory: A Panel Discussion**

**Greg Bosworth**, SCC Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, leads an exploration of CRT in our political discourse and the public education system. It's one of the hottest political flashpoints in our time. Joining the discussion will be **Marvin Tobias** (SCC Psychology), **Grace Moser** (SCC History), **Rachel McWhorter** (SCC English), **Anastasia Bierman** (SCC English) and **Martha Kampen** (SCC Diversity & Compliance).

# Thursday, September 16

## 10 **Separate and Unequal in Death: The Challenges of Preserving a Segregated Cemetery**

Greenwood Cemetery, established in 1874, is the oldest non-sectarian cemetery for African Americans in St. Louis. Historian **Etta Daniels** and groundskeeper **Shelley Morris** of the Greenwood Cemetery Preservation Association will discuss their research and work at the cemetery and how it continues to change and affect descendants of those buried there. Inequality continues even after death, as Greenwood highlights the continued struggle for St. Louis' black community to preserve and honor their dead.

## 11:30 Covid-19: The Delta Variant

**Amy Koehler**, Provost of the SCC Dardenne Creek Campus (and former nursing faculty), joins **Monica Hall-Woods** (SCC Biology) and **Nicole Pinaire** (SCC Biology) to discuss medical questions surrounding vaccines and the evolution of Covid-19, including the Delta variant. **Sara Evers**, Assistant Director of the St Charles County Department of Public Health, will discuss government efforts to fight this pandemic in St. Charles and provide updates on the efficacy of vaccines and masks. **Paul Roesler** (SCC Political Science) will moderate the discussion and discuss the role of government in a democracy.

## 1 Creating Equitable Education in Our Communities

\* live stream only \*

Over 10 million children live below the poverty line in America, and only 14% of children growing up in poverty will graduate from college within eight years of graduating high school. The U.S. education system struggles to provide a functioning learning experience for children in low-income communities. **Francesca Meixner**, an educator for Teach for America, works in these communities to ensure that all children receive an equitable education regardless of family income. A true democracy will care about the needs of all; this means addressing the lack of equity within our local schools. Ms. Meixner will share what individuals can do to assist in creating a fair education system for all and will also guide students in seeing their ability to create lasting change in their own communities.

## 7 Missouri at 200 Years

It's Missouri's anniversary! Join **Debra Crank Lewis** (SCC History), **Gabe Harper** (SCC Political Science) and **Gary McKiddy** (SCC History) as they discuss 200 years of Missouri being part of the United States. They will cover topics including Missouri Compromise, the Missouri Constitution, German influences in Missouri as well as the fractious politics of Missouri today.



### ***A Note about Methodology***

Since 2001, this annual forum has featured SCC students, faculty, staff and administrators as well as invited guests discoursing on democracy. Every spring semester, an “all mail users” message goes out at SCC inviting proposals for Democracy Days that September. No one who has ever proposed a session has been turned down! The agenda you see this year, and every year, reflects the intellectual energies and commitments of the people who step forward to participate.

Presenters and panelists are asked to allow for ample time in every session for Q&A, discussion, dissent, etc., as this forum seeks always to be democratic in practice. If you'd like more information about SCC Democracy Days, or you'd like to take part in D DAYS in the future, please contact Michael Kuelker (SCC English) at [mkuelker@stchas.edu](mailto:mkuelker@stchas.edu).