



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
NATIONAL AGENDA 2022
“Politics by the Numbers”

Nora Kelly Lee
“*From the Review to The Atlantic*”

HOSTED BY University of Delaware –
Center for Political Communication

PARTICIPANTS
Dr. Lindsay Hoffman Director of National Agenda and Associate Director
of the Center for Political Communication,
University of Delaware

Nora Kelly Lee Contributing writer at *The Atlantic* previously serving as
a senior editors on the politics desk. As a graduate of
the University of Delaware (AS12), Lee credits her
career to field experience as a writer and editor for the
University’s the *Review*. As a member of *The Atlantic*’s
politics team she directed coverage of the 2018 and
2020 elections, both impeachments of former President
Donald Trump, and the January 6 insurrection, as well
as other major stories.

Transcript of Event

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University of Delaware
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[Musical interlude to 0:00:42.2]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Please welcome, your host for this evening, Dr. Lindsay Hoffman.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Good evening, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us at the – I can't believe it – the Twelfth Annual National Agenda Speaker Series. We've been doing this since 2010. I'm so pleased to welcome you to the University of Delaware, virtually for those who are live streaming and, and in person for those of you who are here today. We're here thanks to UD's Center for Political Communication with generous support from the College of Arts and Sciences. This year's theme as you can see is "Politics by the Numbers." We're looking at polling, who's up in the polls, who's down in the polls. We're less than two weeks from the 2022 midterm's elections. A very important midterms election for Democrats and, and Republicans. So, what can we expect? Tonight's guest will help us understand how to interpret the news and what it's like to write and edit for a national publication about politics.

As usual, we will be inviting audience participation but I'd like to remind everybody that civil dialogue is vital to the success of this program. So let's agree to be candid but also courteous of each other's views. I'll open things up for Q&A around 8:30 and our student volunteers, Millie and Kate, will be helping with the microphones down here at the front of the stage. They will bring the microphone to you after you raise your hand and direct you back to your seat. And don't forget, we've had some amazing programs this year. Those are all available to watch on our website at cpc.udel.edu. My last conversation with an

indigenous photojournalist and a graphics editor for *The New York Times* was fascinating. I highly encourage that. So, our speaker tonight is a contributing writer at *The Atlantic*, has been an editor there as well. This monthly magazine is celebrating its 156th, 165th year, birthday this year. The people who started this magazine back in 1857 were fierce opponents of slavery but they were also, as quoted in the history of *The Atlantic* magazine, moved to overcome what they saw as the elites, the elites of partisanship believing that the free exchange of ideas across ideological lines was crucial to the great American experiment. Some of those founders included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Some names you're probably familiar with. So, one of the oldest, longest running magazines in American history. Our speaker previously served as senior editor on the magazine's politics desk. Kelly, Nora Kelly Lee is a proud Blue Hen and she credits her career to field experience at the *Review*. Anyone here from the *Review*? Representing the *Review*? Thank you. Yes, the, the, the student newspaper here at UD which is also celebrating a birthday this year – 140 years old as a students, a voice for students at the University of Delaware. In her role at *The Atlantic*'s political team, Lee directed coverage of the 2018 and 2020 elections, both impeachments of President Donald Trump, and the January 6th insurrection among other major stories. She graduated with, from UD with a BA in Spanish language and literature and minors in journalism and political science in 2012. Working at the *Review* as a copyeditor, then copy chief, then managing news editor and then finally executive editor helped secure internships with *The News Journal* and Philadelphia Magazine. She also worked as a copyeditor for Science Magazine and a correspondent for The National Journal before moving to *The Atlantic*. So



please, let's give a big welcome back, a big Blue Hen welcome to UD alum Nora Kelly Lee

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you so much for being here.

NORA KELLY LEE: Thank you for having me. This is so surreal –

DR. HOFFMAN: Is it surreal?

NORA KELLY LEE: – to be back. Its, its surreal.

DR. HOFFMAN: Have you been back since, since you graduated?

NORA KELLY LEE: I came back to talk to Review staffers a few years ago, around 2015, 2016 and then my husband and I live in Washington, D.C., my parents live in South Jersey and on our, in our travels back and forth we've occasionally stopped on campus.

DR. HOFFMAN: Nice. Well, so, what's, I think, you know, thank you so much again for being here. What's it like, what, what's most different from when you graduated 10 years ago. Can you maybe recount a story or a memory from your time here at UD that might be different from what the students here have experienced? Or something like –

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, my gosh. Well, I mean, the, the place physically has changed so much. The development, the dorms, for the most part seem a lot nicer.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

NORA KELLY LEE: And I was talking to some Review students earlier today and found out that they are pretty much 100 percent online and we barely had a website. So, that tells you something about the changes in media over the last 10 years.

DR. HOFFMAN: Sure, yeah, it's been a massive change. So, what, what I like to do for National Agenda events is, this is also a class and you had the pleasure of meeting a lot of my students today. My students submit questions for the speaker. They do some research on the speaker and so I like to highlight some of the questions that they have asked. So, Sarah asks that being a UD alumni, what are some pieces of advice you would recommend to students on campus about networking –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and accessing resources for our futures?

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah. I mean, I know that networking is really scary. It's scary to put yourself out there especially when you're a student and maybe you haven't had internships and you don't really feel like you know what you're doing, but everyone that you talk to in the professional world was once right there in your place. So, I mean, the first thing that I would say is get an internship if you can. It's not always feasible financially or logistically but internships are the reason why I got my first job. And, I, just like the *Review* I, I credit everything to those early internships. I, I, my first internship was at Philadelphia Magazine and it's the city magazine, the city of Philadelphia – it's like New York or Washingtonian – and I only got that because of Review clips and, and yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, so, all right. I gave you some of the softball questions. Now let's get into –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – into some deep stuff. So, our next, not to plug our next speaker while you're here but our next speaker [chuckle] –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – I'm going to do it anyway – is John Della Volpe who wrote this book *Fight: How Gen Z's are channeling their fear and passion to save America*. Another question that came from one of my students that says, when, right now I'm reading this book. He talks a lot about the potential that Gen Z –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – Generation Z has for creating a better world than the one we live in now. With extremism on the rise do you have hope for Gen Z in terms of bridging –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – the divide. I think, we have, we're living in this very polarized time, or do you think that Gen Z is going to kind of continue the status quo? What are some –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – ways you would wish to circumvent this polarization that we're facing?

NORA KELLY LEE: That's a really good question. I mean, the rap on young people – I'm a millennial; the rap on my generation was that we didn't care. We cared when Barack Obama was elected. We cared at other big national moments like that but other than that we weren't super engaged. But my understanding of Gen Z is that Gen Z cares deeply about the future. When you think about issues like climate change, when you think about issues like workers rights, my understanding is that you folks out there are going to be the ones who are going to push for a change in this country on those fronts. And I know that it's difficult for Gen Z right now coming out of the pandemic and trying to find your footing as you're entering the working world but I think that those core values are

going to help push this country in the right direction. I'm sorry, what was the second part of that question?

DR. HOFFMAN: Just what are some ways you, we could, you wish we could circumvent this polarization that we're facing right now. This is a topic that keeps coming up in the classes is we have Republicans and Democrats being so polarized and –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – divided; we have people in different generations being polarized from each other.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: What are some of the ways that you think that that people could find some connections in this –

NORA KELLY LEE: Well –

DR. HOFFMAN: – difficult time?

NORA KELLY LEE: – I think that we have to unite around a common sense of facts first. I think once we kind of agree on the basics we can figure out whether we can find commonalities in terms of ideology, in terms of personal perspective but we have to get those basic facts down first. And, you know, I think that one of the things that, one of the things that Gen Z can really bring to the table is their interconnectedness, is their, the, their voice like we talked about before, and when we talk about the influence of Gen Z on the electorate – I was just reading a story by one of my colleagues, Ronald Brownstein, on the way up here and he talked about how pivotal the Gen Z vote is going to be particularly in the southern states this year. And so if, if Gen Z is willing to get to the polls and is willing to exercise their vote on all those fronts I think we'll be in good shape.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, that was going to be one of my next questions is we're looking at – and I have a, a chart I'll show a little bit later – but basically we're seeing that Gen Z typically 18 to 29-year olds which –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – can include some of millennial as well but that they are really not that excited or engaged around this, these midterm elections.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: The numbers who say that they are very excited or are paying a lot of attention to these midterms is very low –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: – compared to older generations. So, what do you think what can motivate Gen Z –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – students to see that their vote matters in these midterms?

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, I mean, I think there's a difference. There, there's, people can be politically engaged in terms of caring about the news, in terms of caring about issues that affect their communities but not, they don't necessarily show up to the polls. And so, what political professionals have to do is figure out a way to get the people who are, who care deeply to turn out. And, that is, that is the burden on the profession. I mean, I think its each individual young voter needs to recognize their power, needs to recognize that voting – yes, you, you might vote for people who won't give you everything that you want but if they can give you some of what you want that's typically then considered a success in this country. I know when I talk to young people they often say well, I voted for so-

and-so but they didn't do anything for me. And then when you drill down into the actual issues they may have done a little bit on a, on several different fronts and that might be good enough. They might not get the world but, but if they can make incremental change in the direction that you want to go in that's, that's what your vote's for.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I'm going to pull a, a, a tweet that I, I think a friend of yours posted a few days ago. Let's see if this comes up. A –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – picture of the letter from the editors from you as the executive editor. This would have been what year?

NORA KELLY LEE: This would have been 20, 2011-2012.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. So, it looks like – I'm sure folks can't really read it – but it's apparently Hurricane Irene caused some trouble with early publications of, of the *Review* that year.

NORA KELLY LEE: That's right.

DR. HOFFMAN: And then there's also a picture of the spine of the, the collected stories from the *Review* that year. So, what, what was it like when you took on that role of, of executive editor and how did that impact – well, actually no, I'm going to transition into tell us a little bit about what it was like to be executive editor –

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh.

DR. HOFFMAN: – during 2011 – 2012. But also, I think for a lot of the students here we've, we've invited a lot of journalists to come and be interviewed but what's the difference between a reporter and an editor?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: And what's, what's the role of an editor and you can maybe start with examples from your time at the *Review*?

NORA KELLY LEE: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: Because I think a lot of folks don't really understand the difference between what it means to be a reporting on the ground and then what it means to be back in the office and actually making sense of all of that information –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – that's coming in.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, I mean, being the executive editor of the *Review* remains one of the highlights of my career. There's something so special about working in a newsroom with your peers, about – I was talking to the students about what, talking to the students about this earlier – flying without a net. *The Review* is an independent newspaper. It's housed in the University but it doesn't have any or it didn't have advisors from the University. So we really felt like we were on our own and it was an amazing experience to know that we were 100 percent in charge and that our successes were 100 percent ours. Obviously our failures were 100 percent ours. But that was a, that was a really wonderful thing. And Marina Coran (sp?) who shared this is still my best friend in the whole world. She works at *The Atlantic*. She's the best space reporter in the whole country. Go Google her. And so doing the job with her was, was incredibly special. But it came with a great deal of heaviness and weight and responsibility. We covered some heavy stuff. We covered crime on campus, we covered – and off campus, the anniversary of 9/11, the 10th anniversary was the next issue after this one. We covered the deaths of different students. And so, to cover all of those hyper

sensitive issues as, you know, 22-year-olds was a weighty thing. And we took that responsibility very, very seriously. In terms of what the difference between being a writer, being a reporter and an editor, a reporter is someone who goes out into the world and is either assigned to go out into the world or decides to go out on their own with the story that they've pitched to an editor and they contact sources, they, in-person they go to compile great scenes, they might call up an historian or someone else who's really knowledgeable about a particular topic to get all the context around that story that they want to do. They write it all up and then they send it to their editor. And that's me. And what I do is I go by it line by line and try to make it the most beautiful, perfect version of itself that it can possibly be. And sometimes that process – I was telling the students earlier – can be a 45-minute process and a really fast breaking news story or it can be months of work. And the great thing about working at a place like, like *The Atlantic* is that you got to work on all these difference lengths of stories, stories with varying levels of ambition and all those different modes activate different parts of your brain and I think all together make you a really well-rounded journalist.

DR. HOFFMAN: We gave really a crisis of distrust in media in –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: – in this country and you know over the past several years an increase in people calling news fake news, and *The Atlantic* is considered a, more a far left magazine than maybe other magazines. How do you talk to people who say well I don't, I don't believe what, what, what's published in that magazine?

NORA KELLY LEE: I mean, I would push back a little bit on it, it being

described as a left magazine. I mean it was founded on liberal principles. You mentioned the abolition of slavery. But I think we would consider ourselves just a, a, a bastion of American values. And you can call those small L liberal but certainly not, we certainly don't have a political affiliation and nor do we want to. The publication has never wanted to be a voice of any, of any political party. And, in, in terms of how to deal with readers calling us fake news, I mean, that's just the, the price you pay in, in the media today. And the only thing that we can really do and the only thing we really try to do is work as hard as we can to be transparent with the reader about where information comes from, to be transparent with the reader when it's our own analysis of a particular event, make sure its signposted to the reader that something is opinion versus a news story and to make sure that we, we, we perform at the highest standards. Quality, I think quality of journalism if you can defend what you've done, if you've maintained a high quality then, then hopefully that can be enough to convince people who might even disagree with the premise of a story that you did your level best. I know that I used to talk to Republican sources when I was a reporter at a, at *The Atlantic*, Republican elected officials who would say, you know, I, I love reading you guys because I, I do trust that you're doing the right thing even if I don't really understand your analysis all the time.

DR. HOFFMAN: Hum. Well, I, I want to move on and think about moving from campus journalism to local journalism. A, a new journalism collaborative based at WUSF in Tampa, Florida just established themselves, they, they aim to expand coverage of nearby counties by providing, reporting to local public and commercial outlets and their multimedia reporting will, will zero on regional issues currently receiving little attention from media outlets such as education –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and underrepresented communities. What role do campus newspapers, university newspapers and local media play in, in the, the larger media landscape and are you concerned that their impact is, is dwindling?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum. Oh, absolutely. I mean, when I was working at the *Review* we liked to say in a very self important way that the two newspapers of Delaware were the *Review* and *The News Journal*. And, you know, we were college kids, we were –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: – we were pompous. But it was true because a lot of the local media in Delaware had, had really, really dwindled by then. This was back in, you know, 2010, 2012, and when I went to intern at *The News Journal* I knew that I was serving a function that a fulltime paid employee would have done 20 years ago. And that was, for me it was a great thing because it meant that the minute that I started that internship I was out in the world covering the news all across Delaware. I was able to get those clips that would help me build my career but it was also really sad. At *The News Journal* – I don't know if any of you have ever been inside of it but there used to be a section that housed all the different little microfiche which you guys in the front probably don't even know what I'm talking about but they were old copies of the newspaper. And people, reporters back in the day would go into that place – it was basically like a little library – and they would glean information. They would read old stories and they would try to learn about the history of the state. And, there was a pickle shaped pen that was on the sign-out in front of the library and that pen had been in the same spot for like five years. There was dust gathering around the pen because

there weren't enough reporters in the newsroom who had time to go into the library and learn about the news that their predecessor had covered. And it was really depressing and everyone would point at the pickle pen –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: – and say, you know, don't you move it. So, it was starting my media career with, in that context where I knew I was serving the function of, of someone who's a fulltime reporter was kind of a, was kind of a depressing thing and it's not a unique story. It's not a unique story at all. One of my reporters at *The Atlantic* wrote a really great piece a couple of years back where she profiled her own hometown paper and how it had been absolutely decimated and I know that there's been a lot of research done about how the rise of polarization has actually corresponded with the, the demise of local news.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: I think we can see there, there's no; one of the things that she wrote about is how local news really provides a touch point for people in the community. You know, if you see that some building is on fire down the street from you, you know that your local reporter is going to go and they're going to find out what happened, who's responsible, and what can be done about that fire. But absent that kind of information the community is left to conjecture. They go on Facebook to try and figure it out and they get fed misinformation even about local community fires. And, and without that, that unifying thing to, to build your community's identity around you really lose a lot in, in terms of community culture, and in terms of community unity.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. So, let's, let's think about – I have a student who posted a, a question where [indiscernible] said that there are now public relations

class where they've been learning that the number of journalists is decreasing while PR practitioners is increasing –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – currently Rashine said at a six to one ratio.

NORA KELLY LEE: Wow.

DR. HOFFMAN: We have to fact check that. But, why do you think fewer people are going into journalism –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and, and more are headed towards PR and what would, what ways would you encourage more people to go into a more of a journalistic career?

NORA KELLY LEE: I mean, I think money is a huge factor. It is really hard to get a good paying job in journalism. Entry level salaries are pathetic and even in major cities I know that I've, I've worked with young people who can barely afford to live in Washington, D.C. And I think that, you know, with rising student debt a lot of people just simply cannot afford to take a journalism job no matter how passionate they are. And not even a job, they might not be able to secure the internship that they need to get that job because they need to work a real job –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – in order to pay for, for college. They don't have time to, to do an internship. And so I don't think it's that people are suddenly super passionate about PR. I could be wrong. But I think it's that a lot of the skills, the skills translate, they might be interested in writing, they might be interested in being out there in the public and working with media professionals but they

simply can't afford to, to work in journalism. In terms of what, how we can, how we can encourage interest in journalism, I mean, I think journalists just need to, I think they need to get paid. And, you've seen a lot of efforts to do just that in newsrooms across the country in terms of unionization, in terms of just rattling the cages a little bit and, and telling publications that if they want to, to sustain employee retention, if they want to attract talent from young people –

DR. HOFFMAN: Is unionization the, the answer you think?

NORA KELLY LEE: I don't know that unionization is the answer everywhere but I think it's a answer. I think, I think that there are; it really depends on who owns you too. One of the big problems that we see across the country, particularly in local news is big firms taking newsrooms trying to extract as much profit as they can out of them at the expense of the, the journalists there which certainly doesn't do anything for you know journalists livelihoods.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well let's, let's, we talked a little bit about social media and technology and how the state of journalism is really, really shifting.

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: When you look at the popularity of apps like Tik Tok and how news is actually spreading on, on, on outlets like Reddit –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and, and apps like Tik Tok, what role does a publication like the 165-year-old Atlantic have? Does it still have a role –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – in this kind of hyper modernized technological era where people are getting their news and by the second. Do they; do you think that that model's sustainable?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think it is. I think that one of the things that *The Atlantic* has tried to do in recent years is to be supported by its, entirely by its own subscribers. We know that that, that the appetite is out there. I was talking to the students earlier about how I just simply don't think that any technology can replace the written word. When I was graduating from college the big talk in media was a pivot to video. Every newsroom in the country was going to hire up a ton of video producers and those people were going to produce one-minute, three-minute, five-minute they called them snack-able bits of news and that was going to be the future of media. And within a couple of years all of those people were fired because that's not actually what the audience wanted. I think that the written word, whether it's online, whether its in print is going to continue to be how we consume the news. I think anybody who wants quick little bites of news is still going to get it written they're just going to get it written on Twitter. And in terms of you know, news on Tik Tok and things like that, I mean, my worry about, about people consuming news on social media is just where are they getting it from. There are a lot of self-styled experts on Instagram and Tik Tok who with just a little bit of digging you can see that they don't have any credentials at all but they're passing themselves off a subject matter experts. And certainly those kind of people pop up in news stories from time to time but when you have a journalist who is the, the intermediary there, who is the, the person who, who fact checks that person's claims or is the buffer between them and the reader you know you're going to get the right information.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I want to shift gears a little bit to, to some articles that you have edited and specifically one that was called, I think it was "Revenge of

the Wine Moms”; is that –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Chuckle]

DR. HOFFMAN: – right? Could you tell us a little bit about that piece? I think it came out in 2020?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum. That’s sounds right.

DR. HOFFMAN: What, what was that piece that you edited, what was the motivation for it and what was –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – what was kind of the gist of the story?

NORA KELLY LEE: Sure. So this was a piece written by a young writer named Elaine Godfrey who is wonderful and she had noticed and we had noticed that there was a lot talk on Twitter and elsewhere about middle-aged, largely white moms who were obsessively watching MSNBC during the Trump years. And, we thought, well there had to be more to these women than this stereotype of these, you know, depressed women chugging Pinot Grigio every night –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

NORA KELLY LEE: – watching Rachel Maddow.

AUDIENCE: [Chuckle]

NORA KELLY LEE: And what she went out there and discovered was that a lot of these women, yes they did like Pinot, but –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: – they were also becoming hyper politically active in the way they hadn’t ever been before. They were organizing, largely at the local level, so their, their – I think that there’s a line in the story that says like their anger was national but their action was local where they started getting involved

in school board races and city council races and just tried to channel all of their energy into their communities in a way that really helped sustain them in the final months of the Trump years as they were waiting for that final vote to happen. And, it's a really fascinating piece. I would encourage you to, to read it. They women just leap off the page. They're women that I'm sure many of you know and love. And they fit a really interesting profile. And the big question, one of the central questions of that piece was whether their activism will be sustained going into 2022. And so that's really, and will their votes matter quite as much in 2022? They mattered a great deal in 2020. I mean, we saw Joe Biden sweep the suburbs in part because of women like this. And, and so I'm really interested to see what the, what the exit polls show us in a couple of weeks.

DR. HOFFMAN: What, what should we be looking for when we're looking at those exit polls and even as we're looking at polling leading into –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – these last two critical weeks before the midterms? What, what are some sort of tried and true methods for which polls to trust, what should you look for when you're looking at poll results?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: I mean we are talking about politics by the numbers. Polling is a huge part of, of elections. What are some of the sources that you go to and what are some suggestions you have for interpreting those polls?

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah. I mean, I think the polls done by major news organizations like *The New York Times* are seen as extremely reliable; polls from major universities extremely reliable. When you're looking at a poll two things I would keep in mind is it's only a snapshot in time. It's not going to predict the

future. It's not going to tell you what happened a week ago, what's going to happen a week from now. It is just what happened that day that the pollster reached out to the person being polled. So it's key to never put too much weight into polls. And then look at the sample size. Those are the two first things that I, I really think about. So often online you see news publications in political media that write a quick little write up of a poll where only 100 people were polled and they think that it means anything at all and it simply doesn't';.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: So look for that sample size and then more than anything I generally speaking don't think that everyday voters should be going into the polling document and pulling up the PDF and trying to interpret it.

DR. HOFFMAN: Hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: What I would do is I would go to a, a news organization that you trust and try and figure out what they've said about that –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – poll that you're particularly interested in because hopefully they have the resources to suss it out for you. I'm thinking of a publication like The Cook Political Report for example which they, they obsessively track polls all day every day. That's how they've made their business. Lean on them. Don't try to do it yourself.

DR. HOFFMAN: And I think as, as a, to follow-up on that I think that another number to look at is the, the margin of error um –

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Can you talk a little bit about that?

NORA KELLY LEE: Sure. I mean, the margin of error will tell you how much

error there could be in a poll. So, for example, I saw –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Indiscernible] some of the error, errors that journalists make in reporting polls that are, have races within the margin of error?

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, absolutely. I mean, you'll see, you'll see a story about how, I don't know, John Fetterman the senate candidate from Pennsylvania is polling – and I'm making up this number – is polling, you know, 44 percent in the state of Pennsylvania; Dr. Oz is polling 47 percent in the state of Pennsylvania –

DR. HOFFMAN: I think they're one or two percent off right now.

NORA KELLY LEE: Okay. Okay.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: So, I'm ballpark. That's good.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, ballpark.

NORA KELLY LEE: But then the margin of error might be three or four points –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – which means it's a statistical tie.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: And, polls are a really easy way for political reporters to write something that particular day. You need something to write about, oh there's a new poll. Let's just go ahead and do that. But not every poll is meaningful and certainly margin of error is a thing to watch out for.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, yeah, as a, as a journalist, as an editor you have to kind of be selective about like okay, that's an easy story to run with –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – but maybe that's not the most accurate or, or meaningful story to run?

NORA KELLY LEE: No, absolutely, absolutely. And the other thing that *The Atlantic* tries to do that is a little bitty different from our peer organizations is we, we really try to broaden the aperture a little bit from run of the mill political horse racy stories. And, we're not super interested in, in that day to day horse race.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: It's really more about what are the long term trends in the country? Or what is the, the story that everybody should know about that's currently being under covered.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: So that's, that's nice because when you're in a news organization that puts a lot of primacy on, on horse race coverage you, you have to, you've got to produce something. Ah –

DR. HOFFMAN: What are some of those stories that you think are under covered right now and, and particularly maybe, it could be related to the midterms but it could be related to just more what's happening? We've had a lot of changes over the past several years overturning *Roe v. Wade*, I mean, you name it: the economy. There's, there's so many things going on right now it's almost like overwhelming to think about all of the possible news stories. What's something that you think that is important face, an important issue facing the country that maybe is going under covered right now?

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, my goodness. Oh my – there's so much to choose from. I mean, one of the things that I'm really watching for in the midterms that I think has been under covered is the influence of men of color –

DR. HOFFMAN: Hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – in the electorate. They have had really interesting voting

patterns in the last few years. There's been a lot of emphasis on women and their voting behaviors but, but I don't think there's been enough analysis about why black men and Latino men in particular Trump saw gains –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – among those voters.

DR. HOFFMAN: Right.

NORA KELLY LEE: And I always think every election the Latino vote is under covered.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: People, people paint that population with such a broad brush and it's, it's, it's criminal.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: And then in terms of broader stories, I mean, I used to edit a special section on criminal justice reform and that has a special place in my heart and I really think that that community is, is significantly under covered. Yeah, that's my biggie.

DR. HOFFMAN: So I'm sure you heard about the, the serial podcast –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, Adnan, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Ad, Adnan, yeah.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: Did you guys listen to that podcast?

NORA KELLY LEE: There was also a Netflix documentary that you may have seen about it –

DR. HOFFMAN: Cool.

NORA KELLY LEE: – too. Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, so more coverage on, on criminal justice, more cover, coverage on in terms of the midterms men of color particularly Latino men. Let's jump back to thinking about women again because I think a lot of the focus –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – has been on women in the past several elections. What do you think the impact of Roe v. Wade is going to have on the women voter turnout in the midterms?

NORA KELLY LEE: I think it's going to be significant. What we've seen is after the Dobbs decision came down there, the, we saw what happened in Kansas with the measure being struck down, what we saw a lot of voter engagement among women, a lot of voter interest among women. And then the conversation lately has been more about how the polls have tightened across the country particularly in senate races. But I don't know, I, I still think that that's an extremely motivating, extremely motivating issue for women across the country. And I think that we're going to be surprised by, by just how motivating it is particularly among young women who, you know, hear stories from their grandmothers and mothers about what time was like before 1973. And, and I, I've, I've read a little bit of coverage about how particularly in the South this is a motivating issue in a way that might go unnoticed. We might associate activism around abortion rights with folks on the coast, folks in the northeast but that, you know, don't sleep on women in other areas of the country.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think that's an interesting point because I think one thing that went I wouldn't say wrong but was maybe misinterpreted in the polls in 2016 was sort of the, the effect of women who maybe under reported their support of Trump particularly suburban white woman.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: Perhaps because of sort of some social desirability pressure to, to say they were voting for the first female, white female or first female candidate for, nominee for president. So, I'm just curious if there, if you think there's a similar sort of sleeper effect among like you said southern women or maybe even conservative or Republican women who see that this is, this overturn of Roe v. Wade is, is impacting their lives in real tangible ways?

NORA KELLY LEE: No, absolutely and we also have to think about – I, I've seen a lot of women in the week of Dobbs talk about how this effects miscarriage care and they might be conservative women who are not online with what Planned Parenthood stands for but when it comes to that particular aspect of, of their health they're all for it; they're all for having those rights. And so I think that there are going to be, there are going to be women with very nuanced positions around abortion who are, are going to vote in November with that, with that issue in mind. It's not just like the Planned Parenthood supporter who's out there angry about Dobbs right now. It's also like the Catholic mother who wants to make sure that, you know, her daughter, if her daughter has a problem in pregnancy is going to be able to be healthy.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. When you mentioned the Fetterman Oz race in

–

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: – Pennsylvania, in the, the debate last night between the two senatorial candidates Dr. Oz said that the decision, a woman's decision about her pregnancy is between her, her doctor, and the local politicians –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: – or, local politician. And I think I’m just wondering if you think that that’s, how that’s resonating with women across different sides on the political spectrum?

NORA KELLY LEE: I mean, I did not, I did watch part of the debate. I did not see that part but I can’t imagine that it hits their ears very well. I can’t imagine that that’s something that a lot of women – I think a lot of women in the electorate thought that abortion was a safe right. I think that, that there was a lot of talk after 2016 about not worrying about abortion rights. That, that was something that would not be touched, that it was too baked into American life that that right existed who were shocked by Dobbs, who didn’t see it coming. Maybe they’re not people who are super politically engaged. They’re not necessarily the people who are, you know, reading the news every day. And so I think for those women it, it’s, it’s a jolt.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, the, I, I’ll, I’ll move on from this, this topic after I ask you the, the question about as, as a woman who’s been now in, in journalism, mainstream news for a decade, what challenges do women face in this career that maybe –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: – some of our young women in the, in the audience who are looking to become journalists. What, what are some challenges that women face that maybe are unique to them?

NORA KELLY LEE: Well, I think that there is still some real sexism in the industry. I think that women in media are often put into, I think they call them pink jobs where if you go into a newsroom you see a lot of women who are the social media people, or maybe they’re the communications people – you know,

the, the PR representatives for the newsroom. Or maybe, you know, they're in the art departments but they're not necessarily the people who are the top reporters or the top editors. And, I think there's been a lot of really wonderful change in newsrooms especially after "Me Too" there's been a real effort to make sure that across the board in an organization there are women represented at every level. But there's certainly a lot more work to do. And I can't even imagine what it's like in a local newsroom because the national newsrooms they're still certainly have a lot more work to do and in a place with fewer resources that needs to probably attract more women to come work for them. I, I'm sure it's bleak [chuckle].

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, so, moving on. One of the other stories that you have edited over your time at *The Atlantic* was one about children at the border –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and you talked a little bit about that with my students today. And I was wondering if you could talk about the process of first of all working with that journalist who was a videographer I think?

NORA KELLY LEE: He was.

DR. HOFFMAN: And, and sort of seeing that story from the beginning to the end and sort of what made it one of those stories that you wanted to share with my students? Why was it so –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – why is it on your, of the thousands of, of articles you have edited over the time, your time in being an editor, what made that one stand out as something that you, you said that you are particularly proud of?

NORA KELLY LEE: So I explained to the students that the, the person who

wrote this article, a young man named Jeremy Raff, he was a videographer for *The Atlantic*. He was a documentarian for *The Atlantic*. He; I knew that he was a good writer because he had done a little bit of writing but it was not his fulltime job. But when family separations were happening at the border we knew that, that Jeremy was from a border town actually and so he would have the cultural competency to go down there, understand who to speak to, and just feel a real level of comfort that maybe another reporter wouldn't. And on top of everything else he had a deep interest in what was going on at the border. And so, we sent him to the border and what he did was spend a lot of time with a young female doctor who had been sent in to the detention facilities to take care of and examine the children there who'd been separated from their parents. And so, she described to him horrific conditions. I think it was that every child she saw was sick in some fashion. I think three-fourths of them had respiratory illnesses. There was a baby who had been fed from the same formula bottle for a week or so, dirty formula bottle, uncleaned. And then he spent time in her normal medical practice and he saw the stark differences between what she experienced inside the facility and, and what he saw in this more normal pediatricians office. And he wrote it up for us. One of the things that really sticks out about that story to me is not only the, the subject matter is how Jeremy the writer was, was able to lend a sort of cinematic quality to the writing. Because he was a videographer he was really able to paint a picture –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – about what she saw. And keep in mind, he wasn't there with her inside the detention facilities; he, this was all second hand but he really put you inside the room with her. And so, it's just one of those stories that I don't

think will ever leave me. And it was also a story that got a great deal of attention when, when it was released. It was something that had been, hadn't been covered at all in national media. Obviously child separations had but the actual nitty-gritty way that those children were treated in facilities and the nitty-gritty of, of their health had not, we didn't know about it. And so, we had members of Congress had great interest around that story. And I don't know that there was any particular legislative action taken but I know that they, they wrote letters about it to the administration and it was clearly something that people hungered to know about.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. Well, I think it's another perhaps lends to your theory that there's a power of the written word that that kind of story couldn't have been told in a what you call a snackable news story –

NORA KELLY LEE: No.

DR. HOFFMAN: – because you don't have the video, you don't have that kind of raw material you need journalists to interpret that and an editor to sort of help make that come to life.

NORA KELLY LEE: No, you absolutely do. You absolutely do and I think there's also, we, when we watch television and we watch the news our eyes can kind of glaze over a little bit. When you see during a time of great national unrest when we're covering, you know, a lot of protests or maybe a, a, some sort of national, natural disaster, once you see those images once your brain isn't shocked anymore.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um.

NORA KELLY LEE: You sort of get inured to them.

DR. HOFFMAN: Desensitized.

NORA KELLY LEE: You get – exactly, that’s the word. You get desensitized. But I think there’s something about reading it on the page. That’s my bias but I think there’s something reading, about reading it on the page that makes it really real to people.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think people in Gen Z though have the – no offense – the, the, the attention span to process a lot of these long pieces that you right?

NORA KELLY LEE: No.

DR. HOFFMAN: And how many of you guys think that you, like, would love to sit down and read like – what’s the average word count for maybe an Atlantic piece?

NORA KELLY LEE: Probably 1200 words.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah? Okay, they’re all looking at me like giving me the side=eye. Okay. So, they would –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Laughter.] Thank you for reading.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – but do you think that that’s going to become increasingly difficult or do you think maybe that there’s sort of – and maybe I’ll open it up to the students at some point – if there’s some sort of backlash like, okay, I’m tired of the Tik Toks and I’m tired of the, the tweets.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Like, I want to sit down with something and absorb it.

NORA KELLY LEE: I mean, I do think that technology is always going to evolve in ways that appeal to people but I do think you can get tired of it. I mean, I’m not that much older than you in the grand scheme of things and I’m tired of

Instagram , and I'm tired of Twitter. I'm on them because I feel like I have to be but there's really no joy in them anymore. And, yeah, I hope that people will always fall back on the written word. But, you know, the burden is also on the journalist to capture their attention. I was talking to the students earlier about how we put so much emphasis on the beginnings of stories, the leads of stories because we knew that if we didn't hook a reader within the first few sentences they were gone. And so, it's part of the job of the journalist to make sure that they're doing their level best to, to compel the reader to keep going.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. Well, let me switch gears a little bit before we open it up for, for questions from the audience, but I want to talk specifically about debates –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: – because we've, we're. We're in this season where we're seeing debates like on the Fetterman-Oz debate; there's another debate in New York I think last night. But one story that I thought that was very interesting about your time here to kind of circle back to your time at Delaware was actually related to the very first National Agenda debate that took place, that was sponsored by the Center for Political Communication here at UD. It got national attention. It ended up being aired live on CNN; a Delaware debate. Does –

NORA KELLY LEE: It was a big deal.

DR. HOFFMAN: – anyone remember this? Does anyone remember who this was?

AUDIENCE: Murmuring.

DR. HOFFMAN: Christine O'Donnell, yes.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, tell us a little bit about you're a college student, you're working at the *Review*.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think you were interning at *The News Journal*.

NORA KELLY LEE: I was.

DR. HOFFMAN: What was that day like for you and, and sort of how did that impact like how you knew what you wanted to do with your life?

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah. I, I told Dr. Hoffman earlier that that day was like journalistic heaven for me because first of all we were so proud that UD was going to host such a big event because I feel like UD is scrappy.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: You know, we don't – and, and we were so proud that the attention was on us. So, earlier that day I had worked a full day at *The News Journal* as a fulltime reporter even though I was an intern. And then I remember coming back to campus and meeting up with all of my *Review* friends and going to watch the debate. And I wasn't a reporter that day; I was just the editor overseeing the coverage. But, it was just, it was just one of those perfect days that you remember as a young person that really tell you that you're on the right path. I knew that if I could get energized by going to my reporting gig at *The News Journal* and then get energized by going to a political debate that, that I was doing the right thing. I was doing the thing that brought me a lot of joy. And I was telling the students earlier that it was quite the event. Wolf Blitzer was here.

DR. HOFFMAN: Nancy Karibjanian was here.

NORA KELLY LEE: Nancy Karibjanian was here who I had the pleasure of

talking to earlier. Students made it really festive. There was a campaign ad that Christine O'Donnell had put out in which she said "I am not a witch" because she had been accused of practicing witch craft or some nonsense like that and some political consultant told her go on television and say the words I am not a witch and –

DR. HOFFMAN: Which like smoke kind of –

NORA KELLY LEE: It was billowing, it was billowing –

DR. HOFFMAN: Billowing behind –

NORA KELLY LEE: And there was sort of like an Oprah treatment to her [indiscernible] –

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah. And, and so students dressed up, it was around Halloween time and students dressed up. It was witches and ran up and down the Green and so the atmosphere –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: – was just, it was electric. [Chuckle]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, and my husband, who is in the audience, asked me out for the first time after that National Agenda –

DR. HOFFMAN: No [chuckle]

NORA KELLY LEE: – Debate so –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

NORA KELLY LEE: It's important for [laughter] –

DR. HOFFMAN: Yes.

AUDIENCE: [Applause and cheering.]

NORA KELLY LEE: So it's important for our relationship too. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I did not know that. That –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – was awesome.

NORA KELLY LEE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, so we had our most recent Delaware Debate a week ago.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: We did it virtually this year but back in 2016 you wrote a story about Gary Johnson who was the Libertarian party's nominee –

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh my gosh, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: This is a question from Andrew and talked about his presence in Andrew's words or lack thereof in Presidential debates –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – because he needed 15 percent of support in polls.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think that third party candidates, and this is something we come up, that comes up in Delaware debates a lot, is we have third party candidates who don't have enough support in the –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – polls to be on stage. Do you think there's value in them being involved at the debates at all levels or do you think that standard of 15 percent mark is, is, is acceptable?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um. It's really hard because there are a stunning amount

or stunning of third parties out there.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: There are some real jokesters running around saying that they're running a political party. And so, you absolutely do need some sort of threshold but I argued in that piece if I recall correctly, it's been a really long time, that I thought that they should have a shot. And if you remember back in 2016 Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were historically unpopular candidates and I believe my argument was in a, in a, in a political environment like that where most of the country does not like these two people maybe we should offer something new. Maybe that added competition would, would be good for, for America. It would be good for the parties to put them on their heels a little bit. And, I, I think I'm still, I think I still believe that. It's, it's, it's hard though because right now when you look at our two political parties we're looking at such existential questions over democracy –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – over election integrity that when you talk about inserting a third party that people have to choose from it, it might complicate things in, in an undesirable way.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. Yeah. I, I, I tend to, I, I have the same struggles because if we want to hear voices that are outside of the mainstream, that are outside of the, the two primary political parties but it's also the reality that we're in a two-party system –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and, and to give voice to someone who is not getting enough support in the polls is perhaps not – I don't know, I struggle, I struggle

with the same, the same thing.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, it's, it's difficult, it's difficult. And, its, and, and adding a third party candidate on the stage at a Presidential debate is not going to be the thing that stops the stranglehold of the two-party system in America.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: I mean, we're talking about serious reform that would be needed –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – that, in order to get real, a real robust electoral system in place.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, before I have Kate and Millie come up to the microphones and, and we'll take some audience questions, maybe just some, you know, again the theme of this is "Politics by the Numbers", as we lead into this last two weeks before the midterms what should we be looking for? In addition to the polls –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: What are some states that we should be looking at?

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: What are numbers that make up Congress and, and the House and the Senate that we should be looking at? What are some of the key things that we're going to be really wanting to tune into on election night?

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, I mean, I'm, I'm I think, the smart people, people smarter than me are saying that the House looks like a goner for the Democrats so my interest is really up in the Senate. And, I'm most interested in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Nevada. Nevada because all of a sudden Cortez

Masto is back on her heels. I think Democrats expected to that, for that to be a much safer election than, than it's turned out to be. Georgia because Georgia represents the future of this country I think. You have a ton of young people, a diverse population, you've got a lot of people from other states moving to Georgia particularly in the, you know, the Atlanta area. And so it's just a really interesting microcosm of where we are and where we're going; and then Pennsylvania because I'm from south Jersey. No, but also because it's a fascinating race. I mean, John Fetterman cuts such an unusual figure both literally and, and politically.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: You know, he's this, this guy with this working class persona who went to Harvard, who is extremely politically progressive against Mehmet Oz who we all watched on Oprah years ago and has no political experience to speak of but it looks like now is giving Fetterman a run for his money.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. Okay. Well, I think we'll shift gears here and begin our Q and A with the audience. So, let's thank you for our, our volunteers who are helping out. Let's go ahead and take a question from the audience and let me pull up the lights a little bit – perfect – so I can see folks. So, just raise your hand and I'll direct one of our mike marshals to you. Yeah, right here.

QUESTION: My question, do you see your writing as a tool for education and or impacting others and if yes, like how?

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, absolutely. I mean, one of the – and do you mean by that do you mean educating readers or, or educating like young people in readers?

QUESTION: Readers.

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean, one of the great privileges of working in the newsroom is that you get to pick your spots; you get to with the help of your colleagues with the advice of your colleagues figure out what are the things that people need to know about that they might not know about. What are the things that are important that for whatever reason are going under covered. And when you find a story that hasn't been told and then that story gets a ton of attention from readers it's extremely gratifying because you know that there was that untapped potential in that subject matter and untapped potential in that readership and it's extremely rewarding thing.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I would add to that that I think, you know, at the end of day as human beings we are storytellers and if you think, I would say if you think about when you go home at the end of the day to your, your spouse or your partner and, and you, you tell your day as a story. You know, you –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – explain sort of what, what was like, what happened to your day as a story. And I think that we crave stories and we crave I think good stories and I think if you become skilled at, at really good storytelling that you can have a real impact. Let's take another question from the audience. Yeah, right over here

QUESTION: Hey, you mentioned that the Democrats may focus more on the Senate because they may lose the House? Why do you believe that the Republican party is more than likely going to take the House when it's been very clear with the [indiscernible] the debates, the overturning of Roe v. Wade that they are no longer as popular as they once were especially with the infighting

between the, the MAGA affiliate –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

QUESTION: – with Trump’s (sic) and the traditional conservatives in the party. By upsetting everyone else around them and the infighting between them what competitive edge do they have to take back the House?

NORA KELLY LEE: That’s a good question because it, we, there is this rift in the Republican Party right now between the, the Trump Republicans, the MAGA Republicans, and more moderate Republicans and so, it’s a great question. Why are they, even with this rift, why are, why do you feel that they’re doing so well competing against Democrats who are arguably more united than the Republican Party.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um. Well, there are structural advantages within many states in terms of how districts are drawn –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – such that Republicans have an edge. And, the, one of the very interesting things about the Republican Party, and this is more, it’s more in the Republican side than the Democratic side, is that we see Republican voters come home at the end of the day. They come back to the Republican Party. And so despite those, those rifts that you’ve talked about we often see them fall in line. I mean, there’s an old adage: Democrats fall in love, Republicans fall in line and I do think that that’s in many areas of this country that still holds true. It certainly doesn’t hold true in a lot of places. It didn’t hold true in the suburbs in 2020 when we saw a lot of former Republicans vote for Democrats but in, in House races, in, in lower level races it’s often true. And, you know, I, I am not a pollster and so the best thing that I can do when it comes to,

to polls I'm often a news consumer just like you. And so the smart money, like I said before, is, is on them taking the House. And so, that's what I'm going to be watching for.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay, great. Thank you. How about another question from the audience? Yeah, right over here, Kate.

QUESTION: Going back on the, on the polls, the perception of pollsters getting it wrong –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

QUESTION: – in like 2016 and 2020 and not just nationally but if you take like a battleground state like Ohio –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um.

QUESTION: – where they saw, you know, it might have been a jump ball race but really Trump won by like 8 percent.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

QUESTION: What lessons do you think journalists have taken away from on how to evaluate the polls with, with, yeah, and lessons they learned?

NORA KELLY LEE: Well, you know, earlier I talked about how some news organizations, there's pressure to cover polls. But I do think that that pressure has lessened over time. I think people understand now in a, in, in newsrooms in a way that they didn't before that pollsters can really screw up. You know, the gold standard of polling is the *Des Moines Register* poll in, in Iowa –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – during the Presidential years and even Ann Selzer who runs that poll who is like a goddess –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – among political pollsters screwed up. And so I think it's been, it was a really humbling moment to see that and I think that journalists, we talked about it at *The Atlantic* – I hope it's a broader, a broader message that's gotten out there – what we would say is we need to contextualize polls extremely well in stories and we need to make sure that polls are, are a jumping off point for telling, for investigating, our jumping off point in telling a story about the electorate and not the entire story. There are a lot of flaws in polling that have to do with people not using cell phones anymore, online polls can be occasionally unreliable, people distrusting that someone is actually calling from a reputable polling organization. I know I don't answer my phone when it's a number that I don't know. These are all barriers to getting an accurate poll and, you know, more sophisticated polling experts than me are hopefully going to figure out a path forward but until we have that clear path we just have to do the best we can to, to properly understand the methods and context.

DR. HOFFMAN: And I think, you know, it's also, again, like you said, looking at the sample, looking at the, the, the methods that the, the, the survey organization went through to obtain people. And I think another number that I might suggest people look at is the response rate for polls and how many, on average how many times people were called in order to, to get that – usually a standard number for it to be representative of the, of Americans is about a little over 1,000. That's what typically you'll see a sample size of around 1,000. But how many calls did they have to make to get to that 1,000 and how many of those were through as you had mentioned cell phones versus –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – landlines versus online.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think some of the best pollsters are using mixed methods

–

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – now to –

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – to find lots of different ways to, to get to, to get to folks but, but it's, it's absolutely something that, that all pollsters are struggling with.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: You know, when polling started in the early 20th century it was really rooted in random digit dialing so that was the best way to get a, a great random sample is just put a bunch of phone numbers into a magic machine [chuckle] and pull out random, you know, seven digit or ten digit phone numbers and then you would get a, a good representative sample. But it's much more difficult and I think that we have to as you said look at these polls with, you know, with some interest and some attention and, and seeing that races are tightening in places where we might not have expected that. But they're not the be-all, end-all. They're not the whole story.

NORA KELLY LEE: No they're not. And, I would also suggest that you, you know, don't just read *The Atlantic*, don't just read *The New York Times*, don't just read the *Washington Post*. Read the local news outlets that we've been talking about this session because those reporters that are on the ground in the communities they're going to be able to tell you a lot that you're not going to get from, from polls in those same communities.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum. Absolutely. Let's open it up to another question

from the audience. Yes.

QUESTION: [Indiscernible.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Sure, yeah go ahead.

QUESTION: [Chuckle.] Hi. I you've like mentioned a lot about like the importance of the written word which like I completely agree with as well. But I feel like what was kind of mentioned before with like myself and even like some of my peers I think it's hard to kind of like take the time out sometimes, or even have like the attention I guess and a lot of people that may not like always be involved in like politics or want to be like as engaged like find it harder to sit down and read something like that. So, is there any credence to things like podcasts, or like newsletters at some like news organizations will use to kind of break down in a very quick way some issues as opposed to like reading something that's a little bit longer? And, is that something like The Atlantic is looking at doing or –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

QUESTION: – is that something that you might be interested in personally too?

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, I think newsletters are, are a great resource. It's a great way to learn all you need to know very quickly. And not all you need to know but know the, the top line, major stories. The Atlantic does have a daily newsletter that goes out that highlights some of our best journalism on a particular day. And I know I'm, I'm a Washington person so Politico, and other publications like that do a banner job of, of telling you, giving you that little – I hate to use the word snackable that I used before –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

NORA KELLY LEE: – but that little snackable bit of information. And I love

podcasts. I am a huge fan of podcasts. I don't think that there's anything wrong with, you know, maybe it's, it's too strenuous to pull up a story on your phone and read 1500 words but if you can listen to a podcast on the elliptical there's nothing wrong with like taking pleasure in your news consumption. I know at work some of our favorite things to share with each other were fun bits of journalism that had been produced. Not every work of journalism that you consume has to be super serious. You can get what you need to know out of things that are formatted or written in a fun way. So for example, because that's all kind of abstract, one of my favorite writers is Caity Weaver at The New York Times. Do any of you know who she is? She started her career I think at Gawker which no longer exists but she is just an effervescent writer and, and she writes – she used to write a lot of celebrity profiles, now she dips in and out of, out of news and culture. And everything she writes is just joyous. And so I would try to find if its, if the news become overwhelming newsletters are a great resource and then try to find those, those kind of writers who can buoy your spirits while informing you about something.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's great advice. Let's take one more question I think. Yeah, great.

QUESTION: I think at least a day or two ago there were a couple of characters in Mesa, Arizona that were sitting with their guns and trying really hard to intimidate people it was actually right by a mail-in box.

NORA KELLY LEE: Um, um-hum.

QUESTION: Now, is this, am I getting too hyper about this or is this a couple of guys or do we expect to see a lot more of this? What they say is that I mean the voting process itself may not go well in a lot places because of people

like this.

NORA KELLY LEE: Yeah, I mean, I'm worried about voter intimidation at boxes like that. I'm worried about voter intimidation at the polls. It's really hard to tell whether that is a one-off that was blown out of proportion or if this is something that we're going to see across the country in the days to come. But there's certainly a history, a long history of voter intimidation in this country. And so, you know, I am just like you I'm looking to my news, my favorite news reporters to, to tell me what they're seeing on the ground. But it's certainly something that we need to be worried about. Election integrity in many ways is on the ballot this year and I, I, I'm a journalist but I'm also an American. I believe in democracy. I believe in election integrity. And I'm lucky to work for or to be a contributor to a news organization that has those values top of mind. And, and we'll see what happens.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think there's anything that, that if citizens are concerned about voter intimidation or, or what's happening even on Election Day with poll watchers who are –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – are monitoring sites, is there anything that, that you know of that, that voters can do to sort of counter that, to, to sort of help –

NORA KELLY LEE: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – voters, to help voters get to the polls?

NORA KELLY LEE: Oh, that's a really good question. I mean, I know that in some communities there's a strong tradition of helping people get access to the ballot, of making, I know particularly in the black community there's a strong tradition of, you know, souls to the polls, going to vote on Sundays, of making

voting a really joyous thing. And so, the only thing that I know of is community groups that decide we're going to, we're going to do everything we can to get our people to the, to the ballot, that cast their ballots. But, you know, at the same time there have been measures passed in states across the country that have limited the ability of those community groups to do that kind of work.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: We've seen laws in, in Georgia and elsewhere where you can't even pass out a bottle of water to somebody waiting in line at the polls.

DR. HOFFMAN: Hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: So, I think that we are going to, I think it's, its, the onus is on the community right now to –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

NORA KELLY LEE: – to get their people out.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, yeah, they've looked to local community organizations that may be offering transportation –

NORA KELLY LEE: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – to folks to the polling places and just offer some, some help to them. So I think that's a, a really important question. I'm going to switch gears a little bit before I, I thank you for, for being here and for coming back to the University of Delaware. I have a few announcements about upcoming events. So I want to start with our Voices of UD Audio Essay competition. Its, this year we invite you to consider if you are more than a number. So, America's experiencing a historic era of polarization; this spans social, political, racial, economic issues and numerous citizens are taking to the streets to protest everything from police brutality to election fraud allegations to immigration and

gun violence and even that Roe v. Wade overturn that happened earlier this year. So, we want to provide students and members of the community – this is not just for UD students alone; this is for members of the Newark and, and Delaware community, regional community to reflect on a personal experience in which you felt you were treated like a number perhaps. How did the experience affect your life or the lives of others in your community? What actions have you taken? What do you think is the eventual impact on society? So, these submissions are due by December 9th. There are cash prizes or awards up to 500 dollars for students who submit. But, we've been doing this since 2017 I think was the first year we did the Voices Audio Essay Competition and now we're also welcoming videos. It's a great way to hear from people on the ground in our community about the kinds of things that, that students are concerned about, the kinds of things that, that citizens of, of Newark and the greater regional area are concerned about. So I really encourage you to submit to that. I also wanted to point out a, a program that I've mentioned a couple of times previously in this Speaker Series is, I have some students some of whom were just out on the, on campus earlier today holding signs that say The Free Intelligent Conversation and these, this is an initiative, a non-profit initiative that's encouraging people to just engage across differences with people you might not know. It doesn't have to be about politics and it doesn't have to be about the midterm elections. It could just be about I think one of the, one of the favorite questions is what's one of your favorite childhood memories? Or, what's the secret sauce that makes you, you. So, these are questions that, that our students are, are kind of walking around campus and engaging in conversation with others and having sometimes really meaningful conversations. At our dinner

tonight we had this as one of our activities and heard some really kind of powerful stories about, you know, hopeful experiences that students are having. And these are conversations that I think maybe we are forgetting about in this kind of era of, of mass polarization and, and kind of we've entered a, I think a, a dangerous period of dehumanizing people who disagree with us. And so, this has just been a really fun activity for my students. And I encourage you if you want to check out freeic.org you can find some questions there, have some of these conversations with your own communities and friends.

VIDEO SPEAKER: So, what's the answer?

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay, so, I –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – forgot that I was going to play right away –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I even was told backstage that's going to play right away. So hopefully I can go back and, and not mess this up. But I wanted to mention something that's really important that we're doing starting next week. We're doing debates, college debates with organizations Braver Angels, Bridge USA, and several other organizations and through looking at a, a, a poll of students we examined what topics students were, were really energized about having a conversation about across differences and Greek life came up as one of the, the things that students are really thinking a lot about in terms of whether you know Greek life should be eliminated or, or whether Greek life should be handled in a different way? On this campus you've heard things from sexual assault to, to, you know, drinking too much alcohol, lots of things that are happening in, in those communities. But I wanted to point out that just last Sunday CBS Sunday

Morning aired a story featuring Braver Angels and I thought I'd just play this three, three minute story or so which is basically okay, we're polarized in this country. We're, we're very much divided. What can we do about it? And I feel like things, organizations like Braver Angels are really helping to, to kind of provide some sort of salve to that. So let's hope this, [chuckle] this works if I go backwards.

VIDEO PLAYING

DR. HOFFMAN: So, I, I find that hopeful. I find that to be a, a message that I think that we see in that particular video a lot of older community members who are participating in these, these workshops and they mentioned that it was three hours. I'm not going to give you a three hour debate, students. But I think that we're seeing even just trying a little bit in this very polarized moment in this country can have some, some small and potentially large impacts. So, I encourage you guys to visit. There's a QR code there but you can also visit the website – I can't see it from here –

<http://braverangelsudelawaredebate11222.eventbrite.com> or my email is up there if you want to figure out how to attend. For our students there will be free food, free beverages and I think overall hopefully just a fun discussion about things that, things that, that matter to us. So, I wanted to – oh – reiterate that Braver Angels debates are not competitive events. They're a collective exercise in thoughtfulness, respect and searching for truth. So, participants often leave with a refined understanding of their own position, more aware of the valid points in opposing views, and an increased capacity for engaging maturely with those who express differences. We all have to learn how to do this again. We almost have to go back to kindergarten, relearn those exercises of how to have a

conversation with someone you disagree with. It's not any one of our individual faults that we're in this situation but I think we as individuals can improve the situation that we're in. So I'm asking students on this campus to really engage on this. I would be remiss if I didn't remind you that before I see you next, which is November 9th, is the midterm election. So, if you are as excited as this young student is – I need to figure out who this is –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Chuckle]

DR. HOFFMAN: – she was – this was last year's National Voter Registration Day. That's my hat. I wear that hat regularly to look ridiculous and attract attention. But these are students who were registering other students to vote. We did this again this year. But your vote is your choice. 2022 election we've seen young people again be most, the least likely to say they're excited about voting in the midterms so talk to your friends, talk to people in your, in your, your dorms, your fraternities, your sororities. It's going to make a difference if you talk to them. And then I wanted to highlight as well for our students a, an, a new app / website that students can use called IssueVoter and again the, the website is up there or email me if you have questions. This is how you can hold; hold your elected representatives accountable after you've voted in the election. So oftentimes you think about voting, oh let's go vote, let's register to vote and go vote; well, what about hey, that person ran on this campaign promise, did they follow through on that? And so what IssueVoter allows you to do is select issues that are important to you – say, abortion rights or climate change – and you will get notifications that your elected representative is voting on a particular related issue that day and it gives you all the different ways you can contact them. So this is where technology becomes really exciting and fun and, and it gives us

ways to access our, our elected representatives that maybe we didn't have before. I also wanted to point out that UD – and, and you might recall this your time at UD particularly the 2012 election, of course you had graduated I guess by then – but, but a relatively politically apathetic campus. Not really voting at great rates. So I don't think we have 2012 in, in this particular data set but this is; let's just travel back to a couple of years ago. Does anybody want to travel back to 2020?

AUDIENCE: No.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay, well let's just do it for a minute. Let's travel back to 2020. UD have demonstrated that they can and will show up to vote. The voting rate of UD students in 2020 – get this – was 75.2 percent; 75.2 percent of UD students voted in 2020. In the middle of a pandemic with mail in and absentee ballots which are typically the most, the strongest barriers for students to vote. We can change the culture around engagement on this campus. This is nearly 20 points higher than 2016. And higher than the national average of 66 percent. But what about the midterms. So let's take a look at; this is the, the graphic I was telling you about earlier. We look specifically at age groups. As is typically the case, older voters are generally more engaged with this election and midterm elections in general. So, vote, about half of voters aged 18 to 29 say they're extremely or very motivated to vote. Over 8 in 10 of those 65 and older say this, and compared with the voters under age 30, those 65 and older are nearly twice as likely to say the control of Congress really matters. So, young people who make up one of the largest generations in this country are not having their voice heard and my students are like thinking I'm a broken record here – I say this all the time but – it's important for you to make sure that your voice is heard. I

wanted to mention our, our final speakers of the National Agenda series is John Della Volpe. The Institute of Politics Harvard Institute of Politics has been doing a youth poll, a poll of young people for the past 20 years since 2001 I believe or no, 2000, 22 years. And a Harvard senior who just graduated who was one of the instrumental students on that polling project last year so this will be the day after the election. What I'm really curious to ask John and JingJing (sp?) about is did young people show up and what did they do? Who did they vote for? So, I think it's going to be a fascinating look at, at Gen Z and millennials and just a, a really interesting cap to our, our annual speaker series. So I just want to say, again, thank you so much for joining us. Please visit cpc.udel.edu for more of our programming. Be sure to follow us on social media. I'm so happy that you were here with us tonight. And I hope you have a wonderful night. I'll see you back here in two weeks. And thank you so much to our speaker tonight. Nora thank you for coming back here –

NORA KELLY LEE: [Indiscernible]

DR. HOFFMAN: – and congratulations on all your success. Let's give her a big round of applause.

NORA KELLY LEE: Thank you.

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

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