



## NATIONAL AGENDA AWARDS

**LAUREN DUCA**

**“Opinions Matter”**

HOSTED BY

Center for Political Communication,  
Co-sponsored by the Department of Women and  
Gender Studies  
University of Delaware

PARTICIPANTS

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Director of National Agenda and Associate Director  
of the Center for Political Communication,  
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Lauren Duca

Award winning journalist, feminist and political  
columnist, and columnist for Teen Vogue featuring  
her column “Thigh High Politics; renowned  
“tweeter”.

Transcript of Event

Date:

September 12, 2018

Place:

Mitchell Hall, University of Delaware,  
Newark, DE

DR. HOFFMAN: Good evening everyone. Thank you so much for being here.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: This is our Eighth Annual National Agenda Speaker Series and I'm so excited to bring this to you from the University of Delaware Center for Political Communication with support from the Office of the Provost and the College of Arts and Sciences. I am Dr. Lindsay Hoffman. I am the Director of the National Agenda Series and Associate Director of the CPC. This year's theme, Midterm Matters. We'll be talking all things related to the midterm elections, as well as issues that matter for the midterm elections. We are a non-partisan organization and we've organized nationally known speakers here. We've brought them here, and you may recall my discussion with Joe Biden and John Kasich right here on this stage last fall. Our goal is to be a model of civil dialogue, speaking with Americans from across the political spectrum; Americans young and more experienced; Americans from different backgrounds; Americans from different parts of this country. Both in the classroom and in this auditorium, I've witnessed firsthand that it is possible to talk to those who disagree with you without it turning into a rancorous fight. And in election years, yes, even in the midterms, it's more important than ever to talk to a variety of folks to get perspectives on the issues that matter most. Tonight's event is cosponsored by the Department of Women and Gender Studies. And all of our events this semester are on Wednesdays so please visit [cpc.udel.edu/nationalagenda](http://cpc.udel.edu/nationalagenda) for all of our dates and times. Coming up we'll hear from a 16-year-old who writes a daily political newsletter and has over 50,000 subscribers; an expert on cyber security who is also UD alum; a writer from the Daily Show with Trevor Noah; and two Pulitzer Prize winning journalists from the

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Washington Post. And of course, the Delaware Debates will happen right here October 17th. Mark your calendar. And if you want your voice heard, this is the second year of our Voices Matter Audio Essay Contest. Tell your story about what it's like to communicate about politics as a student at the University of Delaware. Find out more at [cbc.udel.edu](http://cbc.udel.edu), you'll hear that a few times tonight, and yes, there are cash prizes. If you appreciate these events, please sign up for our email list out in the foyer before you leave and consider supporting the CPC so we can continue to bring you high quality programming. Tonight's event is free and open to the public, like all of our events, to create an open space for thoughtful dialogue. I encourage audience participation both from the audience here in Mitchell Hall and via Twitter. Just tweet using the hashtag @udelagenda for a chance to join the discussion. Before we get started, as I always like to do, I'd like to remind our audience that civil and courteous dialogue is vital to the success of this program. Although it may seem that all of the political dialogue we see in Washington, at the local town hall, even at home is contentious and vicious, we can come together and engage in civil dialogue. Enter this beautiful space at Mitchell Hall curious, open-minded, and compassionate and you may come away with some real solutions for a compassionate conversation or just hear a really good story. Either way, let's all agree to be candid and courteous. Tonight, without further ado. Lauren Duca is an award-winning journalist best known for her earth, earth scorched viral piece "Donald Trump is Gaslighting America" in Teen Vogue Magazine. She'll explain what that means tonight. In just over a week the op-ed was viewed 1.2 million times and reshaped the world's perception of the magazine targeted at teenage girls. She's also known for a short but contentious interview with Fox's Tucker Carlson which inspired

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the name of her ongoing column for Teen Vogue, “Thigh High Politics”. Her writing can be found in the New York Times, the New Yorker, and New York Magazine. She graduated from Fordham University with a bachelor’s degree in English and Philosophy in 2013. There she was the editor-in-chief of the alternative newspaper simply called The Paper. She went on to receive a master’s degree in journalism and Critical Theory from New York University in 2015. But, if you know Lauren Duca it’s probably because of her wildly popular twitter account where she tweets about everything from feminism to Supreme Court nominees to Arianna Grande. Tonight, our program focuses on why opinions matter; why we need to be able to share our views strongly and passionately, and why voting in the midterm matters. Please join me in giving a big Blue Hen welcome to Lauren Duca.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

LAUREN DUCA: [Indiscernible.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] Thank you so much for being here.

LAUREN DUCA: Thanks for having me. We have these really weird headsets on.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: It’s freaking me out.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, they’re kind of like Star Trek.

LAUREN DUCA: -- in our brain. [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] Well, before we –

LAUREN DUCA: [Indiscernible]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- before we get started I wanted to share the story of how I

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found you –

LAUREN DUCA: Uh-huh.

DR. HOFFMAN: You were, you know, a relatively unknown writer, I mean, before this particular piece that got published in Teen Vogue. The 2016 piece called Donald Trump is Gaslighting America went viral because of its provocative claim that the Trump White House is manipulating, psychologically manipulating the American public. Google gaslighting and you'll probably come across your piece on the first page. Let's start with this concept: what exactly is gaslighting and where did the term come from?

LAUREN DUCA: Ah, yes, gaslighting is a psychological abuse tactic in which the victim is made to doubt their own sanity and it, it comes in modern parlance from a Victorian thriller which is a super short and cool play to read and also a movie. But essentially the, the, the plot is what I use to, to breakdown the term and to – but my goal in writing this piece was to give people a word to use to explain feeling insane from the president-elect deliberately deceiving us. Um, my views on how Trump has gaslighted America, and in fact the way in which he's gaslighting America, has evolved, become more sophisticated since I wrote that piece. The thing, the reality is, and what I wrote at the time, is that this was going to then come, these, these acts of deception and contradicting use of reality were then going to be under the official seal of the White House and now in fact they are. And, I hoped to empower people by giving, by clearly explaining this term and I, I think that that's actually an important point is like I didn't invent gaslighting. Not by any means. That's a 1938 play; people had said gaslighting in the context of Trump before. I wasn't the first person to say that. What I did was very clearly break it down and explain it in terms of an example. Um, and I

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think a big misconception about the work of journalism is that you have to have this oddball completely unique and irreverent sideline cool view; this like hipster angle for approaching the news. When in fact the rule of journalism now is about verifying information and making it more accessible and easier to understand. And I think that role when we're bombarded with information and disinformation and misinformation is increasingly on empowering people to feel confident in a shared truth. And so, its not that ah, that, that article was not revolutionary because it pioneered the term, but because it, it allowed for a central place for people to have a currency for identifying a feeling of generalized public insanity. And, I think that we, we should all kind of insist on journalism's role being making politics more accessible to people.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I mean, what you do as primarily an opinion columnist type stuff, how do we educate our students and the public as to what the difference is between an op-ed versus a straight news story. Like, how do we help them understand?

LAUREN DUCA: I would say that everyone in the country I wish would read *Elements of Journalism* and like, that's on Amazon, you can get it for a few dollars, like it costs less than gelato I think, so. Hey, we just had gelato like in between the salad. It was super weird. But so –

DR. HOFFMAN: But go ahead; but go ahead.

LAUREN DUCA: -- but so, I'm, so, I ah, journalism is about creating a shared foundation of information. So, what I do as an opinion writer is I very clearly delineate between facts and opinions. Um, I am not cherry-picking facts to manipulate. I am not trying to convince. I am presenting things as they are and when I am signaling my opinion I am very clearly allowing readers to know that. I

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am totally transparent and I'm saying here's, here's what we know, here are the hard facts. And by the way, like the need for investigative journalism especially at the local level is crucial and different than what I do. But I am radically transparent, and I believe that what I can do to, to further connect with people is say, here's the world and how I see it. It's impossible to come to anything just to reporting, to, to basic small talk without a particular set of preferences and experiences. And I believe that we can better overcome our biases if we can admit to them and if we can be honest about them and so that's why I share bikini photos on Instagram.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: Also, I go to barre and like it's a lot of money; it's not like come on; anyway.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, you know, as a professor –

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- as a professor of media and journalism and, and politics I'm fascinated by the fact that students don't really understand that the vast history of journalism is routed in very partisan, very opinionated politics –

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- very opinionated writing and I, the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was more focused on objectivity, fairness, autonomy –

LAUREN DUCA: But I am objective –

DR. HOFFMAN: Do –

LAUREN DUCA: -- so I, I think that's important to clarify and I want to let you

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finish your question. But, I, it's really crucial to say I still follow objectivity of method and I am still, I still operate – and so objectivity is kind of this viscous concept and I think it's problematic that we don't have a public understanding. Ah, the idea is things are fair and balanced and the truth is a math equation. That's not the reality. Objectivity of method means applying a set of editorial standards and ethics to verify that which is true, and I still operate in accordance with those guidelines. And that's very important to me. The human mind cannot be erased like a \*\*\* white board. I mean, unless you do like a lot of Molly like four –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- or seven days in a row I've maybe seen that in college. But like mostly, no, you can't just erase your mind and you've had, you have these things you like and you have this way you've grown up and you have this high school you went to and these parents and, and the particular traumas of any given childhood and you like things and you're, your likely to tell a story in a certain way because of who you are. I, I think it's ridiculous to deny that and in fact more honest to admit to it and to say hey readers here's me, I'm a blazing feminist, I sometimes eat an entire jar of pickles. Like, here's all of what you could possibly \*\*\* know and I'm telling you the truth like how I report it from that point. But, objectivity is something that I think has been taken from us as a profession because its not about being fair. It's, it's about being rigorous and experimental and held to higher standards of verification.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right, so like pickles, um I –

LAUREN DUCA: Pickles are good. My endorsement.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] No, this is, and by the way there will be some

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profanity –

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- in this talk tonight.

LAUREN DUCA: From who?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] I think what's interesting to me, though, is that given that history of American journalism being very partisan and being very opinionated, like what, what do we need right now? What does journalism need right now? Do we need more, you know, and I might know what your answer is, but do we need more opinionated partisan journalism, or do we need more objective, fair –

LAUREN DUCA: We need more people having conversations from a foundation of fact. So, we're having this conversation about opinions matter. So, like, there's a lot of confusion about that as well and I think it connects to the confusion about objectivity. I've been at other colleges and I've had, you know, Libertarian Troll Boy in the audience being like don't all opinions get to be heard? No, not all opinions have equal weight. Opinions with a strong foundation of fact that have been well researched and are rigorous and are driven by logic and are connected with empathy. I think we all are participating in our culture, we all are participating in our shared foundation of fact when we are sharing things on line. Like increasingly our public square is social media. And, also our conversations ought to hold to the same level of rigor. Like, not just \*\*\* saying \*\*\* in kind of all I mean. Doing the research. Not operating out of fear. Not operating out of ignorance. It, it doesn't take much. And we have so much. So, I was like joking at dinner with like some lovely young people, like have you guys heard of

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Encarta. Like laughs from maybe but I used to have to get information by like putting a CD in a computer and like it made a sound –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- and truly, and now you can just Google. Anyway, we have so much access to information. We have so much power. It's not hard to embolden yourself. I think that that's what we need. I feel like, like my take on this is we should all be kind of operating with a journalistic, journalistic ethics in our political conversation in the sense that we are saying things that are true, we are moving from a place of being willing to learn, we are moving from a place of being willing to accept evidence, and we're not trying to manipulate people. And I don't think that that's, um, so crazy. I think that there are also different types of journalism that are necessary. I, I've shared a stage in a "Me Too" conversation with Meghan Toohey who broke the Harvey Weinstein story with Jodi Kantor and was like frothing at the mouth because she's so \*\*\* cool. But like her approach to journalism is rigorous investigative work and research and she's excavating power structures by going and digging and being a detective and finding the receipts. That's different than what I'm doing. I am taking risks and I'm putting my personhood on the line by saying what I think is the most precise possible condemnation of what I believe is an attack on authoritarianism and rejection of compassion for the marginalized. Those are different things. My friend Sarah McBride is in the audience and I don't see her – there, there's Sarah. Buy her book Tomorrow Will Be Different. But, I will conclude with this. There are different forms of practices and Sarah was kind enough to participate in a panel I did on, on, on feminism and different modes of feminism. And Sarah is the first transgender person to ever address a national political convention. Like, I'm so

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\*\*\* proud to know her. She's in the room. Right?

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

LAUREN DUCA: Love ya.! Tomorrow Will Be Different. Buy it for real. I love her. But Sarah was sitting across from Emma Sulkowicz who you may know as the, the performance artist who did mattress performance at Columbia and Emma has recently been seen with asterisks on her \*\*\* out nude outside of the Whitney. And so, like Sarah and Emma were talking about how we need people in the room and people outside of it. Like, we need diversity of practice. I think the diversity of practice is about progressivism and diversity of practice also applies to journalism, but the motivating ethics has to be about truth and a, a shared foundation of truth ideally with the intention of building a truer, more equitable society. And if that's biased then I'm mother \*\*\* biased.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, speaking of bias, I have a photo here –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- of your appearance on Fox News with Tucker Carlson –

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, he really went after you –

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- after you had made a comment about Ivanka Trump on a plane.

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Could you tell us a little bit about that interview? We talked about it today but why did you get invited, what happened there at Fox, and sort of what was the fallout? What was the result from this interview?

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LAUREN DUCA: Yeah, oh wow. What's a good place to start because there's so much that we, like, I don't even know –

DR. HOFFMAN: The Ivanka Trump, Trump tweet maybe?

LAUREN DUCA: I think, okay, cool. So, it was hard because I, we were talking about this and there's a whole kind of conversation about what Tucker Carlson has become and what the place of Fox News is. So, there's a lot there. When I got asked to come on I didn't know who Tucker – I knew like he, a, about a bowtie that was in the general vicinity of John Stuart. You know he's since kind of metastasized into this poster boy for white supremacy in this really miraculous way. But, ah, that was not the case and I, I didn't have a full awareness of him. I had a, an awareness of Fox and I thought that the Ivanka plane conversation – we also talked about this in class, like, that was an event that happened maybe four years ago – but like, Ivanka was on a plane, she was on Jet Blue for some reason dot, dot, dot. And a man was like why is Ivanka on my plane which is perfectly reasonable. But I understood that the trap that was being set was a matter of civility and respectability. And these kind of nonsense rules about how we must behave in, in the, in the context of a figure like Ivanka. And I thought that I could go on and dismantle that bomb by just being like no drama on airplanes, let's not talk about that. Instead I would love to talk about how Ivanka is now at the time poised to become one of the most powerful women in the world and frequently deflecting all accountability by playing a role of daughter. She, she subsumes to sexism when it is in her favor and allows her to further consolidate power and then waves the flag of feminism to her benefit. Stumped for and was a surrogate for the most anti-woman candidate, explicitly anti-woman candidate of our time while pretending to be a feminist. I wanted to have that

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conversation in the context of Fox with what is her power in the White House and what answers do we have on that? I thought that I could get them to be rational in that regard. He was clearly and actively hostile and sexist. [Laughter.] That's really like a calm way of – I, I did not know what I was getting in to at all. I think that, people ask me often what prepared me for it and why I was so – we, we talked in class – how are you so expressive. And like that's just me. I didn't have any TV training or, like I clearly still don't have training. Like I'm going to be cursing and saying like and like touching my hair and whatever.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: But –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- and be like making jokes that are probably -- don't tweet but just tweet flattering photos you guys, okay?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: People are always like retweet me. I'm like, I look like \*\*\*. Just like look at the picture. But –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- so anyway. Weird. But so, it, on this context of Tucker I knew what I wanted to talk about. I just explained it. I wanted to say what is Ivanka's power? I knew how to talk about that. I had a lot to say. I felt confident that I had things to kind of pull out of my bag of tricks that I felt confident in in the sense that I had verified them, I had researched them, and I was ready to go. And I think that that's why I was unshakable. And I, I think that the bigger takeaway – there are two – one as we talked about earlier, is that was a, sort of,

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in retrospect, a really gratifying experience because it translated into explicit gruesome terms – you are not welcome here because you have written about fashion and pop culture. And, I mean, it was kind of a relief because I was getting that sense. There was this cheeky sort of young women care all about politics, why? Like who? And it was just so annoying and patronizing and sexist, and people were complimenting me and saying, wow, I'm, I'm, I'm, my name is Gary and I'm middle-aged and like I read Teen Vogue. Like, you're welcome. And I, it's just sort of, you know, it was like miraculous. Like, the, the thing is that the intention in those emails was positive and so even at that level, I mean, even at the level of then I was on the Today Show and they were like, do you like, do you like politics? I was like, am I on some weird \*\*\* crossover of the Twilight Zone and School House Rock? Like –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- what is happening? And it's just this absurd, like, we, we are patronized, and we are dismissed and, and we are rejected from the conversation or made to feel silly and sad and then we're told we're apathetic and it's like they're making fun of me. So, I don't know, I think that Tucker encapsulated that in a way that was a really clear bulls' eye that I might have had a harder, a harder time clearly taking aim at and it was just like, yeah, \*\*\* you dude. Like, I don't even, you haven't worn a bow tie since 2006 but it's still part of your brand, honey. And that was –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- helpful.

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DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Wow.

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: That's not the first time I've said that tonight.

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I think I do want to get to a more, a little bit more serious topic though.

LAUREN DUCA: It's just good that there's not a wine glass here.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: I did break a wine glass, but it was while I was making a point --

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LAUREN DUCA: -- so I'm good.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah, it was like --

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, it was very --

LAUREN DUCA: Shatter the glass --

DR. HOFFMAN: -- it was very dramatic.

LAUREN DUCA: -- wine glass. Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: But, I mean, you have been a victim of, I, I hate to say cyber bullying --

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- but like online harassment based on how you have obviously been very vocal about your opinions. I mean, how do you deal with that? What advice do you give to young women and young men who are

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wanting to voice their opinions online, wanting to have a space in the online sphere but are nervous about what's going to happen to them. What kind of backlash they might get.

LAUREN DUCA: Okay. Yeah, there's a lot in that. The first biggest thing that I think applies to everyone is that it's scary. Like I'm scared. It's overwhelming and it's a bad time. There are pile-ons and outrage, a complete total uneven alignment of punishment and only the people who are subscribing to decency are held accountable to it. At that same roundtable with Sarah, my friend Aquila [phonetic spelling] put it as like, you know, somebody's robbing the bank and you're sitting here arguing with me that, like, pennies aren't real. And it's, we just so lost the conversation in nitpicking each other and that's real. I think that there's frustrations about that that vary based on different intersectionality's of identity. What I would say to you overall, and what I try to do for myself, is just be willing to learn. You're going to have bad opinions. Like, we're not all, we're, we're, we're humans living and figuring out and, and we're all questioning the status quo. So, in questioning that we're coming at, at it from different levels of evolution. And I didn't fully understand racial justice. I am a white woman. I needed to learn about that. I didn't fully understand -- I have a lot of really close gay friends -- I didn't fully understand the gay experience. I still learn about parts of that. I think being willing to learn and being willing to say -- just don't die on the hill of your bad opinions. I think we all participate in a conversation, and also then maybe check yourself and say when am I participating in a pile-on when progressivism ought to allow for progress. Like, let, let people learn and teach people where you have the energy and the resources and the privilege to be able to do that. I think that express yourself also and know that like some evil thing is

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not going to jump out. If you think you love people and you generally just want love and equality hopefully is what most people in this room are willing to subscribe , like, I don't know -- probably like the New York Times would try to say that that was biased, not really -- people who want love and equality, like Maggie Haberman would be like I don't know if I can say that. It's become a weird \*\*\* time but if you want love and equality, right? Like you generally wish for that, you're not going to be magically awful. You might say something that hurts others and your intention might not be to do that but what you must learn from it is your impact and then you adjust it for the future. I, I think I've made mistakes and I've found it really rewarding to say it's come to my attention that this made people feel this way. That's not what I was trying to do. I'm sorry. Like, its not like this is not what I meant and you're coming for me is just like -- show compassion. It's not; we're not taking hits. There're not losers. Like, we're all, we're all in this together. I think that just be willing to learn and like participate in that. Then though there's harassment which is a different conversation. It's not, I don't know, I think I'm often asked, and not that you're asking in this way, but I think I'm often asked about it in terms of, like, tell them, like, girl power. Like, tell them you're a bad-ass. And I'm definitely a bad-ass. I'm definitely really \*\*\* resilient and I like, I don't take any \*\*\* and I have a particular upbringing. I've endured a lot of crap and a lot of trauma and I'm really scrappy. And I've had to be. Um, And I'm ready for it. I also struggle all the time. I also am overwhelmed all of the time. I also am figuring out how to do it better all of the time. Um, it takes a colt (sic), a cost. It takes a toll.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

LAUREN DUCA: It makes me angry. I am mad that I am sometimes literally

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thinking I hope I finish my book before someone shoots me at an event. Like, then its like, I'm not totally getting, um, I am exposed to death and rape threats. I am exposed to people saying things that seep into my consciousness and my brain is my entire well-being. I'm a freelancer. I come up with ideas for a living. I write for a living. I have to have energy to communicate for a \*\*\* living and people interfere with that deliberately. Ah, that's not okay and I have to, I think I've had to learn to experience that pain, and to admit that that's pain. And to admit that that's awful. And I don't –

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, so –

LAUREN DUCA: -- deserve it. And to be self-righteous then about combatting it. I'm angry and so I'm going to use that anger and I'm going to use it to become stronger and to continue fighting back because the only other choice is to despair, and, like, I refuse to sit and eat garbage in silence. And so, I would say, like, if you are a young woman, if you are anything that presents, and your avatar is anything other than a straight white man – and also I understand the internet is hard for straight white men too and it's also difficult – the point is the more marginalized you are the more automatic gutting your opinions will have. The more just you speaking out will be an issue. And the reality is, like, just me being a young woman is the problem a lot of the \*\*\* time. And I've had to understand that and move from a place of righteousness and say that in taking the bullets of this I am paving the way and setting an example. And I think that the more people who do that creates more of a collective power of refusing to let this force, which is just like the white, white supremacist patriarchy as like a virtual swarm of locusts, quash the conversation because the public square is increasingly taking place online, and our right to assembly and our right to express our opinions is

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policed before it even happens because people are scared to express opinion by virtue of receiving harassment. So, if you can push through that it is worth it and it is an act of defiance and it is a political act. So that's how I justify it. Also, I listen to Donna Summer so like it's a lot of –

DR. HOFFMAN: Oh, wow --.

LAUREN DUCA: -- [Indiscernible] –

DR. HOFFMAN: Donna Summer. But, I mean, I, I'm wondering if you did have the option to talk to one of these many trolls that you have once –

LAUREN DUCA: I have.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- people – yeah, like, can you also see the humanity in them and sort of try to make a connection compassionately to where they're coming from. And how, how can; I guess what I'm saying is like we're in such a politically divided place right now and we, we are disgusted by the other side. We talked about this, about the disgust and disrespect. And, like, how can we see those other folks as potentially also being human beings that we might be able to connect to?

LAUREN DUCA: I have a really, just a problem with that question. I think it totally miss understands the power structure. I think that when somebody is trolling in the way we're talking about where they're making a death threat, they're making a rape threat, ah, they're calling me a \*\*\*, they're calling my little brother and asking if I've been institutionalized. They're calling a college friend and spreading a rumor that I've been in porn to pay for college. They're deliberately trying to harm me, um, and ruin my life as a goal. I'm, I don't think it's fair to ask if I understand their humanity because my humanity is under active attack. I have spoken to trolls. Lindy West has this like apocryphal story that I

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was inspired by where she confronted her trolls. I wrote a piece about the affect of harassment and one of my trolls apologized to me and I spoke to him on the phone. He explained to me basically this process of dehumanization, of he had been on the Donald on a Reddit Board. There have been message boards that had coordinated harassment; 4-chan, there had been actually a post that was like harass – it actually said, harass her until she has a mental breakdown or goes into porn. I'm like, I don't know. All of this – by the way, right, like all of it centralizes around mental health and sexuality which is a whole other dissertation but like we have limited time here.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: He, he, he understood my humanity through this essay, and, and was willing to talk to me. I actually caught another live one – I don't know, maybe anyone who follows me, this guy Gary who basically, I don't know, he clearly just like wrote every insult he could think of. It was so insane. Like, it was just, he was like emptied the pot of like every possible nasty thing that he could think to say about a person. And I was like, just tired and I sometimes hesitate on the ethics of throwing a person to the wolves, but it was just so gross, and I just felt like emotionally he had come on my face and I was like no thank you. And I'm going to put you on twitter.com and people are going to come and for you now and you're going to experience this. And now he's apologized, and we have a phone call this Sunday because he was drunk, and he did, and forgot I was a human, basically said in my apology. I think that this is not; I am constantly trying to be as transparent as possible because I think there's a willingness to perceive people who speak publicly and who are public voices as

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symbols, um, and to forget that. But that, that's what's happening when you're getting harassment and it is, is a loss of humanity. So, it's, it's kind of this cumulative affect, I find, of, of, of feeling like, I feel people forgetting that I'm a human being. It's not even; there's a, there's a traumatic toll of worrying about a death threat and a rape threat and someone taking my secure, social security number, and telling me they know where my parents live. That's a real practical safety threat. But the broader thing that's corrosive and hurtful and harmful is, is them forgetting my humanity. So, I guess the answer, though, is just remembering love overall and I don't think that work deserves to be done with these people. I think that the best you can do is keep asserting love, and keep asserting that you are the light, and that, that you believe in love and that, like, you are motivated by an honest desire to do good because so much of what gets lost in the conversation and allows for this hate is a partisan conversation where we think we're trying to harm each other and come from two different sides. So, the best that I can do in understanding those people's humanity is continue to assert that my goal is again creating a true or more equitable society and I'm not going to go out of my way to make someone listen to that who has told me they're going to come to my apartment and rape me.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Always interesting. [Laughter.] Well, I'd like to switch to the topic to something that's very dear and true to you which is millennial apathy. So, you have posted that millennials are now the largest voting block in this country, which I tell my students all the time, and Gen Z is growing. So, pardon me, you've been actively asking young people to vote. What's the one message you want to share with college students here in the audience tonight about the upcoming midterm elections?

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LAUREN DUCA: Well, ah, it's, it's, vote. Vote, vote, vote. But, voting it feels, it's not as simple as that and its frustrating that it's framed as if its as simple as that. As was just learned, why, why don't you guys care? Like, just, just care. Just vote. And I've heard that. I've been in a lot, I've, I'm, I've been working on a book since the election and I've been researching the way we understand youth apathy in general not just in the context of millennials. And I feel like I cared before. I cared a lot. I just didn't understand my passion as applied to a traditional political context. I didn't understand the weight of my voice. I didn't understand a practical application of democracy. I think that all of that it's coming more sharply into focus and we're questioning more grandly who makes the rules. These things that were seen as kind of like a sanitized self-cleaning litter box of a \*\*\* system like democracy is just going to magically propagate itself and we can just be like good job America. Like we are eating hot dogs. It's just insane. And I think that, like, a lot of what we've been taught denies an active civic participation. Also, by the way, you know what, yeah, our individual voices are kind of statistically non-significant as Northwestern and Princeton found in 2014. Like, Citizens United, yes, we all know about the weight of money in American politics. We all know generally about these big monied interests and how power is consolidated. And, we all know that our voices don't have enough weight. So, what's the solution to that? To just say like, okay cool. Like fine. Like lets just become China in a few minutes. It's like what the \*\*\*? Like we just, if you accept inevitability you confirm inevitability as reality. The second you say I can't you, you make that the truth. And I think we're all kind of subjects of this broader demographic bystander affect. But the people to blame are also politicians who are deliberately – and another part of this conversation is we're

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not being catered to. The system is setup to make it harder to vote. They're not catering – Like. my favorite example of how are, how do you know young people are not of genuine interest to politicians? What would their campaigns look like if they cared about us? What do people who are trying to market us do, right? They got, they have a certain color pink, okay? They have fonts. They have avocados. All right? You can picture it. Like, anybody in this room who has been on Snapchat or Instagram for two minutes knows what a powerful – we are on the subway, I'm buying sheets. I don't even know why. We're being marketed in really, in really specific ways that campaigns aren't doing. And that's just a surface level example of a lack of interest. And I actually asked Al Gore about this at the Teen Vogue Summit. Interestingly enough, a setting in which there were like palms, you know, like whatever. There was [indiscernible], and it was like I'm a registered voter. It was all of these things that are esthetically youthful that make perfect sense that you don't have to be any kind of genius to understand would be appealing. And in that context Al Gore is saying this sort of thing, this sort of: Vote. Vote. Just vote, you guys. Why aren't politicians using those marketing tactics? Why aren't politics, politicians actively trying to expand the electorate beyond even young people? It's deliberate. It's by design. And when I asked Al Gore about that knowing, knowing this, understanding this, his answer was this reciprocal loop of disengagement. Well, young people don't vote. Well, young people don't vote so we don't have to cater to you. I guess now he's an activist, but he was a politician. But in general, that's the line of thinking and, and it, we, we have to, our votes don't individually \*\*\* matter. I'm not going to lie to you. We have to build our, in seemingly insignificant individual contributions to elective, to collective power in order to flex the muscle of people

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power in general as a country. But as a youth demographic we are, millennials are the largest voting block; Gen Z, you guys are honestly way better than us. Like we kind of sucked but we're trying. But like we're hanging on. And we're like [indiscernible], like you all need to even better than us. We're trying. We're figuring it out. But you are really coming, you're coming of age in this moment where you've had a president elected that is positively absurd that was, we were told was impossible, that is an illegitimate \*\*\* panzer of a person and you're saying and who's questioning and demolishing our ideals of democracy, of decency, who is constantly embracing authoritarianism and, and, and being just objectively deliberately cruel to marginalized communities in a way that it's indisputable while, by the way, being mentally unfit in a way that is routinely obvious to everyone in the country and no one is stopping it? So, the question is who makes the rules and what I would tell you is us now. So, vote is the message.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

LAUREN DUCA: All right.

DR. HOFFMAN: Opinions matter.

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.] He keeps doing it [indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: Opinions on all sides matter.

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Before we get to the audience Q & A, which I'm sure there are lots of great questions, you've been very active in the opposition to the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

LAUREN DUCA: I would just quickly; I know this, you guys have probably, have like maybe C4, C3 rules about this \*\*\*, but like I would just say calling out

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the president for these harmful tactics in an, in, in a clear-cut hard-hitting way is not something that should be caught in the conversation of both sides. And I think that the conversation about both sides is part of that objectivity issue. The truth is not a math question and Elements of Journalism I recommend everyone reads. Journalism needs to do a better job at communicating its job to the people but, but it, it, both sides is not someone's criticizing the president and someone's not. And I think that –

DR. HOFFMAN: It's not as simple as that.

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah. I think that also it's, it's important to clarify that the, the, that the, the, the TV model of broadcast news and kind of that fair and balanced framing of things acts as if like climate change for example ought to be two people on a stage and one person says climate change is real and the other person says climate changes is fake; that's not a reasonable rational debate and that we've seen an over compensation for criticizing the president that is extremely painful and normalizing. And we talked just at dinner about this desperation about like cataloguing his lies because it was everyone scrambling to appear objective. That's performance. When you have Maggie Haberman, for example , and I will use her name again because she pisses me off, you are saying, you are just quibbling about falsehoods and lies when what you should be doing is doing the work to ensure the American people know the things coming out of the president's mouth are not true and this is what's happening. He's lying or he's crazy. He's unwell or he's deceiving us deliberately because they're not \*\*\* true. So, one of those situations is the reality and that's what the American people need to know. So, you can call it whatever the hell you want but you need to contextualize it within that. And there's this, this double, this

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bending over backwards – I, I’m sorry, I just feel this is very important – that we also see in the teleprompter thing, right? That’s what that’s about. That’s why that has reached such a fever pitch in the conversation of oh Trump, Trump read off a teleprompter and he, he, he demonstrated literacy.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: The, the, that is about trying to say look I can find a good; it’s like when you hate someone and you’re like well she had a nice shirt. Like it’s insane. And, and, and we shouldn’t be bending over backwards to do that because the work of journalism, the fundamental thing to make clear besides the fact that Trump is a demonic \*\*\* sweet potato is –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- that – it’s journalistic – it’s okay and that’s opinion – so, um, but –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- but I think the thing to make clear is that the job of journalism is empowering people’s information. The job, the job of journalism is empowering people with information. I just can’t say that enough because from a foundation of information is how we participate in our democracy. And that is what the service must be and our, our, our allegiance and my allegiance most certainly, is, is to my fellow citizens and, and anybody who is not operating by that standard is not a journalist.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, a, a less controversial topic. Brett Kavanaugh.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: You’ve been very active. You did a --

LAUREN DUCA: Who is she?

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DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: You've been on tour this summer talking about the importance of Roe v. Wade.

LAUREN DUCA: Ah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Tell us a little bit about Brett Kavanaugh, what you think about that particular Supreme Court nomination, what you've been doing in your advocacy work, and then we'll open it up to the audience.

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah. One thing I would want us, want to say first, yes, I have a difficulty with navigating two roles which are activist and journalist. I don't think they can't coexist. I think that takes a lot of work to make them coexist. I am a feminist and I am a journalist. So, I, I went on tour fighting this nomination. I'm going to explain why fully in that specific context. But the broader up top thing I want to say is, and I, I spoke about this with some of the students earlier, is that is, being a feminist is about equality. Period. A lot of confusion about that. That's what it's about. Being a journalist is about providing a foundation of information upon which we can participate civically. I believe the American Project is about building a truer more equitable democracy. In that regard, not only can feminism and journalism, coexist. In fact, we should all be feminist journalists. I have an argument for that. I stand by it. I believe that reproductive rights are essential to that equality. I don't, I think that these things are inarguable when we use logic and by that, I mean that having a baby costs money. So, when we're talking about financial justice and we're talking about people having; or we're talking about evening a playing field, we're talking about welcoming all voices into the, into the formal civic conversation about how we

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ought to live together, that requires reproductive rights. Period. There are no progressives that are willing to compromise on that. Bernie Sanders, I'm just, that's just not up for debate. So, I'm sorry, so I may throw up. But, um so –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- that's why I initially joined the tour. I wanted to just, I wanted to rant about reproductive rights. I feel some type of way about that. What I came to learn from it, and I crossed, I, I, the line between my journalism and my activism became really intense when I finally wrote about it because when I finally sat down to write about this thing I had done for ten shows in 14 days, losing my voice finally in a rally at Union Square where I was advocating solely for our senators, responding to their constituents, I, I wondered where, where I was rallying people power why that would ever be considered in somehow opposed to journalism. And I think that that shows that our collective idea of journalism has gotten out of whack. My message in this regard is that our senators are elected officials and they ought to answer to us. They work for us. Period. The majority of the country opposes this nomination and the idea that its inevitability is a reflection of an illegitimate government. That's what I think. And, I, I have a constitution to back that up. I mean, what is government by and for the people when we have elected officials who are somehow inoculated to public mandate and public opinion. What does it mean when there's a confirmation hearing about a position that is going to shape American lives for decades that we're told is a sure thing, that we're told there is nothing we can do about it. I don't, I don't, I don't know exactly what the rules are for breaking through that noise where you have the Washington Post saying that Brett Kavanaugh is a \*\*\* car pool dad. You have, you have the New York Times saying that liberals are

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stagnating without, without covering any of the grassroots efforts that I was on the ground for. We can't expect a mainstream media to reflect back to us the size of a movement while it's happening, but we have these numbers and these people \*\*\* work for us. And our voices will be heard. And if advocating that is not journalism then um, maybe by the person who is making that definition I'm doing something else but by my definition of journalism which is empowering people with information and the information they need to participate civically extremely \*\*\* Brett Kavanaugh.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

LAUREN DUCA: Opinions matter.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: You know, I'm just trying to bring up some light conversation here –

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- on stage. Well, I think what I'll ask Hannah and Parker to do is, they are two of my students in National Agenda, this is actually a class, so as, as Lauren mentioned she's been meeting with my students throughout the day and they are, have volunteered to throw around what is literally a microphone as a box. A catch, it's called a Catchbox. They're going to come down to the front and we're going to invite a Q & A from the audience. But I think I'll, before we do that maybe I'll just open this up talking about journalism, what is journalism and what isn't journalism. We talked a lot about this op-ed, this anonymous op-ed in the New York Times –

LAUREN DUCA: Oh, yeah.

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DR. HOFFMAN: -- from within the White House. Um, um, do you have some quick thoughts on that before we open it up to the Q & A? Like, is that, was that appropriate for that person to do that?

LAUREN DUCA: Ah well, I guess, well I don't know, I guess if ew mean, what do we mean by appropriate because, yeah, as we discussed there's a lot going on with that. I do think that there are sinister implications to it and cynical ones as well with what the goal is for kind of shoring up the idea of some underlying principle within the GOP that could somehow be separated from Trump. But maybe what the main take away of it is that there's somebody within the, the administration who recognizes completely and fully that the man has no moral center and is completely mentally unfit in, in a completely explicit terms in this article. For the public to have that grander permission to recognize Trump as the abominable cancer to our democracy that he is, is significant and hopefully will make a difference in recognizing his legitimacy, I hope, in the most present time in terms of blocking Kavanaugh because why should that man get a Supreme Court pick. But, what it also shows is that there's a crisis of cowardice. That there are people that now we, we, we know for certain, I think we've kind of all known for awhile that there, there are people that understand Trump as the monster he is and, and, and will have points of, of equivocation but are unwilling to stand up for him. And to, to explicitly recognize it as was the case in this op-ed and refused to stand up for it. I mean, it just shows us that the norms and values that we, we take for granted that we think are going to magically again uphold this self-cleaning litter box of democracy, they are not self-enforcing and, and our norms and values, our laws are only as strong as the people who are enforcing them. And, and what we're seeing now is that, you know like, we are

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the ones we've been waiting for in such a profound way. There aren't, there aren't some magic authorities or gatekeepers who are going to save us and, I mean, I think that they, they already showed us that when they told us it was impossible for him to win and then boom, he won. But, it's just a further corrosion of, of, or should be a further corrosion of our willingness to accept the status quo because these things are not going to correct themselves and so vote in the midterms.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Thank you so much.

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, I, I will remind everybody that this is, we are a nonpartisan center and we bring lots of voices in to this conversation and we want to make sure that we engage and demonstrate civil dialogue. And in that spirit, I'd like to invite questions from the audience. So, it looks like Hannah has the, the Catchbox. Do you want to toss it, you can toss it, you don't have to hand it? Toss it. All right, our first question.

Q: So, my first question for you is about you, obviously you're very passionate and really -- first of all, thanks for coming, we really appreciate it. But my question for you is obviously in your abrasiveness to the president we know that negativity drives down voter participation so how do we kind of address what's going on with the president but at the same time not turn down the voter participation. And how do we balance the two?

LAUREN DUCA: What do we know?

Q: So, when we're negative and we know campaign, negative campaign ads from politician's turndown and drive down voter participation --

LAUREN DUCA: Oh --

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Q: -- candidates --

LAUREN DUCA: -- well I think we also need positive policy proposals as well. So, there's, there's this, this general criticism of the resistance from people who are cynical \*\*\* out for themselves in media who are framing the resistance as like simply a reaction to Trump. That's not actually what's happening. Um, I think that that's a really simplistic understanding. There, what Trump is, is this grotesque event that has made us question the status quo. It's not as if; somebody running on just \*\*\* Trump doesn't deserve to be elected. That's not even happening though. Like, I feel like there's always this coverage that's like just resisting Trump is not a platform. So, like, whose are, I don't know, who is that candidate. There's, no one's even actually doing that. Everyone; there's, there's rich outsider candidates coming from across the board with awesome interesting progressive platforms but also in general the awakening moment that has come about in many ways because of the election. It's not about him, and it wasn't about him for me. Um, he is the red herring for a prevailing sickness of our democracy. Where we previously were willing to accept that our lack of solutions for our political problems is just the way things are and now we're saying no we demand solutions. And I mean, Parkland is an example of that that has, that is tangentially related to Trump in the sense that he took money from the NRA, and in fact 30.1 million dollars – double check it. But like, the reality is that this is about saying hold on, why have we said that our political problems are inevitable. These people answer to us. What is this system that we thought was getting better and more equal all the time and that is what will turn out voters and has already turned out voters?

DR. HOFFMAN: Can I put on my academic hat or my tam with a little tassel?

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LAUREN DUCA: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: There is actually a lot of research to show that negative advertisement, advertisements do bring people to the polls. They do actually motivate people. I mean there's some discussion about it, but I think that it's something that – we, we can't assume that, that they're always bad. I mean, who likes to listen to the ads; there's like Mr. Smith is a, he cheated on his wife. You know, like, like they're, they're all terrible but like they actually do draw people to vote particularly in local elections. So –

LAUREN DUCA: Which also pay attention to people who are campaigning that way –

DR. HOFFMAN: Right.

LAUREN DUCA: -- because what does it mean if people are campaigning by smearing and doing this negative – that's not what we should be interested in [indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: I think that's a very good point, but I think that its, it's a larger discussion. I, I'd love to talk with you more about it in terms of what different types of political ads motivate people to get to the polls, particularly in midterms. All right, so Parker's got the Catchbox.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much for your contribution today. I really enjoyed your comments. I was just wondering, you reject the inevitability of like Kavanaugh's nomination, but you also asserted that, you know, elected officials have to represent the interests of the constituents. And while the majority of America opposes Brett Kavanaugh, more than 25 states, more than 50 senators their constituents support Brett Kavanaugh. And how would you say –

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LAUREN DUCA: That's not, not good.

Q: Okay. That's great to hear. But I'm just concerned about the fact that we're looking at a lot of, even Democratic senators that have states where most of the constituents voted for Brett Kavanaugh and continue to vote motivated by the platforms that he supports. And, maybe if you just, like, respond to my question by saying by saying why you believe that's not true I'd also like to hear that.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. Can you give us sort of a breakdown of –

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah, I'm a little confused about this question.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I think she's concerned about which senators are kind of pro Kavanaugh, anti-Kavanaugh.

Q: Oh. Yeah. Sorry about that. No, no, I was just saying that there's a lot of, there's at least over 50 republican senators and they've been elected and not a lot of their seats are considered very vulnerable. There's not a lot of democrats that might flip those seats –

LAUREN DUCA: Oh.

Q: -- the democratic seats where the – in North Dakota for example we have a democratic senator who supports reproductive rights but over, there's a 35 percent margin for weight of Donald Trump and her constituents are urging her if you want to be elected vote for [indiscernible] Kavanaugh. So, I just mean, maybe you believe that that's not representative of their states but that at least seems to be the impression to maybe me or some other people tracking you know the electoral politics of these states.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

LAUREN DUCA: Ah, okay, so some, some of that was just patently

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[indiscernible] but I get your overall point which is that there is a majority of Republican senators and they are Republicans. I think, and we assume they're going to vote a certain way. That's really problematic. I was in, I was in Texas on the "Rise Up for Roe Tour" and people were really frustrated, and they were like our senator is Ted Cruz, of course he's going to vote a particular way. There in lies the problem. That playing for a particular team means you don't have to answer to your constituents. I mean, I, I don't know what your reelecting back in terms of these opinions but actually there's recently been data that shows that people are not going to even – whatever, I'm not going to get into the; I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I think –

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, no, but there's recent polling shows that people don't really care about --

LAUREN DUCA: Right.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- how their senators feel about Brett Kavanaugh.

LAUREN DUCA: [Indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: That's not going to influence their vote this November.

LAUREN DUCA: I'm going to vote based on that. And I think because people don't feel a voice in it and that's what the problem is. I mean, the, the idea is like within democracy as presented as something separate and other and something that's going to grind away magically at the Supreme Court is even more vacuum filled off within this as a thing that we don't have a role or a voice in and who decided that? I don't, it, it's, it's, its positively absurd that this governing body would be completely and totally removed from prevailing public opinion and, and, and voter opinion on, in terms of that not reflecting votes and low voter turnout is what allows for there to be a calculus that doesn't, doesn't even begin to consider

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opinion. But I think like the overarching takeaway has to be we, we all have to vote. I mean like, I'm saying if you, if you want to, you live in Texas and, and, and you support Ted Cruz I still think you should vote. I, I'm, I, I, if you live in New York and you support Andrew Cuomo I still think you should vote. I, I, I think that we flex our muscle as a people power and as a voting body in showing that we are going to show up and showing up we're going to register and showing up we're going to vote. And there's a lot going on there and there's a lot that's complicated but the problem is that everything falls into these two teams that are presumed to, to fall into these two camps automatically and that we have to choose the less bad one and like sometimes the less bad one like is Joe Biden and likes ice cream and were like that's a little more palatable. But it's still part of the same \*\*\* up system that's not actually listening to our voices. I, I, there's a, I'm just frustrated because the idea that there could be both sides on Brett Kavanaugh I think is a, is, is, is easily as disproved as this: seven in ten Americans are pro-choice. This is a pro-choice nation in terms of public opinion and unequivocally based on his past rulings and his hearings as well Brett Kavanaugh would gut reproductive rights. There is no argument otherwise on, based on any kind of logical standing. And, that is opposed to what the majority of the country wants as rule of law. And the fact that our senators are willing to rule against that reflects in unwillingness to represent constituents that should enrage everyone regardless of where they fall on the political spectrum.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right, let's take a question from the; I don't think we got a question from the middle here. Parker? I see –

PARKER: [Indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: Just toss it. See where it goes. Don't be afraid. [Laughter.]

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LAUREN DUCA: Yes.

Q: Welcome. We're glad you're here. I have a question about what you define as journalism because I agree with you. You say that journalism is empowering people with information, but I think one of the big problems with journalism with my students and with many people is they don't understand that journalism is not information that's transcribed from the journalist's experience, it's information that the journalist gathers and verifies.

LAUREN DUCA: Yeah.

Q: And I think, because I, I heard you say verify like two times. I, you're the only journalist I've run into in a really long time, on every channel I've ever watched, and any conversation was even talking about that people don't understand what journalism is, even though it's in complete crisis and is faltering. So, my question is –

LAUREN DUCA: Hum.

Q: Because I didn't go to journalism school and you did and you were just recently at a relatively good one. So, the question would be, what kind of messaging is out there to explain journalism is not transcribing the observations –

LAUREN DUCA: No.

Q: -- of the person with the microphone. It's actually a process –

LAUREN DUCA: Yes. Yes. And I, I, I, we, we have a –

DR. HOFFMAN: Parker.

LAUREN DUCA: -- we have a great –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

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LAUREN DUCA: The, the work of journalism is the work of verification is, it's absolutely essential. So, its empowering people with information through a method, an objectivity and method in terms of verification. And that is essential. Thank you. I think that I'm fact checked and I go through copy and research on everything I write and sometimes I make mistakes and things need to be tightened and I'm a human being and I see things in a particular way, um, and I also – a, a good example, because now I do a lot of opinion writing so I'm sometimes have analysis or moral judgments that I hopefully have signaled clearly but, but when I worked for Teen Vogue I would sometimes cover campus rape stories. And, like, my gut reaction to any campus rape story I did is like where the \*\*\* is he? Right? Like, that's how I gut respond to it. I have to mitigate that, and I have to say okay, the grander contours of my personal experience of being a college student, of my friends' personal experience that makes me very angry of this general story of how young women are treated in hook-up culture is not about this particular story. This particular story has a set of facts and things that I am to represent, and I need to confront my own personal anger in writing about this. I think that's a really good example because I then also can be aware of it and admit to it. And I've also been really, really open with people that I'm a fiery feminist who might be more inclined to that kind of belief. I'm still correcting it but also people know more where I'm coming from. So, in addition in my opinion writing as well I also strive to a level of radical transparency that I hope informs my readers so that they have as much information as possible because I'm going to make mistakes and I probably do every day. But, that they have all of the information and know everything about the eyes through which I'm seeing things. My goal is never ever to manipulate

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but certainly I see things from a particular perspective and I can, I do my best to verify it. I work from an objectivity of method standpoint. But we are all humans and, you know, at, at a grander philosophical level these communications have to be about communicating with truth which is a difficult concept. We're all, we're all in college here. We know about truth. Who wants truth. Like, who wants truth. That.

Q: [Indiscernible]. Why do you think the journalism community doesn't get, nobody knows what they're doing –

LAUREN DUCA: Hah, hah.

Q: Saying I'm reporting it and saying I verified it.

LAUREN DUCA: I think that the, there's a lot of speed. There's a loss of the role of the journalist in the context of the information age. It has to increasingly; it used to be about I'm reporting it. It used to be about what does the public need to know and gatekeeping information. And now everyone is being blasted with, with, with seven versions of the thing and four of them are fake, and, and, and you do have to make sense of the literal phenomenon of fake news and the more quiet kind of odorless gas of bias and processing all of that and what the work of journalism needs to be doing now is breaking things down and verifying and discount, like, understand an entire information ecosystem and working to guide people through it um, and, and, and doing the work of saying this, hey also this is out there and it's not true; this is out there and it's inaccurate; this is, this is what we know for sure and breaking down an, an, an absurd amount of information I think is a bigger challenge and I don't know that the metabolism of the industry has caught up to it. And there's a lot of reasons for that as well. I don't think, I think any individual journalist is like, is extremely hardworking. We're all

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underpaid and overworked, and newsrooms are not providing the time and resources often to do that work and the rush to be first and the rush to get the clicks and the content, we're going to need a new model. But I also am confident that we will find it. I think, I think that, that I have been able to, to maintain an independent channel that I'm really excited about. I think it can be used for evil because like so has Alex Jones, right? So, the things I'm optimistic about I'm also concerned about. But, honestly the question of like what you believe in in terms of the future of journalism and the future of democracy does come down to believing whether or not people are basically good, right? So, like, if we're not optimists, like, lets all go, like, do heroin tonight. I don't know. But like –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- I am an optimist and I think that, like, my, my commitment to authenticity and to these ethics and values will shine through and that the people who are doing the good work will persevere –

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay –

LAUREN DUCA: -- I hope.

DR. HOFFMAN: There is no mandate to do heroin --

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- tonight when you leave here.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: But, I will, I will mention that we have, here I am with –

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.] And don't do heroin.

DR. HOFFMAN: Here I am the professor –

LAUREN DUCA: Watch [indiscernible], it's a PSA.

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DR. HOFFMAN: Oh, yeah.

LAUREN DUCA: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Wearing my professor hat again, um, we have, we do have a journalism minor and a political communication minor, both of which I think talk about a lot of these issues. I mean, we're in a really delicate interesting place and, um, I think it's, it's great for students to engage in these kinds of conversations and I'm so glad to have my National Agenda students here tonight. Um, I think we have time for one more, Hannah, if you want to through one – maybe one or possibly two. So, toss as far as you think you can to someone whose got their hand raised. Do you think you can do it?

LAUREN DUCA: Can we give it to a woman?

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, lets --

LAUREN DUCA: [Indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: Let's do the one right here –

LAUREN DUCA: Or give it to her.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- right here on the, on the aisle.

AUDIENCE: Why is that?

LAUREN DUCA: Because women don't get to speak as often as you, sir. I'm going to take her –

AUDIENCE: [Indiscernible].

LAUREN DUCA: These are the questions from the audience and look at you talking without any permission. Can I have your question, Miss?

AUDIENCE: [Indiscernible]

LAUREN DUCA: You are just being annoying.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. All right, all right.

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AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

LAUREN DUCA: All right.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do over. Can we just toss it to the young woman in the white shirt on the aisle, Hannah? Thank you.

Q: Just one second.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. Did you have a question?

Q: Ah, yeah, hi. It feels great to have another friend in the room by the way. Um, my question is about the hostility between the Trump White House and the media. Do you think there's a better way to cover this complex Trump administration –

LAUREN DUCA: [Audible sigh.]

Q: -- and if so, what do you think we can do?

LAUREN DUCA: You know, I think that hostility is the, the wrong, is the wrong context for it. There's a, there is a, there's a; automatically journalism should be hostile to the White House in the sense that it's questioning its power. I mean, I don't, I'm going to admit my bias and say like Obama's my dad and I love him so much, right?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: But, right? He was one of the least transparent presidents and he did a ton of harm to the press in terms of his policies and there are things about his presidency that were overly criticized and also things about his presidency that I, at the time, I think was coasting by and didn't recognize as harmful. For example, he had a huge chance to regulate Wall Street that I don't think he took advantage of. I don't have time to criticize Obama. Like I will, he, if he [indiscernible] please, like him and Michelle. I, that's my bias on that. But the

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point is, like, the press should be constantly interrogating the power of the state. That is our role. It's been framed as if everything Trump does is wrong which –  
AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

LAUREN DUCA: -- what's he actually doing though on a daily basis, right? Like, I mean, are there times when the language is too extreme or severe? I, I, I feel like we're getting caught up in the civility and particularity of coverage and mincing words when what we should be saying is the White House is deliberately attempting to undermine our foundation of truth and therefore abolishing our chance at a legitimate democracy. And, I'm not really concerned about curse words and nasty terms and little insults and civility and respectability. I think that, sure, let's all try to do our best. Let's all try to dignify the conversation as I clearly need work on. Like, I'm whatever, I [indiscernible] like a sailor which I don't totally understand that metaphor. But like, whatever, so that's what she would say. The point is, I find that there's catharsis in humor and I don't spend the extra time correcting and policing my expression in order to fit rules that I didn't set. And I'm willing to learn and be told the things I'm doing are harmful, but I'm most concerned and swimming as hard and fast as I can at preserving democratic values and I hope that my fellow journalists would do that as well. And I think that ultimately, like, yes, the press should be adversarial to power. The people are trying to derive more power than the consolidation of power that is government even in the best of times. We are on the same side. Journalists are on the same side as citizens and the state inherently operates to increasingly consolidate those power structures and remove voices from the people. And, and, and in that model, we are adversarial. And so, I, I, I think that that is, is, like maybe reflective of the last question as well where we're as a public we think of

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the press as manipulating us. The, the, the overarching duty of journalism should be empowering the people to retain as much power from the state which inherently consolidates as much of it as possible.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Thank you. Let's thank Hannah and Parker for monitoring our –

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- Catchbox conversation. And before we thank Lauren for being here tonight, um, I wanted to make a point, Lauren is very interested in making sure that students, no matter what your perspectives are, what your opinions are, that you make sure to register to vote.

LAUREN DUCA: I mean that. Seriously, if you hate me, like, still vote. Still register and still vote. Yeah, I, I truly, truly – our democracy is healthier if more people are informed and active honestly, truly.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I'm really pleased that we have a student-led initiative on this campus: UD Make It Count. So, we're using the hashtag #udmakeitcount. Students in public policy, political science, communication across the campus have entered a competition. It's called the All In Challenge. And we are competing with over 300 other campuses in the country to engage the most students in registering to vote and engaging to vote using Turbo Vote -- which I think I have on the next slide – it's [udel.turbovote.org](http://udel.turbovote.org). And even if you're already registered to vote, if you sign up through [udel.turbovote.org](http://udel.turbovote.org) you will get notifications no matter what state you live in about when your upcoming elections are. And I'm really happy to and pleased to announce tonight for the first time that we at the University of Delaware; when I came here in 2007 we were rated one of the most politically apathetic campuses in the nation and as of Friday we

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were recognized as one of the top 58 out of almost 1500 campuses in terms of our voter registration and engagement efforts. So, thank you.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So, you can find out more about, we've got several events planned. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, on October 25<sup>th</sup> we've got more National Agenda events; [cbc.udel.edu/makeitcount](http://cbc.udel.edu/makeitcount), be looking for that. Our next speaker is a University of Delaware alum. He is an expert on cybersecurity, he was the president of McAfee. He has a lot of cool information about like what we can expect or be concerned about when it comes to voting, um, in the midterm elections, in the next elections. And finally, I wanted to mention that we have our Voices Matter Contest, audio essay contest. There are cash prizes for this contest. Sarah McBride was so nice to be our keynote speaker at, at this year's contest. It was a really wonderful experience. I hope you thought so too. And it's great to just hear students offer their perspective on what matters to them. And so, this year our theme is about free speech, hate speech, what its like to be able to talk about politics on a college campus. So, without further ado I'd like to give a big thank you to Lauren for being here.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: And I invite you to join us here at our next event, same time, same place, September 26<sup>th</sup> right here in Mitchell Hall. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

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