

JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

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“To see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently, is no small discipline”



Jefferson Scholars Foundation

JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

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The Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture was founded on the belief that the cross-pollination of various disciplines is a crucial factor in the advancement of scholarship. To facilitate and focus such exchange, this journal is dedicated to publishing articles, which address a specific topic of broader interest. Scholars from various fields are expected not to dispense with the robes of their specialty, but to allow their disciplinary expertise to make an impact beyond its customary bounds.

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Jefferson Scholars Foundation
112 Clarke Court
P.O. Box 400891
Charlottesville
VA 22904-4891

jeffersonjournaluva@gmail.com
www.jeffersonjournal.org

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Sarah O'Halloran

Editorial

Verlan Lewis

The Fallacy of Essential Ideological Constructs in American Political Science

Robert N. Spicer

When More Speech is Not Enough: An Argument for the Regulation of Political Deception Through a Campaign Ethics Council

Jacob Waldenmaier

Mystique of the Intellectual: Heroes of Ayn Rand's Dystopias and the Ron Paul Revolution

Valeria Guzmán-Verri

Form and Fact

Vsevolod Bashkuev

Silencing the Shame: Forgetting of the 1920s Syphilis Epidemic in Buryat-Mongolia as a Strategy of Post-Soviet Identity Construction

Brenda S. Gardenour Walter

Phantasmic Science: Medieval Theology, Victorian Spiritualism, and the Specific Rationality of Twenty-First Century Ghost Hunting

All papers are available to download from www.jeffersonjournal.org



Jefferson Scholars Foundation

Editorial

Sarah O'Halloran

McIntire Department of Music

University of Virginia

The theme of this issue of the *Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture* 'Fact, Fiction and Supposition' is shared with the *Jefferson Scholar's Foundation's 2012 Forum for Interdisciplinary Dialogue*. Versions of several of the papers collected here were presented at that event. The Jefferson Fellows chose this theme in the winter of 2011 in part because of our experience of media coverage of the U.S. presidential race which, for one reason or another, put ideas of fact, fiction, sense and nonsense at the front of our minds. In writing the call for papers we thought about what it means to live in a world in which we are bombarded by 'content' and we often struggle to make sense of it. We invited scholars to submit papers on topics including the ways facts are established, evaluated and disseminated; what truths can be found in fiction; and the dangers of supposition.

Our first article considers both academic culture and political culture. In his article on American political science, Verlan Lewis explains that the meanings of terms like "left" and "right," "liberal" and "conservative," "Democrat" and "Republican" are constructed, and continually changed, by politicians and their parties, political activists, and ordinary citizens. The evolution of political identities is widely recognized in fields like American intellectual history, but Lewis believes that American political science lags behind. He calls for the field to recognize the significance of the evolution of political identities and to analyze them with this in mind. Our second article 'When more Speech is not Enough' by Robert Spicer also considers American political culture. It discusses of the problem of lies in political campaigns, the difficulties facing those who wish to regulate it, and suggests that an ethics council could be the solution. Jacob Waldenmaier's paper 'The Mystique of the Intellectual' connects political culture with literary culture. His writing explores the attributes

of intellectual mystique found in both Ayn Rand's dystopian fiction and Ron Paul's political campaigns.

Our fourth paper takes us into different territory, that of print culture. In her paper 'Form and Fact' Valeria Guzmán-Verri draws our attention to an often-overlooked aspect of statistics: the form in which they are represented. She builds on the research of Mary Poovey, who proposed that in the nineteenth century statistics came to represent a key characteristic of the "modern fact", by analyzing the emergence of a "figure-ground" relationship in which a "ground" in the form of conventions of graphical display were created to support "figures" in the form of facts.

Vsevolod Bashkuev's article considers national culture. Writing about Siberia's Buryat ethnic group, Vsevolod Bashkuev considers the selective use of facts in creating a national identity. Using a largely forgotten period of endemic syphilis as his case study, he draws attention to the kinds of things that are deliberately omitted from a group's narrative to facilitate speedy nation building, and the methods of facilitating the forgetting of inconvenient facts.

Our issue concludes with a discussion of popular culture and its historical influences as Brenda S. Gardenour Walter examines the traces of both Medieval and Victorian ideas of the occult in paranormal investigation programs. She shows the patchwork of Medieval and Victorian theology, philosophy, spiritualism, and quasi-science that makes up the nature of the supernatural and the means of proving it as depicted in contemporary popular media.

As is evident from the contents, politics, particularly American politics, weighed heavily in the submissions we received. But as we assembled the issue, the idea of fact and fiction as it is found in different cultural spheres emerged as a thread of connection between the papers. As an interdisciplinary journal, we are pleased to present an issue that brings together discussions of political culture, literary and print cultures, national identity, and popular media.