What is the common good?
Aims of Education Address 2001—Danielle S. Allen

Welcome back to the classroom! Wondering what learning means in “these times”? Now’s the moment to read Danielle Allen’s Aims of Education Address to the incoming class at the University of Chicago, just after 9/11. One of #commongood core sources!

JHU Common Question
@hu_cq
Aug 31, 2020

Everywhere people were saying that they found themselves unable to think. Minds were paralyzed, action brought to a standstill. Our inability to articulate anything beyond that was staggering.

JHU Common Question
@hu_cq
Aug 31, 2020

Thucydides was a critic of democracy and it is tempting to believe that his whole narrative is leading to the argument that democracy, too, would crack, descending into stasis and not finding a way out... For an hour, in that Wisconsin classroom, we wandered off to Greece...

JHU Common Question
@hu_cq
Aug 31, 2020

“Tuesday was a beautiful, early fall day in Madison—crisp, cool, commanding blue skies... By 10:12 A.M. I know pretty much what has happened in New York and Washington to the people, the towers, and the Pentagon (or to the country’s money and its guns).”
"I went to college close to home because I had a band & didn’t want to break it up."

"I went to college because I wanted to be a human."

"In college I realized that I also had something to say."

"If pursuit of the common good disproportionately hurts minorities, you have to start the conversation over."

"When do you give and when do you take?"

"Both my son and I are fourth-degree black belts in taekwondo."

"Writing is never finished, it's just abandoned."
In their first days at Johns Hopkins, students start to develop connections and the ideas that can lead to world-changing discussions.

This year’s question, “What is the common good?,” is linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, political uprisings, Black Lives Matter, and each student’s journey.

“This question is involved in the kind of issues our students are wrestling with,” says [Rigoberto Hernandez]. “I want them to have an experience that will be transformative, even if they’re not here in person.”
Center for Talented Youth Speakers Series

“Curiosity, Conversation, and the Intellectual Life of the University”
Anne-Elizabeth Brodsky, Expository Writing

“Thinking and Seeing”
Steven Gross, Philosophy

“Juggling, Robots, and the Brain”
Noah Cowen, Mechanical Engineering
“We learned so much from a single poem.”
~Student

“It was a really honest discussion about racism in America.”
~Student

COMMON QUESTION CONVERSATIONS

43 % of first year students

83 conversations

64 faculty

“I enjoyed having the opportunity to reflect on why I disagreed with some of the arguments presented and share my thoughts with the group.”
~Student

“I was an international studies major in a group of engineers and scientists, and I welcomed the change.”
~Student
JACOB LAWRANCE
The Migration Series

34. The black press urged the people to leave the south.

Cheree: Defining the common good takes on the shape of the group that is tasked with defining it.

Tony: @Cheree Powerful statement!

Elizabeth: It’s about fear. Fear of vulnerability, of being rejected.... Our ideas equate to our understanding of our own self-worth – that anything short of perfection impacts our ability to listen, to hear, and to reach out and connect.

Phuong: I think we’ve fallen into the trap of a divide and conquer system, splitting and splitting until we have no allies.

Mike: How do we get outside of our own echo chambers? I think we split and split until we only have allies.

Judie: Thanks so much. It was wonderful to hear from all of my Alumni Council colleagues.
Happy September! Register now to stream Picture a Scientist, a film that follows 3 scientists along their journeys as women in the field, at your leisure from 9/8 - 9/10, then tune in for an incredible panel for a discussion on 9/10.

*JHU ID required*

docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAI...
If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him.

–John F. Kennedy

The world does not deliver meaning to you. You have to make it meaningful. . . . It’s a tough, unimaginably lonely and complicated way to be in the world. But that’s the deal: you have to live; you can’t live by slogans, dead ideas, clichés, or national flags.

–Zadie Smith

Watch here
Democracy, Inclusion, and the Path to Empowerment

The Woman’s Hour: A Conversation with Elaine Weiss
For this week’s Common Question (@jhu_cq) Conversation, seven first year @JohnsHopkins students and I will discuss the idea of the Common Good by way of Michael Sandel’s April NY Times Op-Ed, Are We All in This Together?

Opinion | Are We All in This Together? (Published 2020)
The pandemic has helpfully revealed how we value everyone’s economic and social roles.

1 Quote Tweet 10 Likes
Hopkins Faculty Address This Year’s Common Question

Watch here

Sharing your student’s education: Remote learning & beyond
Dr. Kelly Barry
Center for Student Success
The Intellectual Life of the University
Dr. Anne-Elizabeth Brodsky
Expository Writing Program

“The State from Below: Urban Citizenship in Policed Communities”
Vesla Weaver
Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Political Science & Sociology
Self-Portrait

Afaa Michael Weaver

I see myself in the shadows of a leaf compressed to the green blades growing to a point like the shards of miles of mirrors falling and cracking to perfect gardens.

I never inspect the withered assumption of my face’s petty dialogue in raindrops, the deceptive spreading of the words oozing from the skin to the edges of water etched on the ground by gravity and wishing.

Passing for the seriousness of my eye, platitudes of my white collar or the perfect posture of my lips, it skirts from the leaves of the plant hiding me and sits stoic like stone in my pupil, mute and unassuming, like Rashi.

To gather myself I will swim naked in the wind, bending my blind elbows in circles, stopping now to dance like the cherubic gold on the ark, and gather myself from the particles of this excitement another structure, one closely resembling the beginning.
On April 1 at 6PM visiting writer Ada Limón will appear in the Writing Seminars Reading Series.

Join Common Question for a reading before the reading.

Bring a favorite poem to share. Some will read, all will listen.

RSVP
#poetry #astronomy #forthecommongood
Dead Stars
Ada Limon

Out here, there’s a bowing even the trees are doing.
Winter’s icy hand at the back of all of us.
Black bark, slick yellow leaves, a kind of stillness that feels
so mute it’s almost in another year.

I am a hearth of spiders these days: a nest of trying.

We point out the stars that make Orion as we take out
the trash, the rolling containers a song of suburban thunder.

It’s almost romantic as we adjust the waxy blue
recycling bin until you say, Man, we should really learn
some new constellations.

And it’s true. We keep forgetting about Antlia, Centaurus,
Draco, Lacerta, Hydra, Lyra, Lynx.

But mostly we’re forgetting we’re dead stars too, my mouth is full
of dust and I wish to reclaim the rising—

to lean in the spotlight of streetlight with you, toward
what’s larger within us, toward how we were born.

Look, we are not unspectacular things.
We’ve come this far, survived this much. What
would happen if we decided to survive more? To love harder?

What if we stood up with our synapses and flesh and said, No.
No, to the rising tides.

Stood for the many mute mouths of the sea, of the land?

What would happen if we used our bodies to bargain
for the safety of others, for earth,
if we declared a clean night, if we stopped being terrified,

if we launched our demands into the sky, made ourselves so big
people could point to us with the arrows they make in their minds,

rolling their trash bins out, after all of this is over?
THE TRIPLE HELIX & COMMON QUESTION

present

Science Writing in the Public Sphere

a discussion with Ross Andersen,
Deputy Editor at The Atlantic

FEBRUARY 21 6PM EST

Register here
As we get closer to the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines, Eula Biss's 2014 essay gets evermore relevant. She charts an astute, troubling—and, yes, at times raucous—history of vaccination from medical, social, and personal perspectives.

harpers.org/archive/2013/0...

Wondering about those wonkily shaped districts you watched Steve Kornacki wave his hands around last week?

This week, listen to Moon Duchin on her journey from women's studies major to theoretical mathematician to electoral redistricting expert.

Moon Duchin on Fair Voting and Random Walks
Can geometry save democracy from gerrymandering? Mathematician Moon Duchin discusses the possibilities with host Steven Strogatz.
quantamagazine.org
Students in Aliza Watters’ first-year seminar, What is the Common Good?, examined sources ranging from the Bible to Korean cinema.

“First-Year Seminars are not just about developing foundational analytical and critical thinking skills, but also about meeting students wherever they are, building their confidence in the classroom, and creating the space for them to practice respectful dialogue and exchange.”
Listen here.
How do we define what is good for society as a whole?

What happens when collective benefit runs counter to individual benefit?

How are questions and assumptions about the common good built into academic inquiry, as well as our daily lives?
The New York Times Magazine

Safety Lessons From the Morgue

By Robert W. Stock
Oct 30, 2018
What is progress?

Where will you take the question?

Common Question

2021-2022