



ROBERT B. TALISSE

W. ALTON JONES PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
CHAIR OF THE PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

“OVERDOING DEMOCRACY: THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION”

IN THIS TALK, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER ROBERT B. TALISSE (VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY) DRAWS FROM HIS NEW BOOK, OVERDOING DEMOCRACY, IN PRESENTING RECENT FINDINGS REGARDING POLITICAL POLARIZATION. ALTHOUGH COMMON ANALYSES RECOMMEND THAT THE WAY TO ADDRESS POLARIZATION IS TO ENCOURAGE CITIZENS AND POLITICIANS TO “REACH ACROSS THE AISLE,” DATA SHOW THAT THIS STRATEGY FREQUENTLY BACKFIRES, ESCALATING RATHER THAN EASING PARTISAN HOSTILITY. OFFERING AN ALTERNATIVE PRESCRIPTION, TALISSE ARGUES THAT POLARIZATION IS A RESULT OF THE NEAR TOTAL INFILTRATION OF POLITICAL ALLEGIANCES AND IDENTITIES INTO OUR SOCIAL LIVES. TODAY, OUR EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES ARE INCREASINGLY FUSED WITH OUR POLITICAL PROFILES: COMMERCIAL SPACES, WORKPLACES, PROFESSIONS, SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, SPORTS TEAMS, AND EVEN PUBLIC PARKS NOW TEND TO EMBODY A PARTICULAR POLITICAL VALENCE. WHEN POLITICS IS PERMITTED TO SATURATE OUR SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS, WE IMPAIR THE CAPACITIES WE NEED IN ORDER TO ENACT DEMOCRACY WELL. IN A SLOGAN, WHEN WE OVERDO DEMOCRACY IN THIS WAY, WE UNDERMINE IT. THE SOLUTION IS TO BUILD VENUES AND ACTIVITIES WHERE PEOPLE CAN ENGAGE IN COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES TOGETHER IN WHICH THEIR POLITICAL IDENTITIES ARE NEITHER BOLSTERED NOR SUPPRESSED, BUT SIMPLY BESIDE THE POINT. IF WE WANT TO DO DEMOCRACY WELL, WE NEED TO PUT POLITICS IN ITS RIGHT PLACE.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION.
12PM ON NOVEMBER 15TH, 2019
SURFBOARD ROOM IN PAYSON LIBRARY