



“Pursuing Un-Polarization”

Senate Forum 2022

May 10, 2022, 4-6 pm

Convocation Hall, 120 Peter MacKinnon Building

Livestream (virtual) option is available

Senate is one of the University of Saskatchewan’s three governing bodies, committed to community outreach, and the host of an annual Forum on a relevant and timely topic.

This year’s Forum takes on the issue of *political polarization* – we may feel increasingly divided as a society and from our neighbours and friends; are our beliefs and opinions becoming more divergent and entrenched? How can we invite a more civil and open approach to dialogue on tough issues that we feel deeply about—how can we “un-polarize”? Join us for a fascinating discussion with two experts who bring different but complementary lenses to this timely topic.

Are Canadians on the prairies as polarized as popular wisdom suggests? In some ways no; in other ways, yes. Drawing on data from the Common Ground initiative, Jared Wesley describes how divisions among Albertans and Saskatchewanians have more to do with partisanship and identity than issues or ideology. Depolarizing the prairies will take more than coming to consensus on policy; it will mean rebuilding empathy, understanding, and a faith in democracy.

Rebuilding empathy and understanding requires that we focus on respect—what it means to different people, and the many ways we can convey respect. But, as Maureen Bourassa has observed in contexts ranging from poverty to nuclear power, when people and groups gather to find common solutions to contentious problems, disrespect stands firmly in the way. She explores how unpacking disrespect and re-establishing respect are critical in the pursuit of un-polarization.

Program

- 4:00 pm Welcome: Chancellor Grit McCreath, Chair of Senate
- 4:05 pm Introductions: Dr. Chelsea Willness, Chief Governance Officer, Forum Moderator
- 4:10 pm Presenter: Dr. Jared Wesley
- 4:25 pm Presenter: Dr. Maureen Bourassa
- 4:40 pm Discussion: questions from those in-person and from the Livestream chat will be facilitated by the moderator. Closing remarks will be provided by the moderator after discussion.