Life

DODD CENTER HOSTS EVENT ON COMMUNICATION FOR ECONOMIC RIGHTS



Dodd Center for Human Rights on Sept. 19, 2024. The center has hosted many talks and presentations from guest speakers.

FILE PHOTO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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We've all heard the mantra that society is more divided than ever. Many of us have likely experienced growing polarization in relationships with family and friends, as media landscapes grow increasingly algorithmic and people with different belief systems seem to shift further apart.

In this environment, it is harder than ever to foster productive conversations about human rights, but researchers of communication are hard at work figuring out what succeeds and what doesn't.

Jack J. Barry, a researcher at the Center for Public Interest Communications at the University of Florida, gave a talk titled "Communicating to Build Support for Economic Rights with the U.S. Public: Actionable Insights from Communications Research" on Monday, Sept. 21, at the University of Connecticut's Dodd Center for Human Rights.

As a researcher, Barry has conducted studies that bring a scientific approach to understanding polarization.

Barry said that some of the most important aspects of communicating across divides include keeping conversations locally relevant, using rhetorical tools, like analogies to make complex ideas understandable and having trusted messengers deliver ideas for a more receptive audience.

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>
> **JACK J. BARRY**

Barry's work has shown that this kind of communication relies on much more than simply transmitting facts.

"Facts aren't enough to change opinions," Barry said during his lecture. "Instead, you need stories, narratives."

Barry emphasized how impact is made in communication.

He added, "These are key drivers of change. Stories make up what we know, the way we organize the world."

For Barry, useful communication involves reciprocity, trust and the will to understand the values, worldview and identity of target audiences.

"To gain support for your idea, you have to crawl inside someone else's mind," Barry said.

Despite the overall academic tone of the lecture, many attendees found a very salient connection between their personal experiences and the topic at hand. During the lively Q&A session toward the end of the event, some attendees reflected on divisions within their personal lives.

Audience members shared information about ideological turmoil in their families, and at one point during the conversation, the late country icon Dolly Parton was used as an example of being a mutually loved figure.

At the end of every discussion, one theme kept returning: respect.

This includes listening to communities and meeting them where they're at. Also, avoiding pretentious jargon and alienating abstractions.

Shareen Hertel, a political science and human rights professor at UConn, and an organizer of the event, wrote in an email that stories matter.

"The ability to listen to and learn from each other, with plenty of mutual respect and intentionality is key to forging a shared commitment to change policy," Hertel wrote.

SUBOG Weekly Events:

September 27 – October 4

Homecoming Parade – 9.27 @ 1:30 PM along Hillside Road
Homecoming Carnival – 9.27 @ 2 PM at Founders Green
Homecoming Pageant – 9.28 @ 6 PM in the Student Union Theater
SUBOG x USG Voter Registration – 10.1 @ 11 AM at the SU Mall
Coffee House – 10.1 @ 4:30 PM at the Benton
Homecoming Lip Sync – 10.1 @ 7 PM in the Jorgensen Theater
Fan Fest Friday – 10.2 @ 1 PM at the SU Mall

Any questions? Email subog@uconn.edu and check out @subogatuconn on Instagram for updates on our events!



The Dodd Center for Human Rights at UConn on an overcast day. The establishment is home to myriad academic programs and historical documents promoting justice.

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