

“Don’t believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation.”
RICHARD BACH, JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL

David Brooks rues state of conservatism in first talk as new fellow

BY ARIA LYNN-SKOV AND LEO NYBERG
STAFF REPORTERS

David Brooks, a former New York Times columnist and Yale’s inaugural presidential senior fellow, spoke about his views on conservatism to a full auditorium on Tuesday afternoon and spoke with a small group of students after.

At the end of January, University President Maurie McInnis announced that Brooks would be the inaugural fellow as part of a new program aiming to boost intellectual diversity at Yale and bridge the gap between the University and the broader public. During his five years at Yale, Brooks will be hosted by the Jackson School of Global Affairs.

“The political project I sort of dedicated a large part of my life to — basically creating Alexander Hamilton-style moderate Republicans — that’s going great,” Brooks said sarcastically during his talk, eliciting laughs from the audience.

“And so I tell young people who believe the kind of conservatism I believe, it will come back. It’s a good thing to dedicate your life to keeping this intellectual tradition alive,” Brooks said. “But it won’t be in my lifetime.”

At the lecture, which was titled “Why, Despite Everything, I Still Call Myself a Conservative,” Brooks shared his intellectual influences and criticized the current Republican party. At the conversation after the event, ten students debated and asked questions about political philosophy, immigration and what it means to be a conservative.

To open the lecture, Jackson School Dean Jim Levinsohn outlined his and McInnis’ goals for the presidential senior fellowship.

“When I spoke with President McInnis about this project, we agreed that the goals would be five: First, to widen intellectual diversity; second, to nurture a culture of argument and discussion; third, to create a two-way highway connecting Yale and the Academy to the wider world; fourth, to showcase the resources of Yale to help people better understand their lives and their society; and last, to create and share knowledge widely,” he said. “There are few people better equipped to accomplish these goals than David Brooks.”



KIMBERLY ANGELES / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

In his first lecture as Yale’s inaugural presidential senior fellow, Brooks criticized the modern Republican party and discussed what influenced his own conservative beliefs.

Levinsohn wrote in an email to the News after the event that McInnis first brought up the idea of the fellowship last semester.

During the lecture, Brooks traced the history of philosophers whom he admired, including Edmund Burke, Alexander Hamilton and William Buckley Jr. ’50. Brooks said he is disillusioned by the current direction of the Republican party. Instead, he highlighted the principles of American conservatism he aligns with and the conservative thinkers he admires.

Brooks, a self-proclaimed conservative “never-Trumper,” said in an interview last month that he plans to help bring more diverse opinions to Yale’s campus. But after his lecture and small-group discussion, some students were unconvinced that Brooks provides the type of conservative perspective that is common in the Republican party.

“He doesn’t have a controversial opinion when

it comes to the big questions of our modern era,” Hekmat Aboukhater JGS ’27, a first-year student in the Jackson School, said in an interview after the events. “He’s on the mainstream when it comes to immigration, he’s on the mainstream when it comes to tariffs, he’s on the mainstream when it comes to voting against Trump.”

Aboukhater believes Brooks’ moderate ideology will not be an adequate spark for discourse and productive disagreement on campus.

“I disagree with Dean Levinsohn that he brings intellectual diversity to campus,” said Aboukhater.

“I thought David’s talk was fantastic. To me, anyway, it provided insight into how he came to the set of principles that guide him,” Levinsohn wrote after the lecture when asked if he believes Brooks will bring intellectual diversity to Yale.

“I can’t speak to whether others found that thought-provoking, but I did. I’m delighted he was so

open and honest. The goal here is to encourage conversations and I think today’s talk did just that,” Levinsohn added.

Rafael Gonzalez GRD ’27 said he came to the lecture and discussion because he heard Brooks was a great speaker but said Brooks was “cosplaying as a conservative.” Gonzalez said that Brooks doesn’t match the modern definition of conservative.

“He kind of has his own thing now,” Gonzalez said.

In a discussion with Aboukhater and Alejandro Dominguez GRD ’27 following Brooks’ conversation with students, Danielle Frankel ’26 said she was a fan of Brooks and was happy he was at Yale.

She disagreed with Aboukhater’s argument about Brooks’ potential ineffectiveness, stating that it is more important to find someone who can ask thoughtful questions that encourage healthy debate than to bring in a more controversial figure.

For Ethan Chiu ’26, Brooks’ take on conservatism was something new.

“I think that he presents a very different perspective on conservatism than I hear on the news, or that I read about,” he said.

After the lecture, older attendees, including faculty members and Yale staff, said Brooks was a hit.

Gregg Chase, who works at Yale Printing and Publishing Services, said he appreciated hearing Brooks speak.

“His approach to conservatism made me rethink everything, because as far as I was concerned I couldn’t be more left,” Chase said. He expressed his frustration with the “screaming extremes,” and appreciated Brooks’s commitment to political discourse.

Brooks’ next talk, scheduled for March 31, is entitled “How to be Ambitious Without Being a Jerk.”

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Heritage Foundation president criticizes liberalism at campus debate

BY SARAH RIVAS
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Kevin Roberts — the president of the Heritage Foundation, a prominent right-wing think tank — criticized American liberalism at a Yale Political Union debate this week.

Roberts spoke Tuesday evening in favor of the resolution “Liberalism Has Failed,” arguing that liberalism is “a movement of destruction” that has ripped “asunder the very fabric of

American life.”

“Liberalism hasn’t merely failed. It has failed spectacularly, even embarrassingly,” Roberts said.

The Heritage Foundation is known for the 2025 Presidential Transition Project, also called Project 2025, a series of policy recommendations that have been regarded as an inspiration for the second Trump administration. Roberts told the News that he estimated that Trump has implemented around 750 of Project 2025’s recommendations.

Roberts said that he condemned not “classical liberalism” but the “social and economic liberalism of the modern American left.” Liberalism, Roberts argued, has damaged “mediating institutions” such as the Boy Scouts of America, the military, the public school system and higher education.

“Think about colleges themselves,” he said. “With all due respect to you personally and to your very fine historic institution,

not excepting Yale University, modern liberals see institutions as vehicles of state power so they can impose their vision.”

When asked in an interview with the News why he chose to speak at Yale despite his critiques of higher education and particularly of Ivy League universities, Roberts said he still has hope for “institutional reform” to counteract “decades of institutionalized hostility” towards conservative students, maintaining that he still respects “the heck” out of the University.

Other charges Roberts leveled against liberalism were that it eroded the nuclear family, small businesses, local community, American power abroad and the dignity of the human person. Roberts also said that liberalism has “replaced religion with the state.”

As a consequence, Roberts argued that climate change has been a “religion of the left.” Responding to the audience’s laughter, “Yes, the mastermind of Project 2025 came here to speak the truth.”

In November 2025, Roberts faced backlash for defending Tucker Carlson after Carlson conducted an interview with the white nationalist political commentator Nick Fuentes. Roberts later apologized and explained that he was not fully aware of Fuentes’ views, since he does not “have time to consume a lot of news,” according to The New York Times.

When asked by the News how he would respond to critics who argue that he should have been aware of Fuentes’ record of antisemitism before defending Carlson’s interview, Roberts responded that his “default is always to defend free speech.” He added that at the Heritage Foundation, he has “actually led the

charge” to combat antisemitism.

“We need to be really careful about doing anything other than defending free speech. But what I learned is, if you’re going to do that, you’ve got to be really clear about the ideas that are terrible, in this case, particularly antisemitism, to say nothing of the terrible things he says about women,” Roberts said, referring to Fuentes.

After Roberts spoke at Tuesday’s debate, Riya Bhargava ’26 argued against the resolution, saying that Roberts misidentified liberalism as the “disease” that threatens society, rather than modern economic conditions and “unchecked markets.”

Raymond Perez LAW ’26 also defended liberalism, which he argued is essential as “a continuous project” that is “oriented towards equality under the law.”

Bryce Falkoff ’29, however, supported Robert’s resolution, arguing that liberalism lacks identity and a common goal. Falkoff suggested that “liberal movements should adopt civic nationalism” to combat their issue of “fragmentation.”

Roberts predicted that American voters would soon recognize and oppose the dangers of liberalism.

“The glorious thing about this debate is that when the 2030 census comes around, in the next presidential and congressional elections, Americans, whom you can always trust, will put an end to this nefarious modern version of American liberalism.”

The resolution proclaiming liberalism’s failure failed 27-37, with four abstentions.

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ABBY ASSOUAD / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

At a Yale Political Union Debate on Tuesday, Kevin Roberts — an architect of Project 2025 who recently faced blowback for defending Tucker Carlson’s interview with a white nationalist — offered arguments against the current American left.