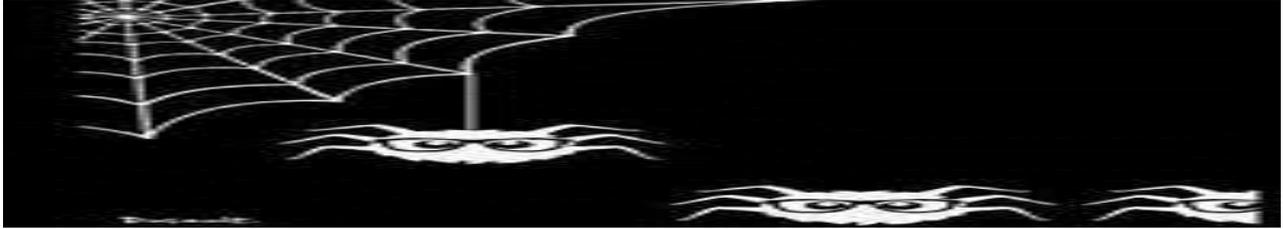


THE INTELLECTUAL DARK WEB (IDW)

Anne Ferber, Seminar Leader



Last year, Anne led a topical seminar concerning “Microaggressions and Free Speech,” in which we looked at the effects of identity politics on political polarization. This is most prominent on University campuses, especially those with a reputation for progressive, far left leanings. Action and reaction among disparate political groups have caused loss of tenured faculty (Evergreen College in Washington being the most prominent news story).

Bret Weinstein and his wife, Heather Heying, were tenured professors who were forced to leave their positions at Evergreen College when they were advised by Evergreen College officials that they could not guarantee their safety. Their “sin” was to question the efficacy of “A Day of Absence” for taking a stand against limiting free speech on campus. Since then a debate has ensued among free thinkers who call for reasonable debate and evidence based argument without resorting to demeaning name calling and discounting adversarial views. This group of polymaths and original thinkers, of diverse political leanings, have recorded videos of discussions, podcasts and seminars with the intention of raising the level of political and humanitarian discourse. Bret’s brother, Eric Weinstein, managing director of Thiel Capital came up with the name Intellectual Dark Web (IDW) as a half joke, indicating the “outsider” status of these participants. This identification, however, has caught on in millennial circles, who fill stadia, and other venues to hear debates by Sam Harris, Jordan Peterson, The Rubin Report, Joe Rogan, Ben Shapiro and others, each calling for tolerance of others’ opinions, as well as supportive evidence and rational presentation in debate. They believe that only through enlightened discussion can policy decisions and predictions of consequences be exposed.

The following articles provide a good example of the issues and beliefs of the IDW as well as a reference for further investigation of any of the names mentioned. (Note: Depending on your browser, you may have to cut-and-paste the address rather than simply clicking on the address.)

1. Article by Bari Weiss in the NYTimes: Meet Renegades of the ID W
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/opinion/intellectual-dark-web.html>
2. Rebel Wisdom-Andrew Sweeny also gives an explanation (including 15 min video of Erik Weinstein on how he came up with the name) of IDW with opinion and insight. The video of The Rubin Report with the two Weinstein brothers goes for over two hours, so be warned.
<https://medium.com/rebel-wisdom/the-intellectual-dark-webs-master-spinner-b41472b982e3>

3. Rebel Wisdom-David Fuller
<https://medium.com/rebel-wisdom/how-to-join-the-intellectual-dark-web-a-users-guide-b60ae0b12b86>
4. There is another article by Andrew Marantz which describes the free speech vs. Hate speech dilemma (and it really is an insurmountable problem) encouraged by the presidency of you know who) which has led to the formation of IDW.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/07/02/how-social-media-trolls-turned-uc-berkeley-into-a-free-speech-circus>
5. Anne would like to refer to ad hominem arguments as an indicator of the polarization we are facing today. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_hominem

Please be prepared to discuss your informed perspective of the IDW in the context of today's political arena. Think about some of these questions as a guide to the discussion.

- 1) Are the ideas presented as a realistic antidote to current political discussions?
- 2) How can smaller, local groups, add to the toleration of diverse opinions?
- 3) Who in the IDW do you find most illuminating?
- 4) Have these readings broadened or narrowed your outlook regarding public discourse around provocative issues?

As always, feel free to bring in other materials in support of the discussion. David and Aram