

by Gleaves
Whitney

Is Common Ground Possible?

A lot of people are skeptical about what the Hauenstein Center is trying to do.¹ Seriously now: common ground between conservatives and progressives?² In popular culture, conservatives regard progressives as arrogant, woolly-minded, and un-American; progressives see conservatives as stupid, mossbacked, and greedy. Does anyone seriously think that the Tea Party would make common cause with Occupy Wall Street, or MSNBC reconcile with FOX News?

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Common Ground between *Whom*?

The gulf between progressives and conservatives has been widening in the academy. This is unfortunate because academic rigor requires intellectual diversity. The April 5th *Chronicle of Higher Education* quotes from Neil Gross's new book, *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?*: "academe contains a larger proportion of people who describe themselves as liberal than just about any other major occupation."

Research shows that "The pattern is especially pronounced in the liberal arts, where political opinions are formed and refined. A recent survey of faculty members at California colleges and universities indicates that Republicans are a rare breed in the humanities and social sciences. In history departments, the ratio is roughly 11 Democrats for every one Republican. In sociology, the ratio is a staggering 44 to 1."³

With our common ground initiative – proudly hosted on a college campus – the Hauenstein Center is promoting intellectual diversity, academic rigor, civic engagement, and principled discourse. We are inviting progressives and conservatives to come together to search out meaningful ways to work together "in Order to form a more perfect Union."⁴

Conservatives and Progressives

Let's first define terms. The conservative temperament⁵ tends to find authority in revealed religion, tradition, the classics, and acquired wisdom of the species. Conservatives champion a culture of ordered freedom arising from the "little platoons" of civil society. As conservators, they prefer continuity over change because civilization has been so hard to attain and sustain. Canonical conservatives have included Edmund Burke, John Adams, Alexis de Tocqueville, T. S. Eliot, Russell Kirk, and Alasdair McIntyre.

The progressive temperament⁶ tends to rely on the authority of reason, science, and utility. Progressives (or "liberals"⁷) seek to expand personal liberty as well as the powers of government on behalf of people who have been historically and unjustly marginalized. They prefer change over continuity because there is still so much injustice to overcome. Prominent progressives have included Voltaire, Tom Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, W.E.B. Du Bois, John Dewey, Woodrow Wilson, and John Rawls.

Conservatives and progressives clash – clash spectacularly over the role of government; the scope of government; the nation's foreign policy; the meaning of liberty and equality; the extent of rights and responsibilities; and the history and destiny of America. And yet, despite ongoing clashes, progressives and conservatives have laid claim to some of the same intellectual history. Both camps have made ideas from John Locke, James Madison, John Stuart Mill, Abraham Lincoln, Walter Lippmann, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan part of their intellectual genealogy.

To show just how complex this progressive-conservative mashup can be, consider Thomas Jefferson. Many conservatives admire Jefferson because of his emphasis on small government, states' rights, a strict interpretation of the Constitution, and wariness toward money speculators. Many progressives count Jefferson among their heroes because of the same wariness toward concentrated finance and crony capitalism, plus the promise of the Declaration of Independence that all human beings should be equal in their opportunities, liberties, and pursuit of happiness. Both the conservative and progressive sides of Jefferson are essential to understanding the American story.

More recently, you could point to an influential author like Wendell Berry for another crossover between the two camps. Conservatives are drawn to his distrust of material progress and big government, while progressives are attracted to his pacifist and environmental sensibilities.

More surprising still is to discover that Russell Kirk admired much about Malcolm X,⁸ and that the hip cofounder of Whole Foods Market, John Mackey, wrote a paean to business and capitalism!⁹ What's going on here?

Simply: Despite the definitional chasm between the two camps, there is more common ground between conservatives and progressives than is usually recognized or willingly acknowledged. In the first place, both camps find sustenance in the liberal roots of the American founding; Burkean conservatives have sometimes struggled with those roots but have adopted much from them nevertheless.

Second, both camps are populated by individuals with a pragmatic streak, thus making common ground more likely.

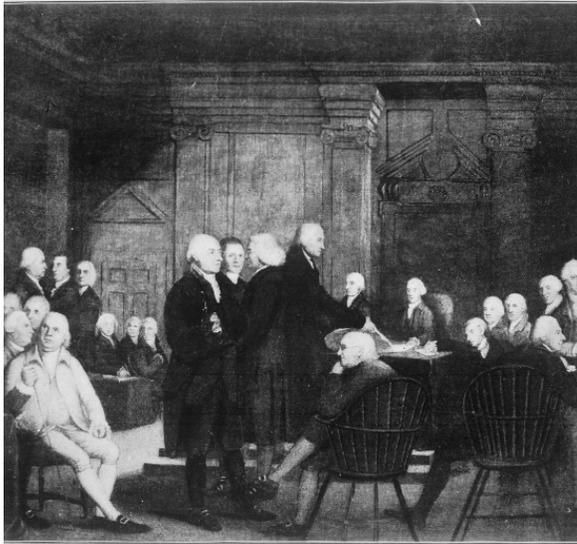
Third, each camp inadvertently tips its historic hat to the other camp. For example, virtually every principle of conservative thought was at one time radical; when Moses established monotheism and led an entire nation out of Egypt, it was a revolutionary departure in human history; now it's orthodoxy.

Progressives live with irony, too. Not only have they relied on the ethical imperatives of our Judeo-Christian heritage more than is usually acknowledged, but they also behave like conservatives to insure the continuity of their ideas and institutions. They've certainly developed their own patrimony and orthodoxies.¹⁰



Constitutional Convention (1787)

“Conservatives and progressives clash – clash spectacularly over the role of government; the scope of government; the nation’s foreign policy; the meaning of liberty and equality; the extent of rights and responsibilities; and the history and destiny of America.”



Second Continental Congress (1776)

“Even when progressives and conservatives don’t see eye-to-eye, even when they fail to persuade each other, they still must learn how to work together enough to keep the American experiment going. Messy though it is, politics beats war. It’s the art of the possible, it requires the virtue of prudence, and it demands skill at bringing about principled compromise.”

The Historic Reality

Self-governing citizens are going to have substantive disagreements over the common good. Even when progressives and conservatives don’t see eye-to-eye, even when they fail to persuade each other, they still must learn how to work together enough to keep the American experiment going. Messy though it is, politics beats war. It’s better than strikes and barricades. Politics is the art of the possible, it requires the virtue of prudence, and it demands skill at bringing about principled compromise. The War for Independence and Civil War show the terrible cost people paid when they exhausted or lost patience with the political option.

That is why the cultural, moral, educational, and institutional elements of a self-governing polity are exceedingly important to its success. Toward the end of his life, John Adams wrote to his son that “Public business must always be done by somebody. If those wise among us decline it, others will not. If those honest among us refuse it, others will not.” Any search for common ground involves the best from citizens and leaders – commitment to community, integrity, understanding of parliamentary procedure, appreciation of the rules of engagement in civil society, ability to listen and form friendships with those who think differently from you, willingness to engage in principled compromise when it can further the public good.

The search for common ground does *not* mean citizens have to surrender their principles. It *does* mean they have to share a *telos* with the opposition, some goal for the greater good. To find it, they must communicate with one another with intelligence and good will to discover the degree to which common ground exists.

Think back to the numerous instances in American history when conservatives and progressives clashed yet also appropriated each other’s ideas and worked together, sometimes in spite of themselves:

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- The Enlightenment is inseparable from the origins of liberalism and thus is a hallowed movement to progressives. But key elements of that movement would be appropriated by conservatives. One of the most influential thinkers of the English Enlightenment was John Locke. A founder of modern liberalism, Locke began to turn the world upside down with the argument that government derives its just powers not from the divine right of kings but from the consent of the governed. America's drive for a new kind of federal republic – a self-described *novus ordo seclorum* – confirmed much of the underlying Lockean paradigm, elements of which would be embraced by American conservatives despite its liberal pedigree.
 - The Scottish Enlightenment gave conservatives and libertarians alike the “private property order”¹¹ that underlies free-market economics. Especially the work of Adam Smith was pivotal, although ironically he worked for the government most of his life. Capitalism would prove to be one of the most revolutionary forces in world history. That an economic order of perpetual “creative destruction” should be accepted by conservatives is an ironic development. Certainly one founder of modern conservative thought, Russell Kirk, struggled with the tension but early on incorporated free-market thinking into his Burkean perspective.¹²
 - A strong whiff of the French Enlightenment blew its way into Tom Paine's revolutionary works. Despite initial opposition from Burkeans, many of the then-radical reforms Paine advocated (e.g., universal suffrage) are nowadays in place with bipartisan, progressive-conservative support.
 - Key documents generated during the American founding also reveal a conservative-progressive mix. Some of the mix stemmed from religious diversity. Most of the founders were traditionalist Trinitarian Christians (Charles Carroll). But others were Unitarians (John Adams), dissenting Quakers (John Dickinson), and skeptical Deists (Thomas Jefferson). At the Second Continental Congress, ordained ministers like John Witherspoon hashed it out with scientific skeptics like Benjamin Franklin. Conservatives and progressives were also sent to Philadelphia by the same state and even by the same family. Massachusetts deputed one of the more radical delegates at the Congress, Samuel Adams, to work alongside and compromise with a Burkean conservative, John Adams. Together they ratified the Declaration of Independence.
 - That Declaration itself seamlessly blended Enlightenment aspirations (in the Lockean assertion of natural rights in the first two paragraphs) with conservative claims (in some two-dozen indictments against the king for violating the ancient rights of Englishmen at the heart of the argument). In so doing, the document joined universal natural rights¹³ with English common law. Indeed, the latter ratified the former.
 - Common ground characterized the final product of the framers who met at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. To highlight the most extreme example: The Southern delegates who were determined to preserve property rights associated with the peculiar institution, slavery, worked alongside the progressives of the day – abolitionists – who were just as determined to stamp slavery out. Despite the friction between them, they successfully negotiated their deeply held convictions “in Order to form a more perfect Union.” Their statesmanship set the pattern in Americans' political DNA.
 - The Madisonian republic forthrightly acknowledges that numerous factions will oppose each other's interests. By design the Constitution disperses power, slows down deliberation, and frustrates lawmaking. In such an environment, common ground is often hard won through negotiation, horse-trading, and logrolling. James Madison was once asked, What are the great principles of the Constitution? He supposedly said that there were three: compromise, compromise, compromise.

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- One of our nation's most distinguished statesmen, Henry Clay, is justly celebrated as the "Great Compromiser." His genius for finding common ground between opposing factions made possible the Missouri Compromise and Compromise of 1850 that grappled with the expansion of slavery. Both compromises were critically important for delaying civil war, with the obvious hope of preventing it altogether.
 - After the Industrial Revolution began radically transforming communities and the material conditions of American life, the Social Gospel movement arose to meet the direst needs of people who were struggling and exploited. These home-grown progressives, fighting for the expanded application of justice, were inspired by an ancient religion that had animated conservatives. The Judeo-Christian roots of the Progressive Era are often glossed over today.
 - The same can be said of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the Civil Rights movement, who sought to extend justice to Americans historically excluded from full participation in American life. Nowadays some progressives are reluctant to acknowledge it, but "separation of church and state" was meaningless in the Civil Rights movement. Its leadership was evangelical to the core, inspiring Republicans and northern Democrats to work for justice and remove this blatant stain on our national character.
 - When World War II reached the U.S., conservative-leaning politicians like Arthur Vandenberg and Henry Stimson worked with progressive-leaning pols like Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman to craft a bipartisan foreign policy in a two-front war: "Politics," said Vandenberg, "stops at the water's edge." Such unity made it possible to win a two-front war in three years, nine months. (Compare that result with the outcome in Vietnam and Iraq, when U.S. war aims were less clearly defined or achievable.)
 - Much the same could be said after 9/11, when many conservatives and progressives were united in their determination to punish al-Qaeda for the savage attacks in New York City, northern Virginia, and skies over Pennsylvania. In the fall of 2001, there was near unanimous domestic and broad international support for launching the war to take down the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.
 - On a humorous note, we see how eagerly Democrats and Republicans in Congress drop their political differences to work together when *they* are inconvenienced by a law. The notorious sequestration of 2013 resulted in cuts that led to longer airport delays. Members of Congress were so upset by the inconvenience to *their* travel that they promptly came up with a bipartisan solution to redirect funding to the FAA!

As these examples show, America has ideologues but we are not an ideological nation. We are neither overwhelmingly conservative nor predominantly progressive. Where U.S. history actually happens is in the conversations, conflicts, and compromises between the two camps.

Every generation, when it enters the public square, must come to terms with this yin and yang of conservative restraint and progressive reform. As a result, our public debate is usually not "either/or" but "both/and" – validating continuity and change, faith and reason, history and theory, civil society and government, free markets and regulation, science and tradition. Since conservatives and progressives alike have shaped the debates, it is appropriate that they be given the opportunity not just to huddle among their own, but to share principled, civil discourse with each other in a high-toned setting.

Black and White?

The idea of high-toned discourse brings us to another point, and that is the way in which progressives and conservatives engage each other. Calvin College political scientist Kevin den Dulk lays out some basic ways American citizens react to a modern development that no previous people has ever experienced, and that is the unprecedented amount of information and disinformation flooding into the public arena. At one extreme are the absolutists and triumphalists. They deal with complexity by removing ambiguity and making issues black and white. Often their campaigns are full of Manichaeian demonization and “the politics of personal destruction.” When they do score a victory (usually presented as good over evil), these chest-thumpers telegraph in word or deed that they are uninterested in negotiation with the other side. Since they won, they are constitutionally entitled to a set number of years in which to impose their values, and if voters don’t like it, they can vote them out. This approach is obviously not conducive to the search for common ground.

At the other extreme are citizens who become paralyzed by the Niagara of contradictory messages that inundates them. Try as they might, they cannot resolve enough of the “gray,” the ambiguity, to decide what should be done. One result of the complexity is that citizens disengage and drop out. Another result is cynicism. If all messages are crafted by hired guns working for special interests, then popular sovereignty is a sham. Cynically abandoning the field, these citizens leave governing to others. The ideal of participatory democracy is eroded, and public affairs are left to a small cadre of “experts” who have been trained at elite universities and hold positions of authority.¹⁴ Paralysis and cynicism are also not conducive to the search for common ground.

In the middle are those who remain critically engaged, despite the Niagara of information and commentary. They refuse to retreat into absolutist, triumphalist, cynical, or disengaged camps. Hearing each side of any given debate critically but sympathetically, they understand that people come to the arena with rich experiences that might teach them something. Although the desires and passions that emerge in the arena are often at cross purposes, civility keeps opponents from becoming enemies – a distinction, by the way, that Grand Rapids’ own Gerald R. Ford scrupulously maintained. They also understand that the opposing camp, because it’s often more than 40 percent of the vote, cannot be excluded from the process. Den Dulk sums it all up, saying that at the root of civility is humility, and at the root of humility is ambiguity – the ambiguity of the human condition as expressed in the multitude of desires and passions in the political arena.



Pearl Harbor unified Congress

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John Stuart Mill related a similar idea in *On Liberty*: “That mankind are not infallible; that their truths, for the most part, are only half-truths; that unity of opinion, unless resulting from the fullest and freest comparison of opposite opinions, is not desirable, and diversity not an evil, but a good, until mankind are much more capable than at present of recognizing all sides of the truth....”¹⁵ Humility is indeed a good starting point in the search for common ground.

Through the ages there have been powerful examples of principled civility arising from the humility that comes from ambiguity. As Spinoza put it, “I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn human actions, but to understand them.” What a good rule for us all.

Closer to home, we have mentioned Gerald Ford’s civility. Another inspiration behind our Hauenstein Center project is the old Firing Line series, in which conservative William F. Buckley Jr. would host progressives like William Sloan Coffin, Eugene McCarthy, and Michael Kinsley. Still another inspiration is the conservative man of letters, Russell Kirk, whose debates with Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Norman Thomas, and other progressives were as civil as they were principled. The Hauenstein Center and our partners are carrying on this tradition of principled, civil discourse in the belief that American citizens benefit from such exchanges.¹⁶

Caveats

Cooperation, bipartisanship, compromise, common ground – they’re not infrequently ridiculed by the chattering class. To be sure, common ground is not a panacea for all of the nation’s problems. Can’t-we-all-just-get-along? Kumbaya. Peace-at-any-price -- these are not the starting point in the search for common ground.

Presidential historian Michael Beschloss observed that the problem with all the talk about bipartisanship nowadays is that it’s like motherhood, something that no one wants to be against, when, in fact, our founders accepted that there would be conflict – lots of it – around important issues. The stupid, vanilla middle is not what true bipartisanship and common ground are about – any more than the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution are about the stupid, vanilla middle.

Openness to finding common ground should not be mistaken for naïvete. Conservatives and progressives alike recognize that they don’t actually persuade each other to switch camps. Most moral, political, and intellectual formation occurs prior to the battles in the public arena – in the home, pew, classroom, workplace, and civil society. A self-governing polity is a crucible of conflict, and the Madisonian republic was designed to absorb that conflict. Because free speech is constitutionally protected, citizens *should* bring opposing beliefs and principles to the public arena for a thorough airing and robust debate. Thus, the prior condition to seeking common ground is not to raise up Pollyannas. Education for public service should focus on the formation of leaders who can clarify their own first principles; on practicing the virtue of courage so that those principles can be expressed forthrightly in the public arena; on learning the conversational styles and negotiation skills that help avoid the demonization of the opposition on the one hand, and the suffocation of social conformity on the other.

Openness to finding common ground should not blind us to how politics actually works. Voting results in winners and losers. What is more, governing is Machiavellian to the core – in both senses. Sometimes – rarely – it is a disinterested exercise of civic republicanism (the Machiavelli of *The Discourses*). More often it is a manipulative assertion of self-interest (the Machiavelli of *The Prince*). The political arena is where our passions intersect with policy, lobbying, and procedural techniques, to be sure, but also, potentially, with bribes, kickbacks, threats, party discipline, and emotional manipulation to get

what we want from others. Who can forget how LBJ administered the “Johnson treatment” to get his way? It’s a dirty business, the pursuit of power, which is why the proverbial comparison between politics and sausage-making is so fitting.

Openness to finding common ground will not require an overhaul of the Constitution or our political system. Republican and democratic institutions have worked amazingly well in the U.S. We are called to learn Civics 101 within those institutions to work out our differences. Likewise, we probably don’t need a third party to achieve common ground. Paraphrasing Kimberly Strassel, we could say that many significant divisions in American politics are not so much over ideology as they are over strategy. Numerous pols are “split between those who insist on making a point, and those who want to make some progress.”

It’s unfortunate that the latter are sometimes written off as “squishes.”¹⁷ Principled compromise leads to sustainable self-governance because it encourages respect for the opposition, regard for the process, and confidence that we are stronger as a people as a result of doing the hard work of finding a way to live together with all our differences. When it happens, we can cheer the vision of the founders, who knew that our audacious experiment in self-government requires each generation to learn that no side gets 100 percent of its way 100 percent of the time. On the contrary, principled compromise is one of the pillars that uphold the architecture of freedom.

Openness to finding common ground does not mean we must surrender our principles. It does not mean seeking the vanilla middle for its own sake. It may sound counterintuitive, but such techniques as negotiating, logrolling, horse-trading, politicking, bartering, and temporizing to fight another day actually preserve our principles; these are time-honored ways to get the job done. (Again, think back to America’s origins, to what our Founders did in Philadelphia in 1776 and 1787.) What erodes principle is not compromise but cowardice to speak up; not negotiating but eagerness to be too accommodating; not tactical retreat but triumphalist chest-thumping.

Openness to finding common ground in principle should not keep us from rejecting common ground in practice when compromise would hurt the national interest. There are times to stand firm. Conservatives and progressives alike know that turning a blind eye to injustice is wrong; that favoring one constituency over others makes a mockery of equality; that excessive tax transfers threaten property rights. Because free speech is constitutionally protected, we are obligated to expose harms to the national interest. Ohio Senator Robert Taft’s warning with regard to U.S. foreign policy remains timeless: If politics always stops at the water’s edge, you may not get enough deliberation, and that’s ultimately dangerous to the nation. What happened when our nation lurched deeper and deeper into Vietnam suggests that Taft had a point. In the early 1960s, there was too little debate over U.S. involvement in Indochina. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964)¹⁸ sailed through Congress too quickly. Had President Lyndon Johnson been forced to make a more thorough case before Congress and the American people, our country might have been spared much tumult and sorrow.

Hindsight is wisdom on the cheap. It’s always easier than real-time decision making. But many people today would argue that the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was an instance when more principled dissent was needed. The collective knowledge held by Republicans, Democrats, and leaders around the world was a model of “common ground” – yet it turned out to be so tragically wrong. Decision-makers should have called for more time, more fact-finding, and more debate. In retrospect – and with due consideration given to the knowledge decision-makers possessed at the time – the great majority of progressives and a growing number of conservatives are united in the belief that the Iraq War was the wrong war to prosecute in March 2003.

Summary

The goal of the Hauenstein Center's common ground initiative is not to turn Republicans into Democrats or Democrats into Republicans. It is not to provide mere entertainment by reducing politics to cable-TV-style shouting matches over the issue *de jour*. Rather, our purpose is to foster an environment where progressives and conservatives can share the same stage, hear each other out, and possibly discover common cause. The historic reality of America is that We the People have worked together enough to find common purpose around important issues at critical historical moments. When that happens, we all benefit as members of the same American community.

We could sum up by paraphrasing Winston Churchill: Seeking common ground is the worst way a self-governing people can conduct their public affairs – until all the other ways have been tried and found wanting.

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Endnotes

1. This text expands on the spoken introduction delivered on April 15, 2013. We are quick to recognize numerous organizations working on common ground -- among them, the National Issues Forums hosted by the Kettering Foundation, Dartmouth Centers Forum, Michigan Political Leadership Program at Michigan State University, and No Labels in Washington, DC. Amid the growing body of books and articles dedicated to common ground, see especially Olympia Snowe's 2013 book, *Fighting for Common Ground*.
2. For supporting our roundtable debate, the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies gratefully acknowledges funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Meijer Foundation, Grand Valley State University, Ralph Hauenstein, and others in our donor community. Several partners have joined with the Hauenstein Center to bring about this exciting exploration of what it means to be conservative and progressive, and whether – and how – the twain can meet: Annette Kirk, president of the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal; Michael DeWilde, director of GVSU's Center for Business Ethics; and Kevin den Dulk, director of the Paul Henry Institute at Calvin College. A shout out also to GVSU President Tom Haas, Provost Gayle Davis, and President Emeritus Don Lubbers, who has been an inspiration since we first began talking about the rising generation of conservatives and progressives redefining their traditions and, in the process, exploring the possibilities of common ground.
3. The erosion of diversity in the political-philosophical views of professors in the liberal arts occurs in a variety of institutions, left- and right-leaning. Wellesley College, Smith College, and Reed College lack political-philosophical diversity as much as Grove City College, Hillsdale College, and Bob Jones University do. See <http://chronicle.com/article/Why-RepublicansAcademics/138181/>
4. The conservative presenters were Barbara Elliott, Winston Elliott, and Ted McAllister. The progressive presenters were Michael DeWilde, Paul Murphy, and Noreen Myers. See their biographies at www.hauensteincenter.org, "Why Conservative? Why Progressive?"

5. Because “conservative” covers such a large spectrum of thought over the centuries, for rhetorical economy I am here limiting discussion to Burkean, traditionalist, cultural conservatives who champion modest or prudent changes *within* the existing order. This acceptance of prudent change differentiates conservatives from reactionaries who would attempt to throw off the existing order and turn back the clock to a mythical golden age, one that usually glorifies the nation’s cult.
6. Again, another distinction is critical. “Progressive” (or “liberal”) covers a huge span of thought in the modern age. It does not just refer to the Progressive Era in American history. My discussion identifies progressives who champion bold changes *within* the existing order. This willingness to work within the existing order differentiates progressives (and liberals) from radicals who would overthrow the existing regime, society, and/or culture to create an imagined or theoretical utopia out of whole cloth.
7. I generally avoid the term “liberal” as a synonym for “progressive” to avoid confusion. For many people who are somewhat left of center, “liberal” identifies a tradition that is generally progressive but not stridently or unrealistically so. The picture gets complicated when it is realized that modern-day conservatives look a lot like 19th-century classical liberals. Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan were considered conservatives during their political careers, but they could also be classified as classical liberals in the intellectual history of the West.
8. See Kirk’s essay on Malcolm X at <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/russell-kirk-on-malcolm-x/>.
9. John Mackey and Raj Sisodia, *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).
10. As I revise this introduction (May 1, 2013), the people of the Netherlands – arguably one of the most progressive nations on earth – are celebrating their monarchy and defending the institution against republican critiques!
11. A term coined by the Austrian economist and Grove City College professor, Hans Sennholz.
12. See, e.g., Russell Kirk, *The American Cause*, 3rd ed. edited with an Introduction and Afterword by Gleaves Whitney (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002).
13. See <http://www.nlnrac.org/earlymodern/locke> for a summary of the controversy over whether Locke followed Hobbes in developing natural rights theory or the more traditional natural law theory stemming from Aristotle, Cicero, and the Middle Ages.
14. For the classic treatment on the illusion of citizen participation, and the resulting apathy or cynicism, see Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, Introduction by Wilfred M. McClay (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993.)
15. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), Ch. 3, para. 1.
16. Specific training that prepares people who disagree with each other to engage in principled civil discourse is increasingly available. One of the leaders has been the Harvard Negotiation Project. See their approaches in, e.g., *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher, Bruce Patton, and William Ury; *Difficult Conversations*, by William Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen, and Roger Fisher; and *Getting Past No*, by William Ury. Such techniques have a long intellectual genealogy in the West; consider the Dominicans’ famous rule of thumb, expressed in the motto, “Never deny, seldom affirm, always distinguish.”
17. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324266904578459162301492522.html>
18. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=98>

What is the **Common Ground Initiative** at the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies?

- The Common Ground Initiative is **unique in higher education** today. No other public university in the U.S. is offering a balanced, comprehensive exploration (and redefinition) of what it means to be conservative and what it means to be progressive in the 21st century. Our talks, roundtables, and debates investigate the first principles of these two traditions, and explore the possible common ground that they might share – historically, culturally, politically.
- Academic rigor requires intellectual diversity. The Common Ground Initiative brings together progressives and conservatives in an **open, respectful, intellectually rigorous** forum to confront the challenges Americans face.
- Our goal is not to turn Democrats into Republicans or Republicans into Democrats. **Our goal is to prepare a new generation of leaders to deal effectively with diverse ideas and cultures.** Adapting the tools developed by the Harvard Negotiation Project and others, we provide workshops that equip emergent leaders with best practices based on rigorous scholarship, sound psychology, and cultural competence.
- On the conservative side, we work with the **Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal**. On the progressive side, we work with the **Progressive Women’s Alliance, Center for Inquiry**, and other organizations. We also partner with the President Gerald R. Ford Foundation, Ford Presidential Library and Museum, World Affairs Council, Paul Henry Institute, National Park Service, and other civic and educational entities.
- Our pilot Common Ground programs have been funded by the **National Endowment for the Humanities**, Meijer Foundation, Ralph W. Hauenstein, and other donors.
- **Our debates feature the all-stars** -- Christopher Hitchens vs. Peter Hitchens (referenced on *60 Minutes*), Arianna Huffington vs. Victor Davis Hanson, Katrina vanden Heuvel vs. Rich Lowry, Susan Jacoby vs. Dinesh D’Souza, and others. We have hosted H. W. Brands, Richard Norton Smith, Kiron Skinner, Ron Chernow, Robert Caro, Amity Shlaes, Robert Dallek, and other historians and leadership writers.
- Our Common Ground Initiative reinforces the Hauenstein Center’s mission: to raise up a new generation of men and women committed to the **ethical, effective leadership and public service that Ralph W. Hauenstein has exemplified throughout his life.**

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