Opening of the American Mind? 
Public Thinking in 21st-Century America

April 3, 10, 17 & 24, 2023
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. @ The Fox Center

Moderated by Ben Jeffery
2022-2023 Fox Center Two-Year Postdoctoral Fellow
(Ph.D., Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago)

What is the relationship between intellectual life and the public sphere? How might we think about the connection—or lack thereof—between the work of the academic humanities and the larger social world? What is it for a society to have a “healthy” or “sick” culture of thought? In this seminar, we will approach these questions as they apply to the contemporary United States, through looking at the work of The Point, a literary and philosophical magazine founded in Chicago in 2009.

The Point was established with the purpose of providing a venue for sophisticated and yet accessible reflections on the role of ideas in everyday life, with a natural focus on the U.S. in the period since President Obama’s first term. In early 2020, the University of Chicago Press published a collection of essays from the magazine’s first decade: The Opening of the American Mind: Ten Years of The Point. The title is a reference to Allan Bloom’s The Closing of the American Mind (1987)—another meditation on the place of intellectual life in the U.S., at a very different moment in the country’s recent history. Through reading a selection of the work included in The Opening of the American Mind, this seminar will consider some of the most significant social and cultural changes of the last decade in America (e.g. Ferguson and its aftermath, Trump’s election, the emergence of democratic socialism and the alt-right) as well as the broader question of what type of public good intellectual life might be thought to supply.

This seminar will meet in-person at the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University, 1635 N. Decatur Rd., Atlanta, GA, from 6:00-7:30 p.m. on the following Monday evenings during the 2023 spring semester: April 3, April 10, April 17 and April 24. For further information and to reserve a spot on a “first come basis,” email the Fox Center at foxcenter@emory.edu. It is expected that participants attend all four sessions. Everyone from the Atlanta community is welcome and invited to join us for this free seminar.