

POL S 334 A - Tom Nichols, The Death of Expertise

[00:00:06.38] - For tonight's event I'm happy to be welcoming Tom Nichols to the store to discuss his new book, *The Death Of Expertise-- The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters*.

[00:00:17.70] In this information age it's more easy than ever to get answers you're seeking to questions about your health, or consumer reviews, or product information. But how do you know where that information is coming from? In his impassioned cautionary tale about the perils of unvetted information, Tom argues that credentials are still important and that giving experts their due is not undemocratic.

[00:00:43.44] Ian Bremmer, president and founder of Eurasia Group, said of the book, "We live in a post-fact age, one that's dangerous for a whole host of reasons. Here's a book that not only acknowledges this reality but takes it head-on. Persuasive and well-written, *The Death of Expertise* is exactly the book needed for our times.

[00:01:02.48] A professor of national security affairs at the US Naval War College, and an adjunct professor at the Harvard Extension School, and a former aide to the US Senate, Tom is the author of several other works on foreign policy and international security affairs including *The Sacred Cause, No Use-- Nuclear Weapons and US National Security*; *Eve of Destruction-- The Coming Age of Preventative War*; and *The Russian Presidency*.

[00:01:31.89] And his real credential for this evening is that he is a five time undefeated Jeopardy champion and one of the all time top players of the game. He was invited back to play in 2005 for the ultimate tournament of champions. So please help me in welcoming Tom Nichols to Politics and Prose.

[00:01:52.77] [APPLAUSE]

[00:01:59.20] Hi. Wow. Thank you. Thank you all for being here and for coming out tonight. And thanks.

[00:02:07.04] I know there's some folks here from the Twittersphere. And there's also some old friends that I'm very happy to see and very touched that are here as well, as well as my wife who is here. And I'll just start by saying if there is any warmth or humanity in this book at all, it's because of her, not me.

[00:02:28.50] So a couple of things, some housekeeping first of all. This is a company town so you all know what I'm about to say next. Nothing I say reflects the view of the United States government, or the Navy, or Harvard, or Connecticut Avenue, or my hometown of Massachusetts, or my cat, or anybody but me.

[00:02:46.52] Let me start first with why I wrote the book, What the book is in a nutshell about, and then move on to your questions as quickly as we can. First, why would I do this? Why would

I write a book with such an unbelievably obnoxious title, such a pretentious subtitle, and this in-your-face opening thesis that's guaranteed to just make people mad at you right off the bat?

[00:03:13.43] I did it because I didn't have much choice. But I can tell you that initially I did not start out on this whole subject to write a book. It started because I was just angry one evening. I sat down at a blog I used to run and as therapy I blasted off a couple of thousand words about why people keep arguing with experts.

[00:03:36.50] And somebody noticed that. The editor at The Federalist noticed that and said-- they had just started and they said could we have that piece? And I said sure. Who'd want to read this old man yelling at clouds thing that I wrote?

[00:03:51.65] And within about a year or so the piece had been read around the world by over a million people. And I realized that I may have struck a nerve out there in the world. And so at that point Oxford actually suggested to me that I should turn this into a book-length project. And that's how the book was born.

[00:04:11.03] It didn't come out of the election. It didn't come out of anything recent that had happened. This is something that had been brewing in my head for quite a while.

[00:04:19.46] Now why is that? What is the problem that I think I identified here? It's not that people distrust pointy heads, and intellectuals, and eggheads. That's part of American culture.

[00:04:32.30] And actually let me say that I actually think it's a very positive part of American culture. Tocqueville noticed it. Other scholars over the centuries, the decades and the centuries, that have written about American culture have noticed that Americans really are skeptical, self-reliant people who rely on their common sense, which is, I think, part of what built our greatness as a country.

[00:04:56.42] That's not the kind of thing I'm talking about. We've gone from a healthy skepticism about experts to something different. We've gone to a kind of epidemic of narcissism where we all think we can replace experts. We all think that what experts do can't be that hard and we could probably do it better ourselves.

[00:05:18.18] And we've seen it not just in the United States but we saw in the Brexit debate where the Brexiteers were saying, experts, who needs experts? We had a campaign where the winner and the current president of the United States said who needs experts. What if I didn't have them? Would that be so bad? Well, I guess we're going to find out in real time, right now.

[00:05:43.01] What was different to me was not that people were doing the kind of thing they were doing to me, say, 30 years ago when I first came here to Washington and I was working on-- shows you how long ago was it was. I was working on Soviet issues, which apparently I'll be working on again.

[00:05:58.04] [LAUGHTER]

[00:06:01.40] But understandably during the Cold War people would say, listen, I want to talk to you about this because I don't want you lunatics to blow us all up. I'm scared. Here's what I think we should do. I want to be involved in this. I understood that.

[00:06:14.51] What's different now is that when I tell people, well, I'm a specialist on Russia, the reaction I get is this-- you're a Russia expert? Let me tell you about Russia.

[00:06:23.65] [LAUGHTER]

[00:06:26.97] And I've found that no matter what the subject I've watched this happen to other experts. And as I started writing and I did this first version of the blog, and then the article, and so on, people were coming to me with these kinds of stories. You're a lawyer? Let me explain the Constitution to you. Oh you're a doctor? Here are some things you ought to know about germs. And it was just going on, and on, and on.

[00:06:50.60] And I started to wonder what had happened that had turned us all into this. And my touchstone early in the book, I mention the immortal character from Cheers, Cliff Clavin, the mailman, if you're old enough to remember that series. Cheers was about a bar in Boston. My youngest daughter won't remember any of this, but Cheers was about a bar in Boston.

[00:07:12.39] And every bar had a know-it-all. There was always a guy at the end of a bar who was always sitting there and saying, well, it's a known fact. And everything was premised with that-- studies have shown, it's a known fact. OK, every bar had that guy.

[00:07:25.49] What strikes me now is we're all that guy. We've all turned into this. We're all constantly lecturing each other on each other's area of expertise. You're an electrician? I have some thoughts on that. You're an airline pilot. How hard can that be?

[00:07:44.63] And I started to worry about it because it's gone from a skepticism about knowledge and experts to an aggressive rejection of expertise. And if that happens, not only is our welfare endangered as people-- that means that people don't get their vaccinations; it means that people don't listen to their lawyers and they end up in jail; it means people end up broke; unhappy, whatever it is-- it also means that the foundations of our democracy as a republic are in danger.

[00:08:18.56] Because we are not a democracy. We are a republic. And we rely on delegating decisions to other people who we assume are going to have some better knowledge of these issues than we do. And those elected representatives have to rely on experts.

[00:08:37.55] I was an aide to a US senator. And in other towns I have to explain what a US senator does all day. I'm thinking this crowd's pretty clear on the job of a senator. But in the morning it's childcare, in the afternoon it's nuclear weapons, and by dinner it's urban policy.

[00:08:54.41] And there have to be people to get those guys-- now congressman, other decision-makers, they can become experts in their field. My late boss was actually really probably his own best expert on elderly issues after years, and years, of years of working on those issues. But by

and large, our republic functions on delegated decisions to others who rely on expertise to help make the best decisions we can make. If we reject that, then we just turn into a kind of an Athenian marketplace where we all have a plebiscite every day and we can change our mind at any given moment.

[00:09:30.95] I'll tell you that when it comes to Brexit, for example, as somebody who is primarily a conservative by nature-- and I mean a small c conservative as well in that I don't like sudden change, I don't like large muscle movements in a republic without a lot of consideration-- I thought it was really-- although I didn't like the European Union when it was born because by my nature I also didn't like big transnational bureaucracies that were going to tell people what to do. On the other hand, I didn't think that the way that you got out of that was to put this to make a decision based on 51% of whoever showed up that day.

[00:10:08.36] And I think it's important to remember that our system of government is built specifically to prevent that. It was designed never to allow that to happen. And so when people say, well, we can't listen the experts. We just have to do this ourselves and do this en masse with the people speaking as a whole, well, that is fundamentally to my mind an un-American approach to the way we're governed. Because our system of government was designed not to do things that way.

[00:10:33.41] Well, a couple of things about this. First of all, is it new? I think it is. And when I say "new," I guess I will speak with the tired voice of middle age and I say new in the sense of 25 years or so. But I think it's gotten worse. I think that this streak has always been there.

[00:10:56.09] I open the book with a quote by Isaac Asimov who talks about the cult of ignorance in American society. Well, Asimov said that in 1980.

[00:11:05.13] But what's different I think is this replacement of experts. It's not just people arguing with their doctors. It's people saying I've been on Google, I'm a doctor too or I'm as smart as a doctor.

[00:11:18.06] There are a lot of causes for this. And I identify three in the book that I wanted to talk about in particular-- the role of higher education, which is supposed to at least cure some of this and is actually making it worse; the role of the media, which I think has-- well, I'll talk about that in a moment but that the media has essentially become an entertainment complex rather than information vehicle; and finally, the thing that everybody thinks is responsible for this, the internet.

[00:11:49.01] But I think it's very, very important to note I don't blame the internet for the situation we live in now. I think the internet put all of this on steroids. I think it made it a lot worse. Because, again, we can all sit at that bar and say, well, I happen to know right here-- the galactic answer machine that's almost always wrong because you've asked it the wrong question.

[00:12:14.60] But this predates the accessibility of the internet. This notion of students lecturing back to their teachers, for example-- one of my favorite things really. You know, professor, there's a few things you should think about. Oh, well, please, tell me. That predates the internet.

[00:12:33.32] So what's going on in higher education? One of the arguments I make is that higher education in the competition for the endless supply of loan dollars that students will take out forever is becoming very client-oriented. It's client servicing. Come to us. We'll give you a great college experience. It's almost like it's a multi-year vacation package. The dorms are great, the pizza is excellent, and no one will ever be mean to you.

[00:13:04.04] College is a place where people need to be mean to you. Dan Drezner-- you put in a plug and I think come and see Dan. Because he's a very funny guy. His book is really important and it's interesting.

[00:13:18.50] Dan makes a great point in his book where he says college is where you go to say a lot of stupid things and have other people tell you how stupid they are. It's that time in your life where you're supposed to do that.

[00:13:29.66] But now this notion of telling students that you know that the teachers are there for a reason, that the institution exists to get them from a place they're not to a place they ought to be, that is almost alien. They look at you like.

[00:13:45.70] And let me just add something here. I've had a very successful career as a teacher, so this is not axe grinding, OK. It's not like, these kids, they always give me a bad recommendation. I've had a wonderful career teaching and that's still going on.

[00:13:59.24] But there is definitely a change that began even a few decades ago as I quote somebody who I can't name, of course, at a major university who said to me, I don't feel like a professor, I feel like a clerk in an expensive boutique. That's a real problem. Because part of education is being able to tell the students they're wrong.

[00:14:21.23] I talk in the book about a beloved figure in my education. I did my doctorate here at Georgetown. And I had a Jesuit professor named Jim [? Schall. ?] He used to begin class. Every year he'd hand out an essay called What a Student Owes a Teacher. Imagine doing that today.

[00:14:39.44] And the essay says things like students owe teachers-- they owe to their teachers-- docility, humility, trust. Kids would be lighting that on fire on their desks. And I read it and I thought, wow, this was a little bit off-putting. But I struggled through the class and I argued political philosophy with Father [? Schall. ?]

[00:15:02.00] And my reward for it was when I got to the end of the class, I got an A, and at Christmas I walked up to, again, this imposing Jesuit professor and I said-- thinking that I was now a made man because I got an A in this class-- and I walked up to him and I said, what do you say, father? Merry Christmas, peace on Earth, goodwill towards men? And he fixed me with a stare and he looked over his glasses. He said, what I say to you, Mr. Nichols, is repent.

[00:15:24.55] [LAUGHTER]

[00:15:32.62] I think there should be more times of telling students to repent instead of telling them how awesome they are every day. And that's unfortunately not happening because, again, there is this notion that everybody should go to college. So I argue there are too many students, too many colleges, too many professors-- yes, too many professors, too many PhDs out there-- and that's part of the problem.

[00:15:54.07] The media has segmented into echo chambers. Journalism is no longer-- and I realize I'm violating the prime directive. I am not a journalist but I'm talking about journalism. But I talked with journalists, interviewed journalists, read studies, did the best research I could.

[00:16:12.07] And I think what's interesting is the news no longer tells you what you need to know, it asks you what you want to hear. And it's all segmented by your particular taste. And this is because there's so much bandwidth, there's so much time available 24/7, that it has to get filled. And when they run out of news it turns into gladiator games. It turns into roller ball.

[00:16:34.93] And I think that's a serious problem, because that's entertainment. And people have a bottomless appetite for this and then somehow think they've been informed.

[00:16:43.63] Now I grant you that an evening news broadcast in 1965 was pretty much the curated result of a bunch of old, rich guys in New York deciding what you needed to know. You know what? OK. Because if what they decided you needed to know meant that a nuclear arms treaty was more important than which Kardashian is sleeping with whom, well then that's probably a trade-off I would take. I think there's something in-between though that we have to demand better of.

[00:17:17.66] And I think journalists actually want to deliver. I think journalists actually want to be doing harder stories rather than 24 things your cat thinks is awesome. But, unfortunately, we're getting the news we want. We're getting exactly what we asked for.

[00:17:38.56] And finally, the internet. Now as many of you in here know, I am an active participant in social media. I love the internet. I like being on the internet. I enjoy it. I've met many wonderful people, many not so wonderful people. But I think it's a really important tool and a really enjoyable place to be. It's like having every library in the world at your fingertips.

[00:18:04.54] Unfortunately, it's also having every flaming dumpster of nonsense at your fingertips as well. In the book I talk about something called Sturgeon's law. For those of you that are avid old school science fiction readers, Theodore Sturgeon was one of the great science fiction writers of the age in the 1950s and 1960s.

[00:18:26.05] And he took it very personally that literary critics thought science fiction wasn't very good, that it was kind of a ghetto of literature. And these literary critics said, well, science fiction is crap. And Sturgeon said, listen. 90% of everything is crap. And that became known as Sturgeon's law.

[00:18:50.48] Well, if you think about applying this to the internet, there are a billion websites on the internet. Even if 10% of them are good, that's 100 million, that's great. It also means

there's 900 awful dumpsters of nonsense out there. And most people, I'm sorry to say, simply don't have the tools or the intellectual preparation to weed through what's good or what's bad.

[00:19:14.11] I was on a panel a couple of nights ago in Charlottesville where a reporter from The Washington Post said most of our-- I should say I think he said most, but he said many of our stories are people who bounce and end up on our page from Facebook. And he said they don't even know they've ended up at The Washington Post. And we're really happy that Facebook leads to that.

[00:19:33.85] But as I pointed out, the problem is that-- the buried lede in there is that-- they don't know where they've ended up. It's great if they end up at The Washington Post. It's not so great if they end up at InfoWars or RT. And the problem is they don't know the difference. And that is really worrisome.

[00:19:53.42] So at the end of all of this I've been asked many times what's the case for optimism? I don't have one. Good night.

[00:20:02.08] [LAUGHTER]

[00:20:04.46] I think that this information bubble is going to burst at some point because we can't live this way. We can't live believing that so many things that are true turn out to be false.

[00:20:19.86] I want to say a word about fake news because it's a term that always comes up. Fake news to me as a Russia guy has a very specific meaning. It means news that was created out of whole cloth intentionally to be a lie and then planted out there. You younger kids know this expression-- astroturfing. It's put out there like fake grass to look real when in fact it's not.

[00:20:46.47] Fake news, no matter what the President of the United States may say, is not stuff you don't like. And people use it that way now. Tom, you're putting on a few pounds-- fake news. Shouldn't have a cheeseburger for breakfast-- fake news, lying doctors.

[00:21:03.75] But that's unfortunately how we use it now. And we really have to stop doing that. As I said, we cannot go on this way.

[00:21:09.74] Now I wrote the book hopefully to spark this kind of controversy and discussion. What I'm concerned about is the way that all this ends is the way most of these periods-- these populist anti-knowledge periods-- end, which is in some kind of disaster that shocks people back to their senses. Nothing will put an end to the anti-vaccine nonsense, for example, faster than a pandemic. And if you really want to see that stuff go away and parents fashionably talking about their belief exceptions and why they think magnesium causes abnormal tallness or all of the other theories that go along with this, a pandemic usually puts a stop to that kind of stuff pretty fast. And I don't want to see that happen. I don't want it to be at that point.

[00:21:58.89] What put an end to the isolationist populism of the 1930s? World War II. After World War II, people turned to the experts and said, hey, maybe we can construct a better international system out of this. And we did.

[00:22:13.43] There was a piece some of you may have seen-- it was piece in USA Today that was critical of the argument. And the subtitle was over the past 50 years what have experts really done for us? To which I answer, well, constructed an incredibly technological, highly advanced civilization of peace, and trade, and global prosperity that, whatever the problems with it, is still actually a pretty good system and certainly better than having to keep numbering our world wars.

[00:22:51.31] So I think in the end my recommendation doesn't boil down to much more than obviously I put most of this on the shoulders of citizens that you have to educate yourselves and you have to make better choices at the ballot box. You just do. And I don't mean that you have to make choices I agree with. You just have to be more informed about what you're actually doing in the ballot booth, in the voting booth.

[00:23:15.33] But also experts have to start shouting back at the crowd more. And it doesn't come naturally to us. Most experts-- I may be an extrovert, but most experts aren't and they don't have the appetite for wading into a crowd and saying, you're wrong, and you're wrong, and you're wrong, come at me, bro. It's uncomfortable. Again, I enjoy public speaking but even I find it uncomfortable. But it's going to have to be done.

[00:23:44.70] In the book, I declare war on the phrase-- I hate this phrase so much-- "let's agree to disagree." I hate that expression. Let's agree to disagree. No, let's agree you're wrong.

[00:23:58.37] [LAUGHTER]

[00:24:02.34] And I think that experts are just going to have to plant that flag in the ground a little more firmly and stand by that.

[00:24:09.66] But let me just anticipate what I know will be probably the first question, which is how about the fact that experts get things wrong, that we're arrogant, that we lack empathy. It's been said that experts are arrogant and lack empathy. Well, I don't care.

[00:24:25.29] [LAUGHTER]

[00:24:27.69] I do. I do care. And I think it's a legitimate charge.

[00:24:32.19] Experts deal in the world of facts. They deal in the world of abstractions. They deal with models. They deal with data.

[00:24:37.98] And they do forget. There's no doubt about it. They do forget that they're dealing with human beings. And that, I think, is a tendency that has always been there.

[00:24:49.26] My last book was on nuclear weapons. And I had to keep catching my breath at the way nuclear strategists throughout the 1950s and the 1960s-- even in the 1980s. And I can tell you in one of my own jobs where we were having a meeting about something and someone pointed to a map and said, well, in that scenario only 40 million people die. It was the first time I'd ever heard somebody put the words "only" in front of "40 million dead."

[00:25:13.81] So that is part of our problem. And I think we do make mistakes and we have to be more transparent about owning those mistakes.

[00:25:20.98] But part of that is speaking back to the crowd. Because increasingly as part of this war on expertise the public seizes on our mistakes. They say, aha, you didn't predict Donald Trump winning so you don't know anything about politics. You didn't predict the fall of the Soviet Union so you didn't know anything about Russia. You got it wrong about eggs and therefore you doctors don't know anything about medicine.

[00:25:44.80] This has gotten to ridiculous-- this game of gotcha about expertise has reached ridiculous proportions because people are looking for any loophole that lets them out of having to listen to experts. And I think that's very dangerous.

[00:25:58.24] But I think that experts have played into that by withdrawing from the public sphere and saying, you know what, it's too difficult to talk to all of you so we're just going to talk to each other in that weird jargon and specialized language that we experts used and just stop talking to the public.

[00:26:13.18] So I chide my colleagues about this regularly. I don't think there's anything wrong with being a public intellectual. I think experts need to get out there and take our lumps but also to stand by the things we think are really important.

[00:26:27.43] Let me stop there. And there's a full house so let me take your questions rather than keep talking at you.

[00:26:34.88] [APPLAUSE]

[00:26:35.83] Thanks.

[00:26:36.78] [APPLAUSE]

[00:26:42.51] - Thank you for coming and thank you for re-tweeting me as I came up the hill tonight.

[00:26:46.59] - Oh, Randall, nice to see you.

[00:26:49.21] - Nice to see you too. First off, thank you for mentioning fake news, mentioning that it's a term that will lead to disaster. It almost led to mass murder a few doors down from here.

[00:27:02.43] - First thing I thought of when I got out of the car. I went, oh, it's that close.

[00:27:05.91] - Yeah.

[00:27:06.93] - OK.

[00:27:07.92] - And I guess my question is I know I got the Trump election wrong. I know you did. I know a lot of people did. So I am a bit hesitant to ask you this, but where do you think it ends for Trump? Where do you think it will end? Personally I think it's going to end in some sort of disaster like you alluded to. But I just wanted to hear your opinion.

[00:27:32.70] - Well, I made a bad prediction so invite me to make another one? OK.

[00:27:36.52] [LAUGHTER]

[00:27:38.82] First, I think it's important to point out that the experts who got the Trump election wrong-- I love Nate Silver at the New York Times who pointed out-- he said, look, I said it was about a 65%-35% chance. That means that every third time Donald Trump wins. I didn't say it was impossible. I said it was unlikely.

[00:27:58.12] And I liken this to the people who get mad at the weatherman. They say, well, there's a 70% chance of rain today. And then you go outside and they say it didn't rain that day-- which is that 30%-- and they say, boy, those weathermen are stupid. They don't know anything.

[00:28:11.61] They were all wrong in the same direction, which suggests there was a systemic error in the way people were looking at polling. And they're going to learn from this. That's how science progresses. It's not the first time that experts have called an election wrong. It won't be the last time.

[00:28:24.21] I don't know where this goes. I just don't know. We are in-- see, and those are the words experts hate to say. We're supposed to say things like, well, I have a theory on this but I'm not ready to share it. I'm not going to say that. I'm just going to tell you I don't know.

[00:28:39.87] And I think part of it is that we're in uncharted territory. I began life as an old Cold Warrior fighting the Kremlin. And then I went to saying, well, the Cold War is over, maybe we should have a better relationship with Russia to-- apparently just before I walked on stage here Mike Flynn just cut a deal with--

[00:29:03.39] - Proffered.

[00:29:04.95] - Proffered a deal?

[00:29:06.78] - He's asking for a deal, yeah.

[00:29:08.55] - The former national-- the three weeks national-- security advisor just proffered a deal to testify about Russia? I can't make any sense of this at all. So I just don't know. And I'm buckled up.

[00:29:22.80] My one concern is that I don't want this to end-- I think we can recover from any mistake, any mistake at all, except war. And I don't mean the use of military force. Because Americans I think have-- we've looked at what's happened overseas and we say, well, this is a

terrible thing. I mean war that touches-- the problem is our wars have been fought by volunteers and they've not touched us, I think, enough. That we've fought them on the cheap.

[00:29:54.99] And this is a bipartisan problem that we don't see it in our taxes, we don't see it in our home life. Very few of us meet or know veterans. I'm an exception, obviously, because I work with military people.

[00:30:07.45] But I mean a real conflict that could escalate to something very dangerous and potentially involve nuclear weapons. So that is the unrecoverable scenario.

[00:30:17.10] - Thank you.

[00:30:17.70] - Thanks for the question. Thanks for coming, Randall. Hi.

[00:30:23.10] - Hi. So I have a PhD in history. And until very recently, I was teaching history at a university. And so your chapter on higher education was of particular interest to me.

[00:30:32.58] Most of that chapter, though, seemed to deal with, I guess I would say, campus culture more so than the curriculum. But when I got to the end you use this particularly nice turn of phrase, borrowed from Ben Franklin-- a republic, if you know what one is. And that made me think about how in my teaching experience it was very hard to say that there was any sort of baseline knowledge that I could expect from my students.

[00:31:00.22] And so what I would like to ask you is do you think the curriculum does play a role in that decline of civic knowledge, civic participation from kindergarten on basically emphasis on STEM and that getting to getting people jobs?

[00:31:16.72] - Yeah, that's a great question. I think the bigger problem is that because so much of education-- I did not write a chapter on K through 12 because the first thing you'd all say is, hey, expert guy, you never taught K through 12. So I stayed away from that.

[00:31:33.32] But I do think that from K through 12 into college the education has adopted a therapeutic model of education, that it's about students, and their feelings, and about building the whole person, and self-esteem, and actualization, and all of that stuff, and not about learning stuff.

[00:31:53.43] STEM is easy because-- I don't mean it's an easy subject. I mean it's something that escapes a lot of that because it's unarguable. So, well, at least math we can't argue over the politics of that.

[00:32:04.92] I think the bigger problem and the reason I focused on culture is when you're constantly talking about affirmation and making kids feel good about themselves, you're killing their natural curiosity because you're telling them you're smart enough already. You're a bright kid, you know stuff.

[00:32:23.13] When I was a kid my parents bought us-- like a lot of parents in the 1960s they said, oh, we don't know what the hell to do with you so here's some encyclopedias-- they've put them there. And I was like, I'm not reading that. And then the minute they weren't looking I was like, OK, I'm going to read this because I don't know any of this stuff.

[00:32:40.75] Well, if you tell kids they know stuff, they're not going to crack that open because why should they. They're doing fine.

[00:32:50.41] Again, I think the teachers who said to me-- aside from repent-- the teachers who said to me, you have a lot to learn yet, Mr. Nichols. And I said, well, where is that? And I would go looking for it. But I think if you tell children I'm OK, you're OK, we're all OK, then they say, all right, well then I guess my day's done and I can go home and I can watch TV.

[00:33:12.00] So I worry about that culture. But I do think yes, of course, curriculum matters. It makes me crazy. I have a teenage daughter and I've been watching her curriculum at schools. And she knows all about, for example, certain Supreme Court cases, but not what the Supreme Court is. Because it's in a test somewhere that you have to know Plessy v Ferguson. She says, well, OK, I had to learn this. And somewhere someone's going to ask her a question about Plessy v Ferguson. I said, well, but you understand what the Supreme Court is, right? No. So that's the problem.

[00:33:45.24] And I feel you. Because I get those kids when they come into college. And I say, as we all know from the Constitution. And they all say, what is this strange Constitution you speak of? So yes, I feel your pain. And a curriculum is important. But I also think culture is even more important.

[00:34:05.76] - Hello. I'm another Twitter follower. And I appreciate your panic level that you post all the time to say don't panic yet, I'll let you know. Every day--

[00:34:14.19] - Everybody stay calm.

[00:34:14.61] - Every day I check it. I'm still calm.

[00:34:17.09] - Good.

[00:34:17.88] - I am married to a Marine Corps veteran, my husband here. And we are very interested in foreign policy. We obviously follow you, follow the news. So I'm not going to miss my opportunity with an expert in the room to ask you what are you looking at in this schizophrenic existence that we're living in?

[00:34:34.05] Because there are days I wake up and Mattis, or Kelly, or McMaster, or Tillerson says something and I say, oh OK, oh good, that is what we should be doing, yes this all makes sense to me. And then 24 hours later something completely different, whether it's handing Angela Merkel a bill or something else insane happens. And I panic again and think, well, wait a minute, maybe Mattis really isn't-- I mean, what are you looking at? What are you monitoring to see which way we're actually going?

[00:35:05.68] - Oh no you don't.

[00:35:07.02] [LAUGHTER]

[00:35:09.73] No. I don't actually tie my personal anxiety to any one thing. You're not going to do it. We're not playing that.

[00:35:22.41] Because the other person I watch when I'm judging my daily anxiety level is another governmental leader named Vladimir Putin. So regardless of what we're doing, I'm also watching what he's doing,.

[00:35:35.53] But I think it's important not to read too much into any one news story at any given time. Because all of them can look terrible at that moment if you drill into it.

[00:35:47.97] One thing I'll say that I think we have to get over is the president no matter who it is-- President Obama, President Trump-- The president is not a demigod. He is surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of other people in this town who are making things function every day.

[00:36:04.56] And I think one of the things that really makes me angry aside from the "let's agree to disagree" thing is people say, well, you're in a bubble. No, the bubble I live in has 60 million people in it. I think the people who think that Washington can't run without one ambassador being confirmed are the people who are in a bubble. Everybody needs to stay calm about that.

[00:36:25.88] Some of you may have seen-- it was a local paper, Washington Post-- I did a piece in the Washington Post where I said chill out everybody. Because they're just drilling down into this looking for this one thing. The government, as you here should know-- maybe people out in the heartland won't see it, but you guys here know the government runs because of the collective efforts of thousands-- hundreds of thousands-- of people.

[00:36:51.36] With that said, sure, the president can make a mistake. If I read a news story or if it comes over the wire that the president had an angry phone call with Russia, and slammed down the receiver, and is now in an undisclosed location, and everybody's evacuating Washington, I'm going to be concerned.

[00:37:06.03] [LAUGHTER]

[00:37:07.68] OK, you've got me. If a bunch of helicopters all get out of Washington at the same time, I'm going to get a little curious about that. But you're not going to see that happen. I don't think.

[00:37:18.33] But thank you for checking. I did an interview about two weeks ago with Wisconsin Public Radio. And I know they meant this as a compliment, but they asked me-- they said, people do this. They check in with you and they said, what's it like to be the internet's glass of warm milk?

[00:37:31.18] [LAUGHTER]

[00:37:32.55] I said, well, thank you, I think. Yes, ma'am?

[00:37:40.49] - OK, this has been delightful. And I think one reason that you say people coming from K through 12 don't know very much about humanities is because-- I grew up in the '50s. I did the Newton school system K through 12-- there's a lot less agreement now on what the curriculum should be and our relationship to the Constitution. And the history I grew up with is not the history I've learned since.

[00:38:05.12] - Right.

[00:38:07.23] - Speaking of history, you talk about there's a tradition of know-nothingism-- or common sense, depending on which side you're on-- in American history. But don't you think there's a class element too now? I'm a physician. Those of us who are in a knowledge industry or experts are disregarded by as "the elite."

[00:38:31.83] - Yes.

[00:38:32.19] - And this is not bipartisan. I'm a liberal. And there was a difference between Hillary and Trump. And Hillary was dissed as elitist. And she has a Yale degree. She knows a lot of stuff-- she knows an awful lot of stuff. She never opens her mouth without doing the reading-- that's a girl school thing for my generation.

[00:38:57.56] - Well, let me say a couple of things about this--

[00:38:59.35] - Sure.

[00:38:59.52] - --because there's a lot to unpack here. First of all--

[00:39:01.71] - Right.

[00:39:01.91] - --surprisingly enough, when writing about this death of expertise problem, I found that it is not actually a class problem. Remember that the lowest levels of vaccination are in places like Marin County, California by people who are just smart enough to think that they're smart enough not to have to do this.

[00:39:23.52] I talk in the book about the raw milk movement. People say, oh, it's great to drink raw milk. Meanwhile, Louis Pasteur and billions of scientists roll in their graves.

[00:39:35.82] But this is not poor people saying, hey, I really need to drink out of a cow. This is people who are [? fashionable. ?] Now we all laughed about this until a couple of weeks ago two people in upstate New York died from eating raw milk products, just the way science might have actually predicted that you will eventually die from drinking or eating unpasteurized products. So that is definitely part of it.

[00:39:59.43] But the thing you've zeroed in on that's really important is the conflation of the word "expert" with the word "elite."

[00:40:05.28] - Yes.

[00:40:06.63] - And I keep trying to explain to people-- and I see there are plenty of people in this room who actually knew me when I was a kid-- I did not grow up in an elite environment. My mom dropped out of high school in ninth grade. My dad dropped out in 10th. I grew up in a factory town that is now full of dead factories. I grew up in western Massachusetts, which is a lot like western Pennsylvania, or southern Ohio, or a lot of other places right now. And so when people say to me, well, you're an elitist, I think my parents somewhere in heaven must be laughing at the idea-- our son, have you met the guy?

[00:40:41.60] [LAUGHTER]

[00:40:43.53] But I think the reason this is happening is because as we've moved into an information age, the winners and losers in the modern era are not people who make a lot of money and people who don't make a lot of money. It's the divide not in money, but in respect between people who know stuff and people who don't know stuff.

[00:41:00.59] And the people who don't know stuff, no matter how much money they make-- I think, again, the president's a great example of this-- feel like they're not respected because they're not able to keep up with everything that's going on.

[00:41:15.95] It always struck me where I live in Rhode Island that I was talking to guys who had a high school diploma and had been working guys their whole lives and lived in half million dollar homes who said to me, you know, this has all got to change? I said, what-- seems to be working pretty well for you. But it was this sense of I'm not respected because I don't know all this stuff that's going on anymore. I don't have this same level of cultural literacy.

[00:41:42.89] And I don't want to get into the election. I'll say one comment-- I'll leave one comment here about Hillary Clinton. And those of you want to know what I thought about Clinton, I wrote a lot of articles about this that are out there.

[00:41:52.53] The problem was Bill Clinton had that same Yale degree, right?

[00:41:55.97] - That's right. We were all there at at the same time.

[00:41:56.87] - And yet he somehow got away with it. Nobody ever said Bill Clinton was an elitist because he stood there, and he kind of did the thing, and he sort of.

[00:42:03.18] - Yeah.

[00:42:03.64] - I think the problem was that Hillary Clinton played into the stereotype of an educated elitist. She just radiated disdain-- and again, this is my personal feeling about it-- radiated a lot of disdain about people that just were not from that background in a way that Bill Clinton didn't.

[00:42:23.39] I was not a Clinton fan in the '90s, but as a political scientist I'd say probably one of most gifted natural politicians of the modern era. And she just wasn't. And so I think she played right into that notion that people with a lot of education just don't like ordinary people.

[00:42:40.04] What bothers me is the notion that if you gain a lot of education you are not ordinary people anymore. And I'll finish our comment, move on to your next question, with there is a story I tell right at the beginning of the book. My brother-- my half brother, much older than I am, retired cop, the stereotype of a retired cop, big guy, then did what all retired cops should do; he ran a bar. And since there are people in this room who've been there, it's a compliment even to call it a bar. It was more like a joint.

[00:43:12.93] And when I was a young professor, I would go down and I'd see my brother. It was in New England. And I'd drive down, and I'd come and I'd hang out at my brother's bar, and I'd shoot the breeze. And one night I walked out-- my brother told me this story afterwards-- I walked out and a guy turned to my brother and said, that's your brother? He's a professor? My brother said yeah. And the guy went, mm, seems like a good guy anyway.

[00:43:31.44] [LAUGHTER]

[00:43:33.30] That was years ago. And it was that notion that if you're a professor, by definition you're probably not a good guy. So that now has reached epidemic proportions. Where it used to be a bar in a mill town, it's now everywhere. So.

[00:43:47.84] - Thank you.

[00:43:48.68] - Thank you. Thanks for the question. Hi.

[00:43:50.29] - Hi.

[00:43:52.07] - I'll try to keep the answer shorter so I can get to.

[00:43:54.26] - I'm [? Samira ?] Daniels. I am actually very interested in the whole topic of expertise. I follow Philip Tetlock's Iarpa [? project ?] tournaments on the quality of expertise.

[00:44:07.43] - I talk about Tetlock in the book.

[00:44:08.68] - Oh, fantastic. But I just want to push back a little bit on how you've characterized the contrast between the non-expert and the expert-- the non-experts in the streets, ordinary people.

[00:44:25.37] - Mm-hmm.

[00:44:25.94] - And I think that the issue really has been that the expert is also a careerist. And in that pursuit of ambition I think with the corporatization of--

[00:44:48.07] - Everything.

[00:44:48.63] - --everything and the special funding of research and so forth, the contrast between the observational studies and controlled randomized studies has distinguished the good expert from the excellent.

[00:45:09.74] - OK.

[00:45:10.00] - And I think we're seeing more of that battle. And I think it's a ubiquitous longitudinal battle of the good versus the great, as Jim Collins. And I think that--

[00:45:21.87] - Let me say a couple of things about that. Did everybody hear the question? This question is about the careerism of experts. You say careerist, I say professional.

[00:45:32.60] - OK.

[00:45:32.91] - That is to say, we can't just walk away from it. One thing I think where experts don't get there do is if a doctor makes a bad call, or a teacher is a lousy teacher, or a lawyer tends to be a lousy lawyer, he doesn't say, well, hey, it was just my weekend hobby. You can't really hold me responsible.

[00:45:51.69] We're held responsible by ourselves. One mark of a profession is that it polices itself. Now sometimes incompletely. Sometimes that doesn't work. There are bad doctors out there who slip through there. There are bad teachers-- believe me, I know.

[00:46:08.76] But the idea that somehow because we're making a living at it-- and this is something I really push back on-- people say, well, you defend experts because you make a living at it. Well, we all make a living at something.

[00:46:18.22] - No, that's not my argument. I was saying that the good versus--

[00:46:22.29] - Well, I'm getting--

[00:46:23.07] - OK.

[00:46:23.52] - And the other problem is that, you're right, that the real distinction between experts is the ones that are merely competent and the ones that are really amazing.

[00:46:31.65] - Yes.

[00:46:32.34] - My only argument in the book-- and this is where I've tried to bring this back to it-- is, look, there are some professionals who are very good and there are some who are marginally competent. But in their field they're going to be better at it than you. No, I'm sorry.

[00:46:47.52] - No, no, I'm [? sure that's ?] fine.

[00:46:48.68] - You know what? Pull your own tooth and get back--

[00:46:51.72] [LAUGHTER]

[00:46:53.52] This is the problem. And that's not to say that there is no room for the talented amateur. Because that can happen. You get the guy-- I love that-- what was it called? Flash of inspiration? I can't remember the name of the movie-- the guy who invented the intermittent windshield wiper. I love that guy. Flash of genius-- where he says, hey, windshield wiper-- and all these engineers stood there going, well nobody-- that's ridiculous. And this guy in his basement said I can make a windshield wiper that does this.

[00:47:21.72] The problem is that's pretty rare. And when everybody in society says I'm that guy then things start to fall apart. Because what I encounter increasingly is that everybody in society says-- when I tell kids, for example, you don't have to go to college. But if you go to college, you should at least try and finish. Because there's value in finishing things. There's value in getting through. They say, well, Bill Gates didn't. OK, well guess what-- you're not Bill Gates and you're not Mark Zuckerberg.

[00:47:50.64] And this notion that well, why can't I be? Because-- and I'll leave you with this quote, which is one of my favorites and I kept over my desk for years-- Ernest Hemingway said there are two real requisites necessary to becoming a writer. One is a real seriousness about writing. And then he said the other, unfortunately, is talent.

[00:48:10.23] [LAUGHTER]

[00:48:12.18] And I say in the chapter on experts in the end that last thing-- and I think that thing you're talking about that defines those really great experts-- is talent.

[00:48:19.53] - Yeah.

[00:48:20.49] - There are a lot of people that can be trained to be marginally competent. But the really good ones will have some talent that over time an experience will show through.

[00:48:28.65] - Something like that, yeah. Thank you.

[00:48:30.96] - So I recognize a lot of the worst aspects of the qualities that you're talking about in myself in moments of introspection. But if I think about 40 years working in health care, not-for-profit side, for-profit, being on boards, dealing with physicians, if I think of 65 years of living and friends, I could not name five women who exhibit the kinds of qualities that you're talking about. I would be here for years talking about all the men that I know.

[00:48:57.96] It feels to me like a lot of the issue, particularly of the rejection of having to have any degree of knowledge to be able to speak with confidence about subjects and to reject other people's opinions, feels very, very male.

[00:49:13.14] - Oh, well first of all, I totally feel your pain about recognizing yourself in the pages. There were more than a few times when I was writing where I had to kind of step back from the computer and say, ah, this guy I'm talking about is such a jerk.

[00:49:29.07] But I also don't think-- I think it's true that men and women communicate differently. Men do, I think, more than women talk to establish dominance, for example. And they are more likely to say, let me tell you. You don't usually get a woman who wades into a conversation and says, all right, I'm going to explain a few things to you.

[00:49:46.58] In fact, I did this talk at the Harvard Coop a few weeks back and a woman in the audience said can you tell me where this integrates with mansplaining? And there was this very heavy pause in the room. And I said, listen, honey.

[00:50:03.76] [LAUGHTER]

[00:50:09.23] But with that said, I think that in some ways-- let me speak for men for a moment. I actually think that men who operate much more on things like hierarchy rather than-- what's the word I'm looking for? Sorry? Consensus, that's the word I was looking for, sorry-- hierarchy versus consensus.

[00:50:35.45] I have found that, for example, at least in my experience dealing in the social media world with the anti-vaxxer movement, for example, it's almost all women.

[00:50:43.75] - That's interesting.

[00:50:44.57] - It's moms. And this notion of, well, doctor, the studies. Because I think men tend to be-- as an intuitive rather than analytical thinker, I sympathize with this, but I think men tend to be overly analytical and I think women tend to be intuitive. I think men tend to generalize, women don't. We're generalizing obviously about-- thank you for getting that joke.

[00:51:07.61] [LAUGHTER]

[00:51:08.90] Whew. That was a close one.

[00:51:12.00] But I do think there are differences in the way men and women approach information-- data. But I don't think that has to do with the situation I'm talking about. I think it manifests itself in different ways in men and women, that they will express it differently.

[00:51:27.41] But again, some of the most ardent-- GMOs or wade into the abortion debate. Well, whose side is science on? There are plenty of males and females who will make these same category errors, confirmation bias, unwillingness to accept new information. So I don't think.

[00:51:46.55] I agree with you that the most obnoxious version of it is men. There's no doubt about it. But I don't think it's limited to men at all.

[00:51:53.30] - Thank you.

[00:51:54.17] - But it was a great question. Thank you.

[00:51:56.65] - We can take just two more questions.

[00:51:57.68] - Two more. Hi, Steve.

[00:51:59.42] - Hey, Tom. How are you?

[00:52:00.31] - Good.

[00:52:01.34] - I'm from the conservative-- [? Stephen ?] Bates from the conservative bastions Vienna, Virginia and Rehoboth Beach. So I'm kind of in a bubble out there. And our mutual friend, John [INAUDIBLE] sends his regrets he's not here today with us. So I want to go back--

[00:52:14.12] - [? Bordeaux ?] sent me a note too.

[00:52:15.27] - Did he? Did he? Ah.

[00:52:17.15] I want to come back to the idea of fake news and the dearth of-- how shall I say-- popular conservative thought leaders. We haven't seen them since Buckley, and Safire, and so forth. We see a few on the internet-- Rick Wilson and a few of the others.

[00:52:33.95] But I want to get my pink pussy hat wearing friends off of HuffPo and Elephant Journal and to start reading some serious thought leadership from conservative writers. And I want my conservative friends to stop watching Fox News, and Breitbart, and everything else and start to read some long-form journalism in print the way you've highlighted here in this book. So what techniques can I do to bring these two together and read conservative thought leaders and disparage these other fringe benefits and bring them back to the mainstream?

[00:53:04.37] - Well, it depends on how many friends you want to have when you're done.

[00:53:06.91] [LAUGHTER]

[00:53:08.12] - I do, I do.

[00:53:10.10] - Somebody yesterday asked me how do you talk to friends and family about this? I said, how well do you like your family?

[00:53:16.85] For 30 years-- I've been walking into classroom since pretty much since the day I started teaching and telling students to stop reading everything they agree with and to find at least one thing once a week or once a month that annoys them. And I think that's how you have to put it.

[00:53:35.45] Look-- if it didn't make you mad, then it's probably. And I'm not equating anger with thought. But if everything you read, if everything you watch you walk away from it saying, yeah, it seems fine to me, you're not challenging yourself. Really good political literature of any kind, whether it's punditry or novels, should have some kind of an emotional impact on you.

[00:53:58.49] Part of the reason I'm not a chemist today, which was my first major-- out myself as a nerd-- aside from the fact that I wasn't in love with mathematics-- I was in love with

chemistry, but I also made the mistake of at 16 years old I picked up 1984. And I was shaken up for days and I just wasn't the same. And I started reading everything across the spectrum from left to right to figure out who I agreed or disagreed with.

[00:54:26.06] And I think it's not that hard to do. And I think one of the things you can do-- you as citizens can do-- is not accept lame excuses from your friends about it. I've said to people-- they said, well, how do you stay informed? And I say, well, my personal favorite-- partly because I worked in politics here and it's an old habit-- I like the Washington Post. I don't agree with everything in it. I liked it before I was ever published in it, just to be clear about that. You know, their Opinion page is really smart. But I said I start with that.

[00:54:57.54] And they say, well, I won't read the Washington Post. It's too biased. And I say, all right, read the New York Times. No, that's a bunch of commies. All right, read The Wall Street Journal. Rich people. What they're saying is I'm not going to read anything because I have already made up my mind and I don't want to read Huffington Post, I don't want to read Mother Jones, I don't want to read National Review.

[00:55:14.96] When I worked in the Senate-- for those of you that are going to ask, it was the late John Heinz of Pennsylvania. And he was a Republican, one of those northeastern moderate Republicans who has been hunted to extinction at this point. But I made it a point-- yes, I had a subscription to the American Spectator and National Review. I also had a subscription to Mother Jones and The Nation. And I read them all because I wanted to know. When I was talking to other staffers or listening to debates on the floor, I wanted to know what are these guys reading.

[00:55:47.59] And I think that's another way you can put it. First of all, stop being lazy. When people say, well, I don't have time to do that much reading. You have time to sit around and watch crap all day long. You have time to watch reality TV. You have time to do this

[00:55:59.83] And the other is to challenge them and to say, look, even if you hate all this stuff, wouldn't you like to know what your worst enemy is thinking? Call it intel. Call it intelligence research.

[00:56:13.50] And I say, look, if you're a student, for example, and you're trying to-- I've had young conservative students come to me and say how to be an effective conservative? I say start reading The Nation, start reading Mother Jones. You already know what you believe. Forget that stuff. You'll figure that out over the years. Read the stuff that really annoys you.

[00:56:32.02] And I would challenge them to do that and not take no for an answer, not take the, "well, the New York Times is liberal, and I don't have time, and it's too expensive." I love that one in the age of the internet-- well, it's too expensive. You know, free.

[00:56:44.95] So take them on and don't let them wriggle out of it. And I have actually said to people until-- I guess those of you who know me on Twitter know that I've done this-- I've said to people who've engaged my social media, oh, you didn't read the article? I'm not talking to you.

[00:56:59.16] - Yeah.

[00:56:59.83] - We're done.

[00:57:00.46] - OK.

[00:57:03.11] - Some of you guys follow me on Twitter-- I haven't read your book but I have a very strong feeling about it.

[00:57:07.21] [LAUGHTER]

[00:57:08.44] - That was the Amazon quote. I remember that--

[00:57:10.22] - Yeah. That's what the mute button was made for.

[00:57:14.23] - Thank you. Jezebel reports tonight you've got about a million, maybe a million five here tonight.

[00:57:17.86] - Is that what it is? OK, thank you.

[00:57:18.88] [LAUGHTER]

[00:57:20.50] - Largest ever.

[00:57:20.89] - Largest ever.

[00:57:22.24] - Largest ever. Huge. This is a bigger crowd than Obama ever got at Politics and Prose.

[00:57:28.23] - Big league crowd. Big league crowd.

[00:57:31.30] - Thank you so much, Professor Nichols. I have a comment-- no I'm just joking. Really quickly-- as someone who's lived in China, Nigeria, and Ghana, I'm actually pretty aware of the way--

[00:57:42.43] - Let me tell you about China.

[00:57:43.63] - Thank you.

[00:57:43.93] [LAUGHTER]

[00:57:44.78] - Right, has this happened to you?

[00:57:46.99] - More than you would expect. Oh, no, actually you wrote the book--

[00:57:48.88] - Totally as much as I would expect, right.

[00:57:50.59] - But in terms of how politics works in other countries versus the US-- and I feel you are probably going to push back on this. Your book is really fantastic, really interesting, especially in how it intersects with the culture of a rejection of expertise. But as a political project, I find that this is something that is part and parcel of conservative politics post-Goldwater-- and not that liberals don't do this. The anti-vax movement, as someone whose father died from malaria, angers me to no end.

[00:58:27.70] But I don't know how you can fix this. Because for conservative politicians, attacking expertise works.

[00:58:41.11] - No, I'm not going to push back on this.

[00:58:42.43] - You're a fantastic public intellectual. You're an honest public intellectual. We're not going to agree on everything, but the stuff that you've done I really agree with. But on this, this is something that--

[00:58:51.91] - Where we just have to agree to disagree?

[00:58:53.68] [LAUGHTER]

[00:58:55.67] No, look, I'm not going to argue with you. But I think it's not-- I'm sorry, were you done talking? Or am I interrupting?

[00:59:02.63] - I'm done-ish.

[00:59:03.97] - Look, it's not-- I think it's become fashionable to say, well, the Democrats are the party of science and Republicans are the party of ignorance. Remember-- part of the reason I was attracted to conservatism as a young man was like Buckley where, to me, I think the better rap on conservatives versus liberals is that conservatives were all brain and no heart back in the day. Conservatives were the ones who said, well, you know, this is the way it is. And Buckley would lean back and go. And liberals were the ones that are banging the podium.

[00:59:39.05] I think what you're actually going to find is that what you're centered on and what you and I would be centered on are the arguments among intellectuals in the two parties where science becomes a bargaining chip between them right-- about climate change. Or you want to see liberals start to get jumpy about science? When does human life begin? Oh, suddenly science isn't cool anymore. Suddenly science is all the realm of squishy religion.

[01:00:06.51] And each side will deploy science in the way that is advantageous to its argument. Does early childhood education work? Oh, yes. Well, not the way we thought. And liberals and conservatives will do this.

[01:00:20.36] Where I think the Republican and conservative populist movement-- because I don't think those are the same at all-- where that has overtaken the Democrats I would say is in this thing we talked about earlier, fusing the idea that experts and elites are the same people. And

so you can encourage people to strike back against these elites and fire up this populist feeling by encouraging people to identify elites as anybody with education.

[01:00:50.16] And that was a very-- let's face it, I didn't think it would work in 2016. I don't think there were that many people without education who could make the difference in a national election. Clearly the Trump campaign strategists were right and I was wrong. But I think that that is a transitory problem here, this notion of putting elite and expert together.

[01:01:10.56] Now part of my project is to pull those back apart. Because there's a lot of people-- look, plumbers and electricians are experts. And they've come to me. And people who are in trades have come to me and said, man, if I'm sitting there with a drain blowing up in my face one more time and the homeowner comes in and says what are you using there for a wrench? Like, oh, I'm sorry, are we going to discuss this now?

[01:01:33.99] A wedding photographer said to me every place she sets up somebody walks over and says, that's great, what lens are you using? Everybody is suffering from this.

[01:01:44.28] I think that yes this election the Republicans mobilized that anger against this generalized elite and melded it to experts more effectively. But I think this attack on-- let's go beyond expertise, call it the attack on the division of labor, because that's kind of what it is, right.

[01:02:03.87] You may have all seen that great New Yorker cartoon that everybody in the world sent me-- thank you all 70,000 of you-- where a guy says I think the elitist pilots up front have lost touch with the passengers. Who thinks I should fly the plane?

[01:02:16.89] [LAUGHTER]

[01:02:18.51] That's the new thing. And I don't think that's limited. On the way here I was showing my wife a cool map that Patrick Ruffini had done of showing the flips. These are not necessary party affiliation.

[01:02:34.47] Now this lady over here had asked me about class. Some of this is class where all of northern Michigan flips from Obama blue to Trump red. That's not people deciding, well, Republicans hate science and Democrats love it. That's people just deciding who the elites are that they hate the most and who they can tag that on. And that goes back to my comment to you, ma'am, about, well, Hillary played into that and made it easy.

[01:03:00.63] But if I thought this were just a partisan problem, I wouldn't have written the book. Because I think most partisan problems are transitory. And I started writing the book years ago-- at least two, three years ago. So I think that it's a bigger-- I think there's a bigger social illness that's out there.

[01:03:19.26] But in this election cycle I cannot help but take your point and admit that it was certainly mobilized and deployed better this time around by the Republicans than the Democrats, no question about it.

[01:03:31.09] Is that it? OK. Well, I'll be here, so thanks for coming.

[01:03:35.73] [APPLAUSE]