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Medical School and  
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**THE CONVERSATION US**

Academic rigor, journalistic flair

## Drones



Would you be – or feel – safer if one of these people were a robot? Skycolors/Shutterstock.com

### Your next pilot could be drone software

Jeremy Straub, North Dakota State University

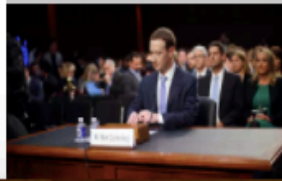
Airplanes could be safer with technology at the helm. A key sticking point is human opinion.

More

## Analysis and Comment



## Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal



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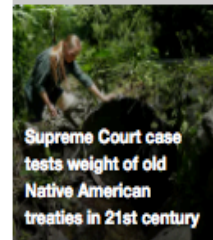
Popular: food, water, transport, health, and energy.

Analysis from academics around the world

Global Perspectives



## Editors' Picks



Supreme Court case tests weight of old Native American treaties in 21st century

## Most Read past week

Abusive relationships: Why it's so hard for women to 'just leave'

What to do if you owe the IRS money

Wealthy Americans know less than they think they do about food and nutrition

The tragic story of America's only native parrot, now extinct for 100 years

The Trump administration's new



Why nuclear fusion is gaining steam – again

# Academic rigor journalistic flair



# What is The Conversation?

- Launched in the U.S. in October 2014
- Initial team of 8 editors has grown to 17
- Nonprofit – no advertising
- Free to read, free to republish
- Other editions in Australia, the UK, Africa, France, Canada, Indonesia

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Q Search analysis, research, academics...

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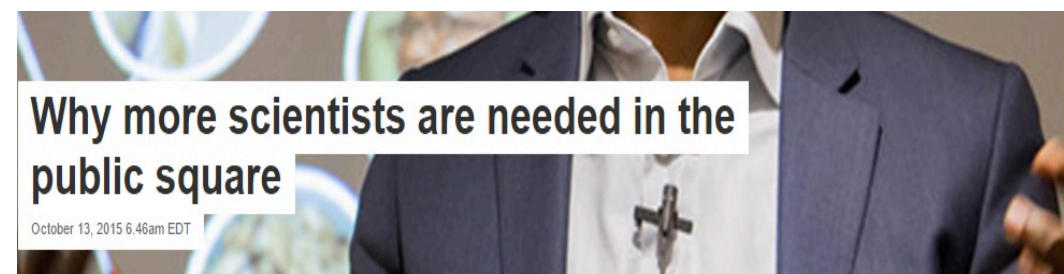
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The Conversation US began with 19 member schools. Today 50 universities and research institutes support The Conversation as financial members to safeguard the current service and help us improve our coverage and features.



*“As the president of one of our country’s leading research university systems, I believe it is now incumbent on the academic community to ensure that the work and voices of researchers are front and center in the public square.”*

–Janet Napolitano,  
President  
University of California



Competing to explain science. Susan Merrell/UCSF, Author provided

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In this presidential election season, one thing is certain: candidates will rarely – if ever – be asked what they would do to keep this nation at the forefront of science and innovation.

That’s a shame.

Author



Janet Napolitano  
President, University of California,  
Office of the President

- Enrich the public discourse
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- Give academics a voice in scientific, cultural debates

theguardian

Academics: leave your ivory towers and pitch your work to the media

Publishing in academic journals is prestigious, but sharing your ideas with a wider audience is exciting and full of unexpected rewards



📷 'People always say I'm a good writer, but I'm shy.' Photograph: Alamy

**Y**ou may have seen the recent headlines screaming “Spicy foods could help you live longer!” But have you heard of Lu Qi, the associate professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health who has written about the health benefits of spicy foods?

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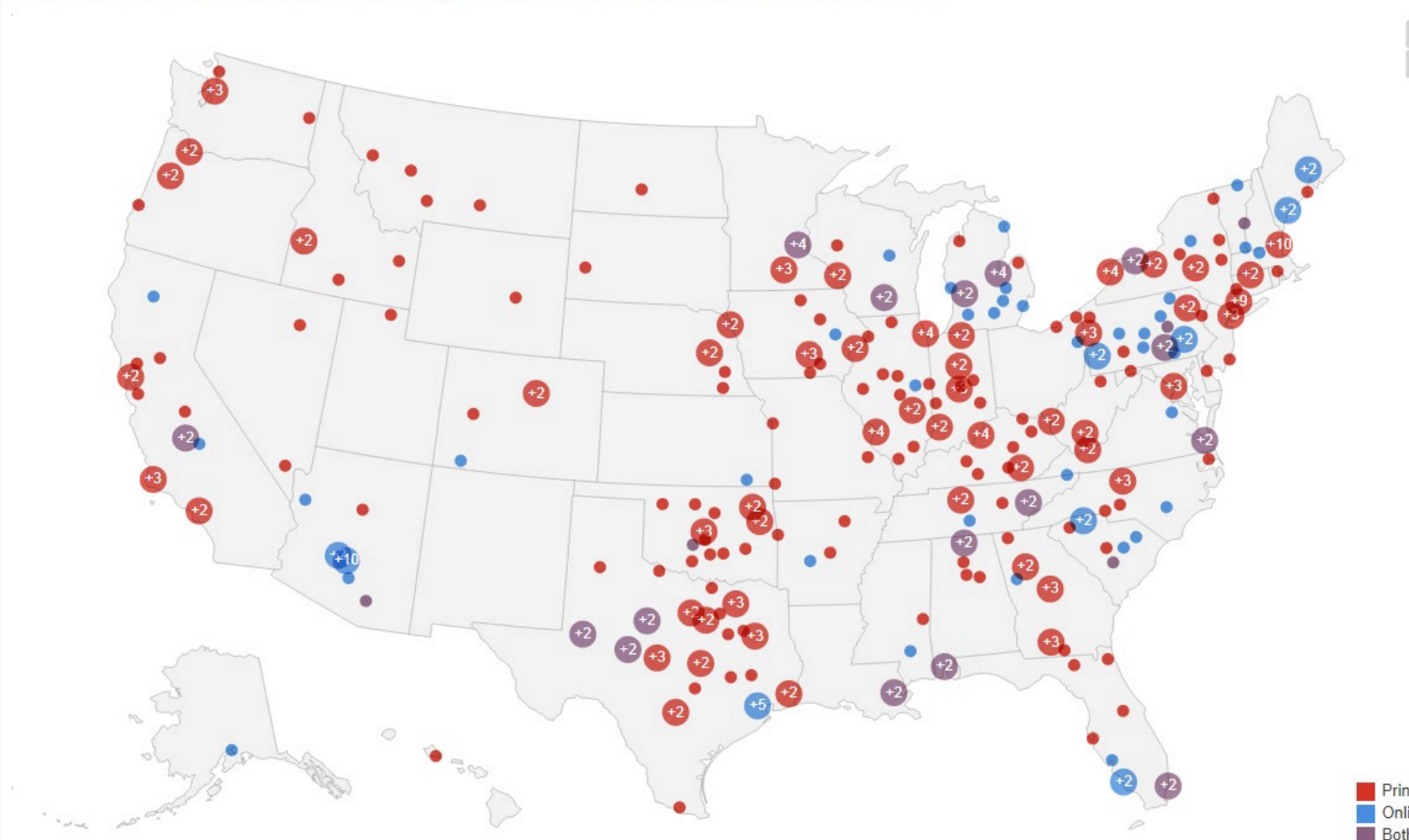




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Source: The Conversation



## Three common arguments for preserving the Electoral College – and why they’re wrong

November 14, 2016 9.55pm EST

Supporters of presidential candidate Al Gore protest during George W. Bush's inauguration in January 2001. Gore won the popular vote but lost to Bush in the Electoral College. Kevin Lamarque/Reuters

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In November 2000, newly elected New York Senator Hillary Clinton promised that when she took office in 2001, she would introduce a [constitutional amendment](#) to abolish the Electoral College, the 18th-century, state-by-state, winner-take-all system for selecting the president.

[She never pursued her promise](#) – a decision that must haunt her today. In this year's election, [she won at least 600,000 more votes than Donald Trump](#), but lost by a significant margin in the Electoral College.

In addition to 2016, there have been four other times in American history – 1824, 1876, 1888 and 2000 – when the candidate who won the Electoral College lost the national popular vote. Each time, a Democratic presidential candidate lost the election due to this system.

For that reason, views on the fairness of the Electoral College are often partisan. Not surprisingly, many Clinton supporters have called for its [reform](#) or [abolition](#). But [most recent polls](#) indicate that supporters of both parties feel that this 18th-century system of choosing a president should be modified or abolished.

Nonetheless, others continue to make the case for preserving the Electoral College in its current form, usually using one of three arguments. In my course about American elections, we discuss these arguments – and how each has serious flaws.

### The evolution of the Electoral College

During the 1787 Constitutional Convention, the delegates “[distrusted the passions of the people](#)” and particularly distrusted the ability of average voters to choose a president in a national election.

The result was the [Electoral College](#), a system that gave each state a number of electors based on its number of members in Congress. On a date set by Congress, state legislatures would choose a set of electors who would later convene in their

#### Author



**Robert Speel**  
Associate Professor of Political Science, Erie campus, Pennsylvania State University

#### Disclosure statement

Robert Speel does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

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These 3 Common Arguments For Preserving the Electoral College Are Wrong

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IDEAS 2016 ELECTION

# These 3 Common Arguments For Preserving the Electoral College Are Wrong

Robert Speel, Erie campus, Pennsylvania State University / The Conversation

@ConversationUS

Nov. 15, 2016



IDEAS **Views on the Electoral College are often partisan**

In November 2000, newly elected New York Senator Hillary Clinton promised that when she took office in 2001, she would introduce a [constitutional amendment](#) to abolish the Electoral College, the 18th-century, state-by-state, winner-take-all system for selecting the president.

She never pursued her promise — a decision that must haunt her today. In this year's election, she won at least [600,000 more votes than Donald Trump](#), but lost by a significant margin in the Electoral College.

In addition to 2016, there have been four other times in American history



PAUL J. RICHARDS—AFP/Getty Images

Signs are seen on a lawn near a US polling place in Arlington, Virginia, November 8, 2016.

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Headline

## Why Trump's wall with Mexico is so popular, and why it won't work

H B / 📄 🔗 + 📱 ↕ Saved. 1,082 words ● Readability

Donald Trump tweeted on Jan. 6 that "any money spent on building the Great Wall (for the sake of speed), will be paid back by Mexico later."

```
<tweet url="https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/817329823374831617?lang=en" />
```

Feasibility aside, this policy reflects a common belief among governments that countries should be walled, and that walls solve problems of migration and trade.



[\[The Economist\]](http://econ.st/2jbKR0e) (<http://econ.st/2jbKR0e>) reports that 40 countries have built fences since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Thirty of these were built since 9/11; 15 were built in 2015.

The United States already has about [\[650 miles\]](http://bit.ly/2ilsum4) (<http://bit.ly/2ilsum4>) of wall

### Requirements

### Collaborators

✉ +

-  **Danielle Douez**  
Editor ☰
-  **David Cook Martin**  
Lead Author Lead Author ▾ ☰

### Interviewees

+

### Disclosures

✓ **David Cook Martin** Edit

David Cook Martin receives funding from National Science Foundation.

### Brief (sent)

Word count: **800**  
Deadline: **December 9, 2016 12.00pm** (8 months ago)

A piece on the problems that come with building walls and examples of how this has played out

- Ability to have multiple authors
- Track changes over time

Home Edition: United States Job Board Get newsletter Dashboard Martin LaMonica 12

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Martin LaMonica W. Rocky Newman John R. Bowblis Bryan Keogh Nancy West

March 7, 2016 10.06am saved by W. Rocky Newman

## Crash in oil prices will hurt the U.S. economy from Texas to Wall Street

Traditionally, low oil prices have been a boost to economic growth in the U.S. The crash in oil prices over the past two years, however, has produced a decidedly mixed picture – with potentially worrying implications for the economy as a whole.

When oil prices fall, consumers spend less on gasoline and have more disposable income to spend on other goods, which contributes to economic growth. Conversely, as oil prices have gone up, consumers have less disposable income to spend on other things, such as new cars, going out to eat, entertainment and new clothes.

### Disclosure

This will appear alongside your article

**i** We ask authors to disclose any funding or affiliation that is relevant, or could be perceived to be relevant, to the subject about which they are writing. This transparency is designed to protect the author's reputation and that of The Conversation. Authors who fail to disclose relevant information may be banned from contributing in future.

Do you work for, consult with or own shares in any company or organisation that would benefit from this article?

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Do you have any other relevant affiliations that should be disclosed? This includes currently being a member of or volunteer for a political party, industry association, not-for-profit group, think tank or other politically active bodies.

Yes  No



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## Saving lives by letting cars talk to each other

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The [death of a person] (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/01/business/self-driving-tesla-fatal-crash-investigation.html>) earlier this year while driving with Autopilot in a Tesla sedan, along with [news of more crashes] (<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-36783345>) involving Teslas operating in Autopilot, has triggered a torrent of [concerns about the safety of self-driving cars] (<http://www.npr.org/2016/07/01/484381632/tesla-autopilot-crash-raises-concerns-about-self-driving-cars>).

### Requirements

### Collaborators

Jeff Inglis  
Editor

Huei Peng  
Lead Author

Lead Author


### Interviewees

### Disclosures

✓ Huei Peng Edit

Huei Peng receives funding from 60 companies – their membership fee supports the research and





**Shannon Schmoll**  
Director, Abrams Planetarium, Department of Physics and Astronomy, Michigan State University

[See institution analytics](#)

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You're not working on any articles

Pitch an Article Idea

**FAQs**

- How do I start writing?
- I submitted a pitch. Now what?
- How do I handle interview requests from radio/TV?
- Other questions? Contact us.

**Published (3)**

**January 29, 2018**  
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👤 53,231 🗨️ 0 [🐦](#) [📘](#) [🌐](#)

**January 24, 2018**  
Look up at the super blue blood full moon Jan. 31 – here's what you'll see and why

👤 431,360 🗨️ 4 [🐦](#) [📘](#) [🌐](#)

**August 3, 2017**  
When the sun goes dark: 5 questions answered about the solar eclipse

👤 106,910 🗨️ 5 [🐦](#) [📘](#) [🌐](#)

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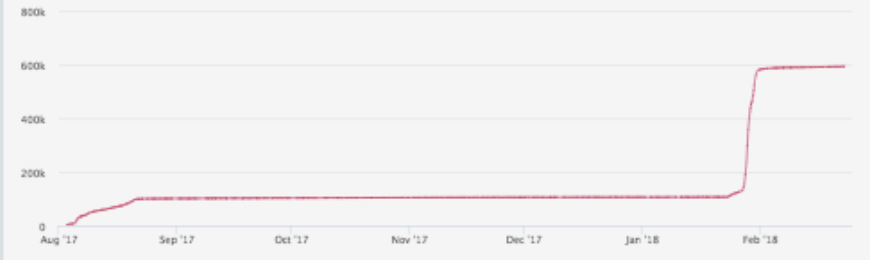
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Did You watch the super blue blood full moon Jan. 31 – here's what you saw and why <https://t.co/6GpO4UBJKh> via @ConversationUS

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February 2, 2018


Look up at the super blue blood full moon Jan. 31 – here's what you'll see and why <https://t.co/pbRBq0Y1Vo> via @ConversationUS #supermoon

 [@ClaudiaHauter](#)  
January 31, 2018

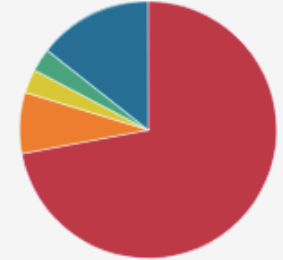
#GerhanaBulan nanti malam bukan gerhana biasa. Apa yang membuatnya istimewa? <https://t.co/kQHIQjBoQ>

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**Country / Territory**



- United States
- Indonesia
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- India
- other

**Publications**

	Washington Post	264,556
	The Conversation	100,645
	Newsweek	37,612
	PBS (including Newshour, Nova, and Point Taken)	36,874
	Salon	24,044
	Science Alert	21,076

### Expert Requests

- Sent daily to Communications Team
- Topics we'd like to cover, but haven't yet identified the right scholar
- Rely on media relations' deep knowledge of faculty to help us connect
- Contact us before writing

#### THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigor, journalistic flair

Welcome to our service for university media teams and colleagues. Each morning you will receive this email listing the stories we are pursuing and seeking your suggestions for academic writers.

In addition to [your pitches](#), today we are looking for:

**1. Politics and Society:** As the showdown over the empty Supreme Court seat and the debate over whether the Court has become more politically partisan continue, we are looking for a scholar who can shed light on public attitudes toward the Supreme Court and how they have evolved over time. In what years, for example, was trust in the Court at a high point? at a low point? and why?

Contact: Maria Balinska [maria.balinska@theconversation.com](mailto:maria.balinska@theconversation.com)

Timeline: Please be in touch before the end of the week

**2. Politics and Society:** Donald Trump and indeed all the GOP candidates are vociferous in their denunciation of the government (particularly the federal government). There may have always been a distrust of the central authorities in US history but have we now reached a nadir in the relationship between the people and Washington? We are interested in scholars who can look at this relationship and place it in historical context – whether it be from the perspective of opinion surveys or popular culture.

Contact: Maria Balinska [maria.balinska@theconversation.com](mailto:maria.balinska@theconversation.com)

Timeline: Please be in touch by end of week

**3. Arts and Culture:** In a recent Psychology Today article, a writer used a German term – *backpfeifengesicht* (literally, a "face in need of a good punch") – to describe Ted Cruz. We're looking for an academic to write a short article that highlights some of the quirkiest / most interesting German words. What is it about the German language that allows for such constructions? In English, why can't there be similar words for complex feelings or extremely specific things?

Contact: Nick Lehr [nick.lehr@theconversation.com](mailto:nick.lehr@theconversation.com)

Timeline: 600 word draft submitted by March 3

**4. Science and Technology:** Pi Day approaches! Calling mathematicians, engineers, and physicists: what is known or possible only because we understand Pi? What important discoveries were made based on our knowledge of Pi?

Contact: Jeff Inglis [jeff.inglis@theconversation.com](mailto:jeff.inglis@theconversation.com)

Timeline: Contact editor by Friday, March 4

Ari Fertig  
Editorial Liaison  
[The Conversation US](#)

# Let's talk about pitching



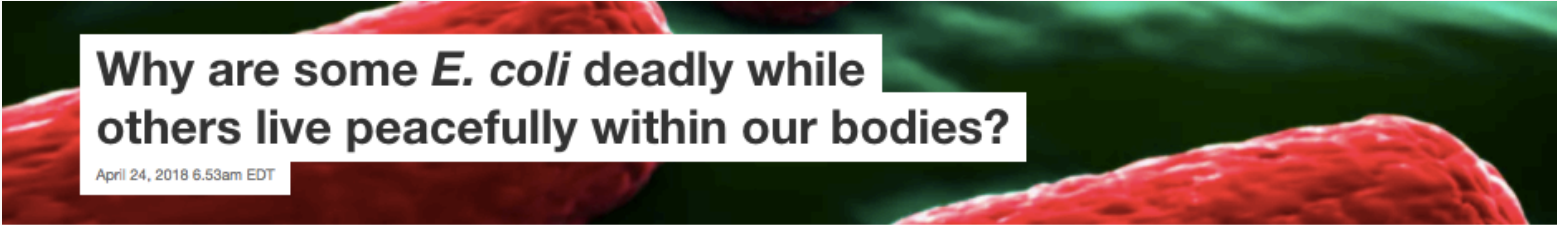
<https://theconversation.com/pitches/new>

- Is it of general interest?
- Are you an expert on the topic?
- Is it timely?
- Can you cover it in 800-1,000 words?

- Write a paragraph summary of the piece to help you crystallize your idea
- Do not write before you've communicated with an editor – we're more likely to accept a pitch than a full article
- Search the site: Have we already covered this angle?
- How does your research add to the discussion already happening in the media?



What does your research contribute to discussion of something that's in the news now?



## Why are some *E. coli* deadly while others live peacefully within our bodies?

April 24, 2018 6:53am EDT

From a human perspective, some strains are good, some are evil. fusebulb/Shutterstock.com

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[E. coli outbreaks hospitalize people and cause food recalls pretty much annually in the United States. This year is no different.](#)


Obviously some *E. coli* can be deadly for people. But not all strains of these bacteria make you sick. In fact, you have a variety of strains of *E. coli* in your intestines right now – including one that's [busy making the antioxidant vitamin K](#), crucial for your and its survival.

Scientists [like me](#) often characterize *E. coli* by the sugar coat they display on their cell surface. A molecule called a lipopolysaccharide is the anchor that displays a collection of sugars to their environment.

These sugars help the bacteria stick to surfaces and reveal their identity to your immune system. Human cells do this, too – your blood type is defined by sugars displayed on your blood cells, for instance.

The sugars *E. coli* display vary from strain to strain. Some sugar coats are associated with strains living symbiotically in your stomach – *E. coli* HS, UT189 and CFT073 are some of the most commonly found to be helpful. Others are associated with illness – like *E. coli* O104:H4, also called enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC), which caused a [major outbreak in Europe in 2011](#). According to the CDC, this latest outbreak is due to *E. coli* O157:H7 – a strain that's caused at least one food-borne outbreak in the U.S. each year since 2006.

**Author**




**Erika A. Taylor**  
Associate Professor of Chemistry and Environmental Studies, Wesleyan University

**Disclosure statement**

Erika A. Taylor receives funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).


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Gram Negative

- Why now?
- An ongoing trend, an event, an anniversary?

### Barbara Bush may have suffered from a chronic lung disease called COPD – a doctor explains

April 18, 2018 6:43am EDT



Barbara Bush and her husband, George H.W. Bush, at his Houston campaign headquarters June 4, 1964. AP Photo/Ed Kolenovskiy/file

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Former First Lady Barbara Bush died on April 17, 2018, two days after spokespeople said that she had decided not to seek additional medical treatment. CNN had reported that Barbara Bush had COPD.

I am a respiratory disease physician and professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and I direct the COPD clinical and research programs. My research has been

#### Author



**Frank Sciorba**  
Professor of Medicine and Education,  
University of Pittsburgh

#### Disclosure statement

Frank Sciorba has received funding from the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, COPD Foundation and several pharmaceutical companies including GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals. He has served on the advisory boards of GSK, Boehringer-Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., and Circassia.

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Seismic shockwaves after a meteorite's collision could affect systems all over the planet. [solarseven/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/solareseven)

### **More bad news for dinosaurs: Chicxulub meteorite impact triggered global volcanic eruptions on the ocean floor**

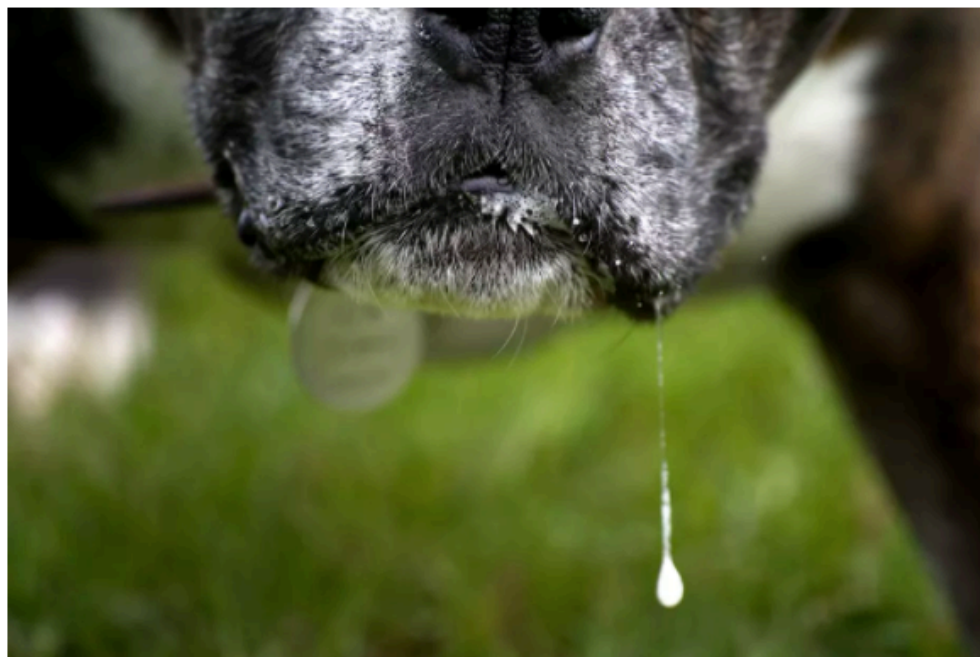
*Leif Karlstrom, University of Oregon and Joseph Byrnes, University of Minnesota*

Research suggests a new threat to life on Earth from the meteorite's crash: Via seismic waves, the impact triggered massive undersea eruptions, as big as any ever seen in our planet's history.



## What clues does your dog's drool hold for human mental health?

December 2, 2015 6.05am EST



There goes some precious DNA.... Graeme Bird, CC BY-NC-ND

[Email](#)    Dogs were the [first animals people domesticated](#), long before the earliest human civilizations appeared. Today, tens of thousands of years later, [Twitter](#) 75 dogs have an unusually close relationship with us. They share our homes and steal our hearts – and have even evolved [to love us back](#). Sadly, they also suffer from many of the same difficult-to-treat psychiatric and neurological diseases we do. [Facebook](#) 51 [LinkedIn](#) [Print](#)

I learned this firsthand about six years

Beskow, in fine spirits. Elinor Karlsson, CC BY-

### Author



**Elinor Karlsson**  
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Massachusetts Medical School

### Disclosure statement

Elinor Karlsson receives funding from the NIH and the Worcester Foundation.

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breeding dogs, we made the genetic changes responsible more common in their gene pool.

When a particular genetic change rapidly rises in prevalence in a population, it leaves a “signature of selection” that we can detect by sequencing the DNA of [many individuals from the population](#). Essentially, around a selected gene, we find a region of the genome where one particular pattern of DNA – the variant linked to the favored version of the gene – is far more common than any of the alternative patterns. The stronger the selection, the bigger this region, and the easier it is to detect this signature of selection.

In dogs, genes shaping behaviors purposely bred by humans are marked with large signatures of selection. It’s a bit like evolution is shining a spotlight on parts of the dog genome and saying, “Look here for interesting stuff!” To figure out exactly how a particular gene influences a dog’s behavior or health, though, we need lots more information.

To try to unravel these connections, my colleagues and I are launching a new citizen science research project we’re calling [Darwin’s Dogs](#).

[Together with animal behavior experts](#), we’ve put together a series of short surveys about everything from diet (does your dog eat grass?) to behavior (is your dog a foot sitter?) to personality (is your dog aloof or friendly?).

Any dog can participate in [Darwin’s Dogs](#), including purebred dogs, mixed breed dogs, and mutts of no particular breed – our study’s participants will be very genetically diverse. We’re combining [new DNA sequencing technology](#), which can give us much more genetic information from each dog, with powerful new [analysis methods that can control for diverse ancestry](#). By including all dogs, we hope to be able to do much larger studies, and home in quickly on the important genes and genetic variants.

# The US may be in for a tough flu season: 4 questions answered

December 20, 2017 6:28am EST Updated January 11, 2018 2:33pm EST

An annual vaccine is your best protection against the flu. REDPIXEL.PL/shutterstock.com

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*Editor's note: This year, Australia suffered [a record number of flu infections](#). This has some experts concerned that the U.S. will suffer a harsh flu season as well. Irena Kenneley, associate professor of nursing at Case Western Reserve University, explains what the news means and why it's important for Americans to receive their annual flu vaccine.*

## 1. When exactly is flu season, anyway?

The timing of peak activity varies from year to year. [Peak influenza activity in the U.S.](#) usually occurs during December through February, but there can be substantial influenza activity up until the month of May. By the end of 2017, widespread influenza activity was reported [in 46 states](#).

The influenza virus is among [the most likely to cause significant epidemics in humans](#). The virus causes acute upper and lower respiratory tract infections, and can lead to [potentially serious complications](#), such as pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections.

The flu can be spread from person to person when an infected person talks, sneezes or coughs. That means it spreads easily. The virus circulates globally and affects all age groups.

### Author



**Irena L. Kenneley**

Associate Professor of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University

### Disclosure statement

Irena L. Kenneley does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

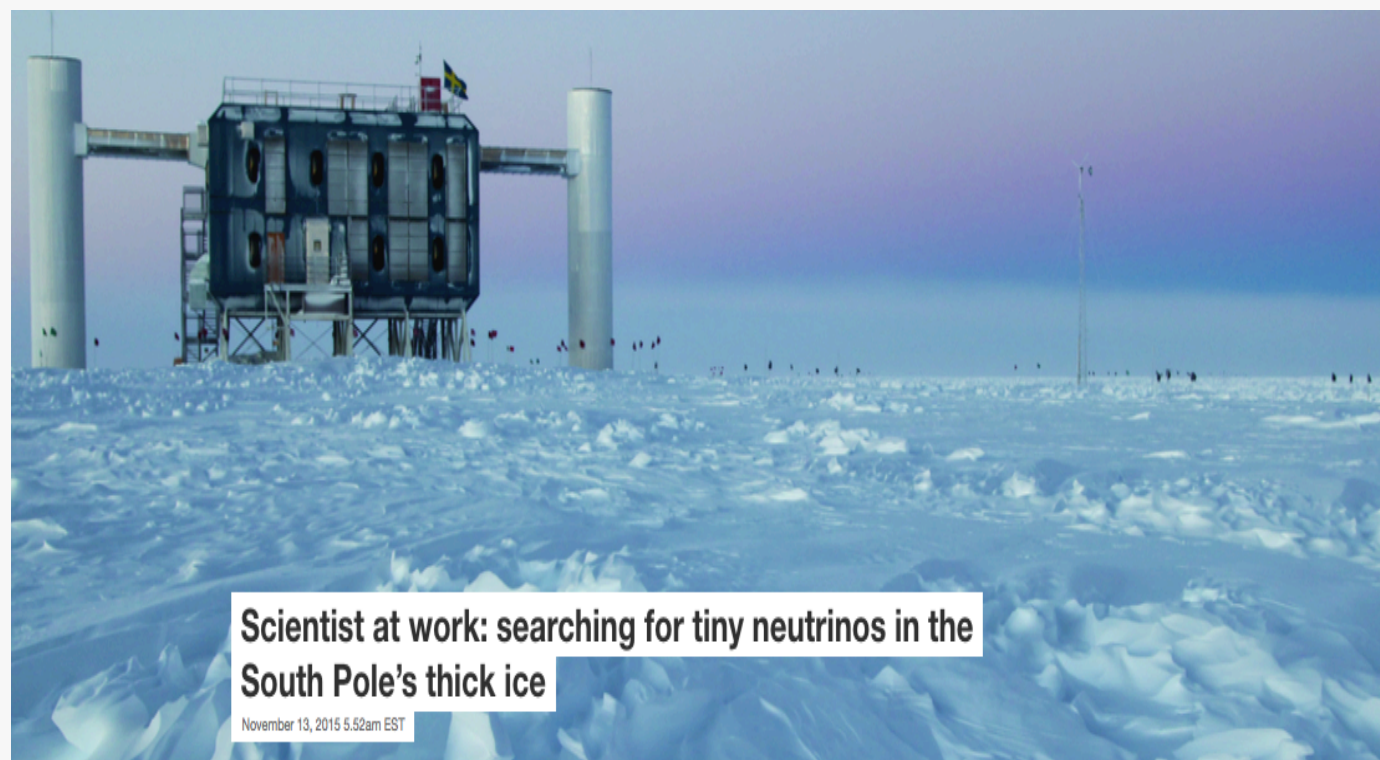
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What's it like  
to be a scientist?

If you could tell  
America anything  
about your job,  
what would it be?



### Scientist at work: searching for tiny neutrinos in the South Pole's thick ice

November 13, 2015 5:52am EST

Ice cold physics: hunting for neutrinos in Antarctica. Sven Lidström, IceCube/NSF, CC BY-NC

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Standing at the South Pole is the next-best thing to being on another planet. If you walk a few hundred yards away from the buildings that make up the National Science Foundation's [research station](#), you see a featureless plain of snow and ice, most likely empty of living creatures larger than microbes for hundreds of miles. With nothing but snow for sound waves to echo off, there's an eerie silence. It's easy to get lost in reverie, contemplating the stark landscape. But then you remember that you're here for a reason: to work on what may be the world's weirdest telescope, searching for some of nature's most mysterious subatomic particles.

Author



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Disclosure statement

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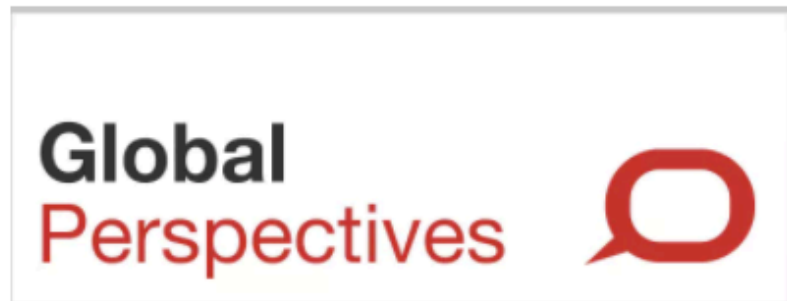
A worker cleans a statue of Vladimir Lenin in St. Petersburg. But how much Russian history gets whitewashed today? Dmitri Lovetsky/AP Photo

## How does an authoritarian regime celebrate a revolution?

Cynthia Hooper, *College of the Holy Cross*

Because the Kremlin hopes to project strength and unity, history isn't used as much to inform as it is to inspire, with events cherry-picked to fit within a fuzzy framework of 'Russian greatness.'

More



### Analysis and Comment



Some of the Facebook and Instagram ads used in 2016 election released by members of the U.S. House Intelligence committee. AP Photo/Jon Elswick

## Why social media may not be so good for democracy

Gordon Hull, *University of North Carolina - Charlotte*

A scholar asks whether democracy itself is at risk in a world where social media is creating deeply polarized groups of individuals who tend to believe everything they

### Research and News

## Brain science should be making prisons better, not trying to prove innocence

Arielle Baskin-Sommers, *Yale University*

Hollywood pushes a fantasy version of what neuroscience can do in the courtroom. But the field does have real benefits to offer, right now: solid evidence on what would improve prisons.

## Why it's time to lay the stereotype of the 'teen brain' to rest

Dan Romer, *University of Pennsylvania*

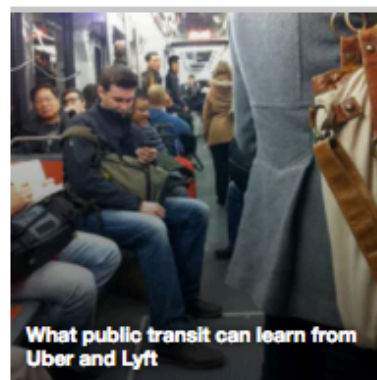
In recent years, the notion of a structurally imbalanced teenage brain has been faulted for bad choices. A review of studies suggests that a deficit in brain development is not to blame.

More Research and News

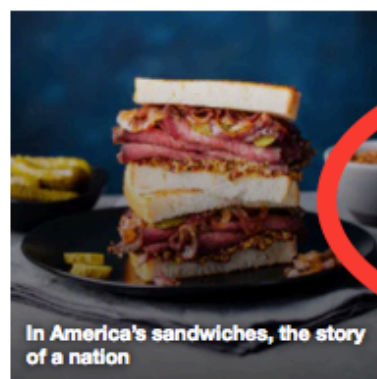
### Tax reform



### Editors' Picks



What public transit can learn from Uber and Lyft



In America's sandwiches, the story of a nation



### Most Read past week

Teens are sleeping less – but there's a surprisingly easy fix

Is daylight saving time worth the trouble? Research says no

What the charges against Manafort, Gates and Papadopoulos could mean for Trump

In America's sandwiches, the story of a nation

How the smartphone affected an entire generation of kids

Pitch an idea

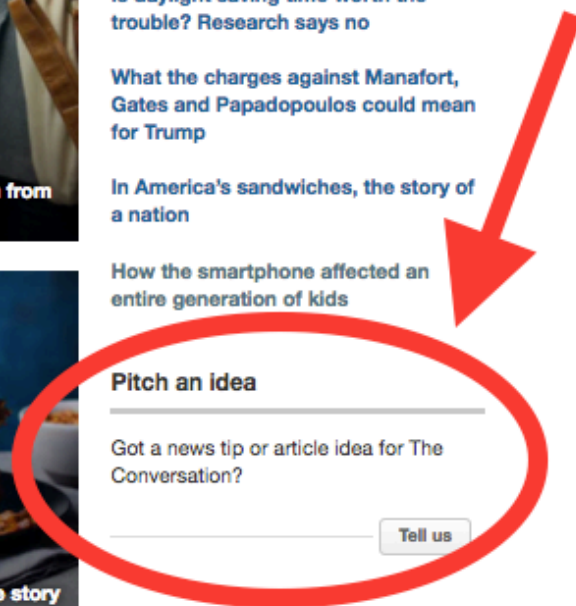
Got a news tip or article idea for The Conversation?

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Our Audience

The Conversation has a monthly

Pitch here!



### The pitch: What's your story?

Story \*

In one or two sentences, what's your story? (50 word limit)

Significance \*

Why is it interesting or significant for non-academic readers? (100 word limit)

Other key points

Why is this a good time to do this article? What is your expertise in the subject? (150 word limit)

Multimedia

Do you have any photos, video, audio, graphs or other material to help illustrate your story? If so, please describe them. (200 word limit)

Timeliness \*

- Relevant now
- Relevant in the future
- Timeless ("Explainer")

Is this issue particularly relevant now, or looking ahead? Or are you suggesting this as a timeless **explainer** of a commonly misunderstood issue?

Section \*

- Arts + Culture
- Big Data + Applied Math
- Economy + Business
- Education
- Environment + Energy
- Ethics + Religion
- Health + Medicine
- Philanthropy + Nonprofits
- Politics + Society
- Science + Technology

The pitch form goes directly to the section editor and is the best way to get your pitch seen

This form is the first step in turning an idea into a story

Work with your great communications team!

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