

S2E07 Foreword: Societies in Hard Times

Guest: Dr. Colin Rose

[00:00:00] **Alison Innes:** [00:00:00] It's pretty fair to say that the last year has been a tumultuous one. We are still living through the pandemic and we live through the endless news cycles and uncertainties of the American election in 2020. Climate change is still threatening with dramatic weather happening around the globe. For some of us in north America.

[00:00:15] This might be our first time grappling with chaotic, uh, people, but it certainly isn't the first time that societies have lived through disruption. Today, we're going to take a look at history to help us understand how societies responded to crisis.

[00:00:30] **Colin Rose:** [00:00:30] Um,

[00:00:37] **Alison Innes:** [00:00:37] the podcast where we're not afraid to dig into big issues. I'm your host, Alison Innes, and each episode, I bring you a conversation with one of our researchers from Brock universities, faculty of humanities. My guest today is Dr. Colin rose, a professor with the department of history and a social historian examining conflict in 16th and 17th century Italy.

[00:00:58] Is 2019 book, a [00:01:00] Renaissance of violence homicide in early modern Italy published by Cambridge university, press examines. How economic decline, climate induced drought and plague lead to the decline of social institutions and the rise of interpersonal violence. Oh, yeah.

[00:01:18] Also incorporates digital techniques, such as databases and GIS or geographic information systems mapping into his research to explore and analyze and visualize large amounts of data. He has also recently taught a new course at Brock university on disasters. And we're going to be asking him about that later as well.

[00:01:39] So welcome Collin.

[00:01:41] **Colin Rose:** [00:01:41] Thank you very much for having me here. It's wonderful to finally make the podcast.

[00:01:47] **Alison Innes:** [00:01:47] Well, you and I have spoken a few times over the past year, um, for, for Brock news stories and we'll put links to those in the show notes. So listeners can, can, can read further. Um, but if they, if they haven't been [00:02:00] keeping up with the Brock news, can you let us know a little bit about your research?

[00:02:05] **Colin Rose:** [00:02:05] Thanks for the question. As you, as you mentioned in your introduction of me, uh, my work focuses on the sort of intersections of social instability and violence and, uh, climate instability in a, in a particular environment in the past it's north Italy in the 17th century, which is. A fascinating time and place because it has all the hallmarks of what it would be, this sort of stable area, right?

[00:02:32] This, it has a centralized government. Um, that's really, you know, not challenged in any serious way. Uh, it has a developed Guild based economy. It participates in international European, uh, commodities exchanges, et cetera, et cetera. Um, But then in the early 17th century, under the sort of weight of a series of crises, um, first and foremost, there's, there's the 30 years of war, uh, that, that erupts in [00:03:00] north Italy, in the 1620s that brings on and, uh, and sort of exacerbates, uh, a series of.

[00:03:06] Bad harvests and then famines relating to the general sort of unstable climate of the little ice age. And then in, in the early 1630s, there's a, there's a terrible outbreak of plague and all of these, um, Sort of major episodes combined with a sort of general stagnation of the economic vitality of the whole region and this, you know, once vital state of, uh, below Inia ends up sort of descending into this.

[00:03:37] There's almost, you know, not, not open civil war, but these civil war levels of factional violence in which. Uh, regional elites are sort of, you know, in the chaos of uncertainty and instability are sort of grabbing for more power and jostling among themselves quite violently for, um, a new place in, in whatever's going to come after the, the plague times and [00:04:00] that.

[00:04:00] Yeah. And that play kicks off a process of about 30 years in which, um, we see heightened levels of, of interpersonal violence, particularly the sort of factional, uh, cyclical, feuding, vendetta type violence that really characterizes. Um, the unstable regimes of, uh, of, of the early modern period, rather than what you would expect to see it below in your, which for, for all appearances is, is very much a stable place, but sort of shatters, uh, in the early 17th

[00:04:33] **Alison Innes:** [00:04:33] century.

[00:04:33] Are those, are those events like to, to what degree are they kind of a constellation of bad luck? And to what degree are they? Um, Cause and effect or feeding off of each other to, to destabilize. Uh, well, that's probably a bit of a tricky question.

[00:04:51] **Colin Rose:** [00:04:51] The, some of it is some of it is circumstantial, right? I mean, it's, it's, it is a tricky question, but it's actually an important question, right?

[00:04:57] Some of them are circumstantial, right? You can't, uh, you can't [00:05:00] always predict the weather. And, uh, when, when you have a series. Cold rainy years and you get poor harvests, you know, you can't control that. Um, nor can you, despite the sort of public health measures that they do institute, and at the beginning of, of an onset of plague, you can't really control the plague without antibiotics and basic sanitation.

[00:05:22] It's not actually hard, but, um, so some of them, some are just circumstantial, right? Bad things are happening, but then those bad things are reflecting off the sort of really structural weaknesses of the society, which is, uh, the sort of underdeveloped civil society that, that really lays, lays at the foundations of, of this society.

[00:05:43] It's built on a, um, almost colonial. Uh, structure all my, you know, uh, the papacy conquers below in, you know, away from its local magnate, local, all like our rulers in the

early 16th century and that, [00:06:00] uh, those, those local oligarchs and their descendants and their allies and their rivals, um, all Harvard.

[00:06:08] Strong resentment against this, this foreign rule, this papal rule that, that becomes, uh, imposed on them in, in the early 16th century. And though some of them try to sort of work within it. Some of them see, you know, advantage for their families in sort of accommodating people rule. Uh, there's always this, you know, sort of, uh, the glory days, uh, What bologna was free, right?

[00:06:33] This sort of, uh, th th th this sort of, you know, dream of Republican freedom prior to the Pope that the sort of lurks under the surface, and that's sort of underdeveloped, uh, relationship between, you know, the elite classes of this society and its sort of foreign, rural. Um, really creates this, this, this deep structural weakness, uh, at the core of, um, of [00:07:00] the society.

[00:07:00] It sort of influx all the institutions of the society, which are governed and operated by these elites in many ways, but only with their sort of, yeah. Half in participation. They're always angling for themselves. They're always angling to one up of each other and the papacy. And, uh, so-so, there's this, as I say, I say it again, like deep structural weaknesses, uh, that, that just limit the strength of.

[00:07:30] Uh, any kind of civil society to, to sort of direct energies towards the, the, the good of the state say or, or, or the common good or the good of the people that, um, so it's, it's a combination of the two, obviously, right? There's there's circumstance and then there's structure and one circumstance it's structure it's, uh, it's, it, it knocks down the walls, you know, in many ways.

[00:07:52] **Alison Innes:** [00:07:52] So you mentioned, um, public health measures and, and I'm, I'm curious, um, how. Did they respond [00:08:00] to the plague? Were, were they able to, um, uh, obviously their scientific understanding of what was going on? Um, wouldn't be quite what we would have now in the modern world, but were they able to respond to people's?

[00:08:17] Fear, uh, take measures that gave them a feeling. So

[00:08:23] **Colin Rose:** [00:08:23] there are, uh, preventative measures and, and responsive measures, um, that the urban governments in Italy, in the 17th century take, uh, in an attempt to ward off and then control and then combat plague, um, uh, on the preventative side, the, the urban, you know, the major cities of Italy each have a quite powerful, usually pretty well-funded.

[00:08:47] Organized by, you know, this, these same elites, um, uh, health magistracy that is responsible for maintaining the conditions under which according to their understanding of wellness and health, um, the [00:09:00] conditions under which plague will, it can be avoided. So very often, uh, particularly if they're sort of rumors of plague in other places, these care magistrates, these will organize, um, sort of, uh, an inquest around the city where they will go.

[00:09:14] Um, they will go. Particularly to the poorer neighborhoods of the, of the city. That's always, it's always deeply classes and they will investigate for what they think are the conditions under which disease breeds. They'll, they'll look at your, are there fleas in the mattresses? Um, are there filthy cesspools sort of heavily sass pets?

[00:09:31] Um, are the kids, are there too many people in, uh, small areas? Um, There is a sort of developed preventative science, uh, that, you know, identifies a set of conditions that, uh, create wellness and health and, and, and seeks to impose those conditions by eliminating, uh, I mean, what, what Mary Douglas would call is what, a matter out of place right there, there's the, these ideas of sort of purity, a danger and where there is.

[00:10:00] [00:09:59] Dirt and feels there is danger. Um, on the responsive side, once you sort of hear about plague what's the, the urban government has, you know, in, in bologna in 1629, we hear about play coming from Germany. And as soon as you hear about plagues, somewhere on the major trade routes and bolognaise sits right on the major trader yeah.

[00:10:17] Uh, that goes north, south through Europe. Um, Well, once you hear about plague on this trade route, I mean, in one, it's a matter of time to a certain extent, but then there's a, there's a, there's a, there's a machinery that kicks in. That's developed, you know, very much in the 14th century, in the wake of the, the initial outbreaks of black plague.

[00:10:33] Um, indeed the word quarantine. I mean, you must know where the, for this point in 2021, you must've heard the origins of the word quarantine. Uh, the quote on Tina that is the 40 days, uh, that ships are required. To wait in the Venetian lagoon before they were deemed to be safely clear of plague and allowed, um, allowed onto finishing territory, right.

[00:10:58] I'll have to dock at [00:11:00] a definition docs. Um, so the quarantine is, is very much a, the, the go-to measure. As soon as you hear of a plague, um, You instituted, you know, greater levels or green, more in tread gray, um, you know, these, these levels of, of quarantine as the play gets closer, I, you start with, okay, well, you know, only commercial travel is coming in the gates.

[00:11:23] Um, no, no pilgrims. Um, Yeah, no, no, uh, no, no travelers. And again, it gets classist and racist here. Right? There's they always ban Roma people as well. Um, then, you know, once you realize, oh, it's still coming closer, then it's okay. No livestock trade, you know, cows or pigs or chickens could come into the city from elsewhere.

[00:11:45] And then, you know, when it's, when it's two cities down the road, you shut the whole doors. Um, and, and then, you know, when, when is the next city over, when you realize it's coming, then it's, then it's a full-on care. If you're right, then it's a stay at home order. So at first they try and quarantine, whole cities, right.

[00:11:58] They try and they try and lock [00:12:00] out the outside world because they have walls, right? They're they're, they're waltz cities. Um, so they shut the gates. They double the gate guards. They try and keep people as much as they can. And then when they realized that, you know, this is, this is probably coming here, no matter what, then it's a, then it's a stay at home, locked out and core a curfew.

[00:12:15] Particularly on, uh, women. Um, the theory being that women, you know, um, did not have professions that required them to be out of the home. So, uh, usually women are, you know, put under strict curfew in their homes, 24 hours a day, uh, which just cast the fact that, you know, many women indeed had much work to do outside the home.

[00:12:34] Um, not to mention, you know, life in Italy in the 17th century was very much. It takes place outside the home. Um, and, and so there's all sorts of ways that people seek to subvert these, right. And then as we see in, uh, 20, 20, 20, 21 as well, um, locked down orders are only so effective as they are followed.

[00:12:55] Right. And, uh, in the same way, the, that, that. We have [00:13:00] sought ways to get around them and, you know, blur the lines and say, oh, well, it's okay if I just see that person. Cause I did my, did my quarantine time. I did my, you know, they've, they've been apart from everyone and I've been apart from everyone. So, you know, I only went to the grocery store last week and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[00:13:16] In the same way that we do at people, justify the selves and people, you know, find ways to see their friends and people find ways to carry on their business. Um, and, and so there's always. Uh, holes in the system. Right. Um, the other thing that they do is they have these, uh, in the same way that we're going to see it right soon enough, I expect that we'll see at least for international travel, some kind of vaccine passport, um, that, that, you know, establishes your vaccine credentials to, to, in order to, to travel internationally.

[00:13:44] Um, and in, in, in Europe, in the 17th century, they had to have these things in Italian. They're called, uh, Fady descending top, basically a Testament of health. Um, or a declaration of health, it's a little card you carry around in your wallet. And it says, at least when I left Milan, I [00:14:00] was free of the plague.

[00:14:01] Uh, and it's, you know, signed by your local government and theoretically it gains you access to, um, to the next city over. And eventually those get canceled too, because you know, the, they realize there's no stopping it. The other thing that they do is they set up. Deliberate play hospitals, uh, called the lateral ratty, um, after Lazarus, uh, that are, that are treatment centers deliberately for plague victims.

[00:14:25] This is where you get like a huge degree of sort of sadness and empathy. And in the historical accounts of play, right, as you read about these lats are at the end, the, the nurses, the nuns who are nurses in these hospitals. You know, gotta be among the most selfless people and then most generous people in, uh, in the historical record of the nurses and the physicians who, you know, quite willingly put themselves in front of this plague in the same way that, um, they're our very own nurses and physicians are working at the brand new hospital here in Vaughan, the court, the Luci COVID hospital, um, that there's, there are these people who in the face of, of [00:15:00] great fear and great danger, well will put themselves, um, to try and comfort.

[00:15:05] To try and comfort other people, right. To try and comfort the sick. Um, and, and so those are the, those sort of major, uh, measures that the public health takes is, is they're not actually terribly different from ours, right? There's, uh, a system of prevention based on,

you know, trying to maintain conditions of health and wellness and make sure that people are as healthy as they can be at all times.

[00:15:24] Uh, and then there's a sort of machinery that kicks in PROMEO much more regular than we are accustomed to of, uh, of quarantine and attempting to sort of limit the spread of disease. Um, and then, then there's, then there's treatment options. That that are sometimes more effective than others. And they have, you know, various sanitation regimes, um, you know, they wash their hands with vinegar and times of play.

[00:15:49] That's, that's what the physicians and nurses do. Um, the unfortunate thing is that that, that their understanding of plague, uh, is, is flawed by. The [00:16:00] the, the flaws in their, in their disease theory, right. In their theory of disease. And so even if according to the theory of disease that they practice everything, they should do everything they do should work.

[00:16:09] Um, their, their theory of diseases is not accurate in the sense that we think it is. Although there is this strange thing where, you know, now that we fully understand that the COVID is an airborne pathogen. Um, I always joke that, you know, while the miasmatic theory is correct, actually, it's, it's, it's bad air.

[00:16:27] That makes you sick. I haven't quite convinced people. Haven't convinced my family that you can give people COVID by raise from your eyes, but, um, they've, they've at least signed out of the miasmatic theory again. That's good. But this is so there's these there's these, this, this it's, it's not actually terribly different from our, from our world in that sense, except for the phrase for that.

[00:16:47] Yeah.

[00:16:48] **Alison Innes:** [00:16:48] Um, I've seen some pictures, um, the circulating on social media and perhaps some of our listeners have to have people who have created their own plague masks, the, um, the long beach, um, [00:17:00] masks that would have herbs. And from that kind of thing, um, inside of them now this pandemic, I think for the most part, in terms of kind of the general population is a first-time experience for many of us.

[00:17:14] Um, certainly, yeah. On this scale. My understanding is that the, the plague was something that came around periodically that it wasn't just kind of, it came in, it went and that was it. It was kind of some, it was always somewhere happening in Europe. So for the,

[00:17:29] **Colin Rose:** [00:17:29] you know, 450 years between us. 1345 and no close to 1800.

[00:17:36] I think the last major outbreak of bubonic plague in Europe is, um, in like Western Russia, I think in like 1771 or something like that, the exact date escapes me. But, um, during that period, when sort of plague is, is endemic, as they say, there is plagues somewhere in Europe, In any given year in that, in that, you know, 400 odd years, um, there is plagues [00:18:00] somewhere in Europe, it doesn't, you know, completely ever disappear and then come back, but a good travels around us.

[00:18:05] Um, most areas we'll see plague three to four times a century. Uh, probably, I mean, I often think of it as generational sort of each generation kind of has their plague. Uh, and these generation, you know, There's, there's a couple different strains as there are, uh, with, with Corona viruses, um, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:18:28] So some have different, uh, morbidities than others, um, uh, have different transmissibility than others. Um, but they're, they, they travel around and so you sort of see it happening. No one wants a generation every, every 25 years or so you can expect to see plague. Um, some, some episodes are much worse than others.

[00:18:49] Three months, some episodes last a year and a half some episodes, uh, have a 5% mortality. So in a sense, had a 65% mortality. Um, so [00:19:00] it, but it never really goes away like in, in until very late. And actually, you mean there, there are Bluebonnet plague outbreaks in various parts of the world today. Um, we now understand it to be, to be, uh, you know, a treatable bacterial disease.

[00:19:14] That, that you can treat with antibiotics. So it's sort of micro this thing that was such a scourge on, uh, on, on the globe for so, so long. Um, the actually, you know, with, with modern, with, with the basics of modern medicine can, can be pretty much defeated. Um, yeah. Treated quite happened anyway, but yeah, so it's, it's, it's endemic in, in early modern Europe.

[00:19:36] Um, it's endemic in, in much of the early modern world is, uh, there's recent work ever by, um, Monica green in the American historical review. That is shaking up how we understand, uh, the black death certainly. And, um, and then telling us actually to start looking. You're a much more global phenomenon than we read Heather to really considered of.

[00:19:59] Um, [00:20:00] so it's, it's not something that, you know, goes, it's always, it's always, you know, it might be, it might be on the other end of the continent, but it's, it's gonna swing back eventually. So I think the major ones in the major ones in Italy or something like six, like in, in the late sixties and there was one like 1554, I think, 1576.

[00:20:21] Around 1598 maybe. And then again, like 1630, um, and you know, some areas are hit worse than others. At those times. I like the 1575 hits Southern Italy, the 1630 hits, uh, Northern Italy really hard. It's probably 60, 30 is probably the worst plague for, for Northern Italy. Um, in terms of its mortality rates, I mean, uh, below in ya, my city, he gets off comparatively light with 25% more time.

[00:20:49] Uh, Parma, you know, two cities down the road, 50% mortality, Venice, 50% mortality patio, 60% mortality. Just these, these massive death [00:21:00] counts. It's horrifying to imagine. I mean, just, just thinking of the stress and trauma that we're undergoing right now, and then. Imagining that, you know, on a, on a scale, much, much, much higher.

[00:21:11] It's crazy. So

[00:21:12] **Alison Innes:** [00:21:12] you look at how this, uh, experience experienced with the play, how the what's happening in politics and with the military and with the climate change and how all these things come together. And result in one of the highest recorded or perhaps highest ever recorded homicide rates in Europe by 1660,

[00:21:34] **Colin Rose:** [00:21:34] the highest ever recorded homicide rate in Europe.

[00:21:38] Yeah, that was a shock, uh, you know, late in the 17th century at the urban homicide rate of was, was 104, and homicide rates are measured. No per hundred thousand population. So that means that, um, you know, in, in a given year, in this particular year in 60 and 60 of, of a given hundred thousand pop, you know, [00:22:00] people in the city of bologna, 104 of them are murdered.

[00:22:04] It's a bit of a. Silly number in essence, there are only 65,000 people in bologna in 1660. Um, so you know, the actual number of, of, uh, of homicides is, uh, more like 70 something. Um, but in the entire province of Balone yeah. Which is a much, much bigger, you know, a hundred, 225,000 people, um, all then, you know, it translates to, I think there was 140 murders in this.

[00:22:35] It was province of 225,000 people, um, over the course of over the course of the year. And that's, that's still pretty shocking, right? If, if Toronto saw a hundred murders a year, uh, we'd have a major problem. We usually see 60 to 80, I think. Um, And, and Toronto is a city of, you know, three or 4 million people.

[00:22:54] Um, so maybe even bigger, I don't minimum, uh, the, the, the scale [00:23:00] of, of the violence near the modern period is, seems a little, um, shocking to, to our minds now, because we don't really conceive of that commonness and that sort of. Uh, frequency of experience of a fatal violence, right? It's it really indicates a society in which sort of violence is part of the repertoire of behavior and conflict, right?

[00:23:22] That it's not a, it's not something that, you know, only abberant people do, but it's something that is wielded quite deliberately by a wide range of people and, uh, and, and a wide range of classes. Um, in order to solve whatever problem is facing them, whatever social conflict they're engaged in. How do you

[00:23:41] **Alison Innes:** [00:23:41] figure out the homicide rate?

[00:23:43] How does one go about, um, researching counting, uh, homicides in 1660?

[00:23:50] **Colin Rose:** [00:23:50] So I'm really fortunate. To have chosen. I mean, I'm not fortunate. I chose to, I chose baloney deliberately for this purpose because, uh, it's archive [00:24:00] of criminal records is, is unparalleled in terms of its size and its conservation. So by my primary source, my major collection of documents is the color.

[00:24:13] Criminal records of the 17th century. Uh, I chose one year of every 10 simply because of the volume of the archive. I couldn't do it all. And in each of those years, I, I went through the entirety of the, uh, criminal records, which include everything from denunciations complaints, uh, all the way through, you know, which are, you know,

summary, justice, you know, dealt with or not, um, all the way through to sort of elaborate long.

[00:24:39] Time criminal trials with lawyers and defendants and judges, et cetera, et cetera, and executions and pardons. And, um, and so for every given year I read the entirety of the, of the, of the criminal record, um, drew out all of the homicide cases, uh, into a database, um, with their, both their sort of [00:25:00] quantitative and qualitative characteristics.

[00:25:02] Uh, and then, and then built my, uh, Build my research off of the about 700, uh, trials that I've found over the span of 11 years. Um, the reason that, you know, this is this, this is probably a very accurate sense of, of how many people are actually killed because it's very rare for a murder not to come to the attention of the authorities, not to make its way into the justice system.

[00:25:32] Um, at some point, at least, I mean, I found a couple sort of really bizarre cases where someone is, you know, redoing the landscaping in their Riverside property and they come across a skeleton and, you know, through the, the, the forensics of the time. And so, you know, figuring out where it is and. Uh, size of the skeleton and et cetera, they trace it back to, you know, a cold case from, from 11 years ago or something like that.

[00:25:59] Right. [00:26:00] So, so you get the sense that there isn't a serious machine of, uh, of, of at least investigation trying to keep track of all of these homicides. Um, It, it would be much less of a reliable count of say, you know, petty assault, uh, or domestic violence or sexual violence. Um, the sorts of violence that are much less likely to leave an unavoidable.

[00:26:27] Uh, judicial trail, right? I mean, w w when someone is murdered, there's a body and there's a, there's an absence in someone else's life, right. That there's, there's kin, uh, aggrieved kin of a murdered victim, for instance. So, um, it comes to the attention of the court, even if it's only as a denunciation, even it's only as.

[00:26:48] I'm pretty sure that guy killed my husband or Hey, I'm pretty sure that guy killed my son. So the, the, the, the basic method of, of homicide studies is to track down as many homicides as you can, through [00:27:00] whatever sources are available to you. Um, in, in later periods, you, you want to double check what can be found in criminal records and cancel.

[00:27:06] It can be found in say a newspaper records or. Or the records there. Aren't so many of those for the early modern period. I checked in the Chronicle records and, and, you know, confirm some, but didn't add any that weren't in the, in the judicial record. And then I also checked in the, um, the records of executions in the city too, to see if there were any, uh, And people executed for homicides, um, that I had missed.

[00:27:33] And then obviously, you know, the core wasn't executing people that they didn't have any trial, uh, records for. So I didn't have anyone, so I'm pretty confident in the size of my sample. Um, and, and it's, it's, it's more or less a process of reading murder trials.

[00:27:47] **Alison Innes:** [00:27:47] So if these murders are being noticed, they're being investigated, there's even like cold cases, um, being looked at like, why.

[00:27:57] Why is the violence increasing? Why, why are, [00:28:00] why do homicides go up so dramatically in this period?

[00:28:03] **Colin Rose:** [00:28:03] Well, it's a really challenging, um, question you ask because, uh, it's, it's, I mean, there's, there's, there's easy answers and there's hard answers, right? And then the easy answer is of course, um, that, you know, There is this group of recalcitrant elites who see an opportunity in the sort of chaos of the plague and the challenge that that brings to the overall stability of the region to reassert their, their hereditary troll over the area and to reestablish the sorts of rivalries and power politics, uh, that had animated their families in the past.

[00:28:45] Right. And that's, that's sort of the. The, the kind of straightforward answer is that chaos brings chaos, right? Um, that, that, that the, the, the plague presents, uh, an environment in which bad guy is going to be bad, I guess. [00:29:00] Uh, and, and, and violent guy is going to violent. Uh, killer is going to kill. Uh, the, the, the, the sort of deeper answer of that.

[00:29:07] And then one of the things in, in homicide studies we look at are sort of different levels of causation, right? There's sort of the immediate cause of a homicide. This guy, uh, tried to Rob the other guy. There's the sort of proximate cause, which is that, well, you know, the plague had happened last year. He was really hungry, so we need to drop that guy.

[00:29:27] Uh, and then there's the sort of ultimate cause and the ultimate causes are very hard to get at the ultimate cost here, I think, um, is that there is this, you know, distinctly weak civil society, uh, and, and, and a distinct lack of. What, uh, Randolph Roth and, and other sociologists sort of working in the Putnam tradition, um, would call social trust.

[00:29:52] And that's a, that's a, a theory I hold to quite happily as well, social trust being the sort of [00:30:00] measure of the legitimacy and, uh, acceptability of. Hierarchies institutions, organizational systems of collective life. That means a, a general acceptance among, uh, a wide sway to the population of the, uh, 40 of government and the legitimacy of that authority.

[00:30:26] Uh, a general acceptance that the social hierarchies of a society are. Um, if not fair, at least transparent, uh, and that there may be opportunities to, uh, Trevor's those hierarchies, um, in, in your, in your, through your action, um, a general sense, the thought the institutions of society are working to the benefit.

[00:30:57] Um, a as widest way or the [00:31:00] populous as possible in, in, in short and say sort of trust in the, um, collective project, right? Like the collective social political institutional project, um, bologna fails to achieve that. Right there is, there is never that, uh, broad acceptance, certainly not among, you know, the elite classes who all, a lot of power in the city.

[00:31:25] Uh, there's never that broad acceptance of the legitimate authority of the people, state of the legitimate authority of the, the, the people, governor of the city, of the institutions that operate in that governor's name and the name of the Pope. There's never

the, uh, acceptance that those institutions are working to the benefit of not just the elites of baloney, but also the, the broader populace, um, the whatever legitimate authority.

[00:31:54] Is, uh, is, is significantly challenged by these series of [00:32:00] crises in the, in the, in the early years of the 17th century, because the, the, the apparatus of the state proves itself inept at, uh, confronting and assuaging. These crises that hit the city one after another, that had the whole province. One after another right.

[00:32:15] Economic decline, a war famine, and then play, right. You get these days, there's 1, 2, 3, 4 punch. Um, that really knocks the society on its, on its bottom. Uh, and, and as they stand back up, they, they sort of look at this, you know, papal authority above and says, look, we, we, we, this, you were supposed to be the, you know, broad centralized institution.

[00:32:37] Uh, the, you know, the, the, the power, you know, the Leviathan that, uh, campus, I'll say for an exchange for, you know, no longer having the, the, the, the freedoms of local rules. Why shouldn't we reassert ourselves? Why, uh, you were supposed to protect the crane supply. Uh, why shouldn't I. Fight for my own family's bread, you know, and it happens not just [00:33:00] at the level of sort of a li politics where these elite families, you know, return to the factional vendetta that organized their communal politics in earlier years.

[00:33:08] But it happens at the level of, of the, the agricultural workers in the, in the rural villages as well. But you see much more conflict over resources, uh, over, over land boundaries. Um, because there's this declined trust that you could take a conflict over where a field boundary is to the local magistracy magistracy and have it fairly adjudicated.

[00:33:33] And so you see a lot more people sort of taking it into their own hands and, uh, instead of, you know, litigating over. The location of the field stones, just, just picking one up and bashing their neighbor over the head with it instead. So there's this, this is real challenge under the face of these repeated and, and quite shocking and traumatic crises to that notion of a collective project and it's, and its legitimacy that that's social trust.

[00:34:00] [00:34:00] **Alison Innes:** [00:34:00] What do you see as a historian who, who works with these ideas of, of social trust? What, what do you see happening right now in our world? As we respond with this pandemic?

[00:34:15] **Colin Rose:** [00:34:15] Isn't that the question isn't that, and I will, as I've gotten used to doing in this year, and as you've heard me say before, um, I will preface my answer by saying it is always dangerous for historians to predict the future. I think last time you and I spoke, I was saying there's going to be widespread violence in the wake of the election.

[00:34:34] Um, that turned out to be relatively tamped out, uh, right. Uh, aside from the March six insurrection, which, I mean, historically, that's going to go down as a, as a, as a major, um, event, I think, but there wasn't the sort of widespread violence that, uh, some of us were predicting and in many ways that that some people were promising, um, I am.

[00:34:56] I am of course, very happy to be wrong on that count.

[00:34:59] **Alison Innes:** [00:34:59] Well, [00:35:00] there's some things that's good

[00:35:00] **Colin Rose:** [00:35:00] to be wrong about. Well, exactly right. I mean, I love being wrong about the potential, uh, widespread, you know, social violence in the wake of an election. I mean, that's, that's great. Super glad I'm wrong. Um,

[00:35:14] **Alison Innes:** [00:35:14] I was just gonna say the irony of course, is that, that was the day that the, um, I gotta get the name right here.

[00:35:22] The defense research and development Canada released their report on extremism and the pandemic. And, uh, you and I spoke about, about that afterwards as well. So, so I'm curious how, how. These ideas of, of, of social trust and misinformation, um, as well, play into what's happening. What w what, what you see happening now, not necessarily what you think is going to happen.

[00:35:49] I'll let you off the hook for that.

[00:35:51] **Colin Rose:** [00:35:51] Great. Excellent. Wonderful. I've always rocked. I don't even know what I'm going to have for lunch tomorrow. Um, I can't even guess, um, I want to front [00:36:00] load the, I don't think that what we're seeing right now is a, um, is a, is a moment, right? I think that what we're seeing right now is, uh, a part of probably not, you know, certainly not the end of, and probably not the beginning of either, um, a long.

[00:36:20] Process and series of processes that have been playing out in the west for, um, uh, for, for, for decades really. And obviously the United States right now is the sort of epicenter of this challenge to that collective social. Project that was kind of instituted in the wake of, of the world wars, right? This a broad understanding of the legitimacy of liberal democracy, uh, of, um, a generally collectivist approach to social welfare.

[00:37:00] [00:37:00] Uh, as much as Americans like to think that they're uniquely individual as much of their, their state, uh, in the immediate post-war years and up until Reagan, much of their stay was geared towards, um, the social welfare of, of broad sways of the population. I will not say all because. It has there have always been, uh, race and gender troubles in both the United States and other countries in the west, including Canada.

[00:37:23] Um, but in the past 25, 30 years, maybe, uh, there has been a much. More concerted, uh, and, and deeper sort of challenge. And I mean that both in an active sense, as well as they, whatever, you know, environmental sense to the, the conditions of that democracy, that basically the, um, terms of that social trust to have been transformed by changing demographics.

[00:37:57] By, uh, [00:38:00] changing population dynamics, uh, changing economic structures, you know, the hoarding of wealth at the upper, uh, tiers of society. Um, and that the, you know, the, the circle under which a liberal societies should be. Uh, establishing that social trust has gotten wider and wider and wider. And those who were in the original circle many ways have gotten more and more defensive about opening that, that trust up to, to, to new people.

[00:38:30] Um, so that's, this is where we see the sort of resurgence of white supremacist ideologies and white supremacist rhetoric and white supremacist action in both United States and Canada. Um, and, and, you know, Germany and Hungary and, uh, and all sorts of places where sort of neo-fascist racial politics are on the rise is that there has been this, you know, post-war effort by states and institutions, uh, and, and sort of liberal leaning in groups and all of these places, progressive as [00:39:00] groups to, um, open up that circle of social trust and provide a social project, a collective project.

[00:39:08] That includes many more people and, um, hateful racial ideologies in many ways have, have rejected that premise, uh, and therefore have rejected the social trust of those of that premise and therefore rejected the legitimacy of the institutions that promote that product project. Uh, this is why, you know, Vast swaves of Republican voters can, can say that Democrats are evil, right?

[00:39:42] Because they don't even recognize the legitimacy of a politics that runs counter. To their thinking. And Democrats, voters can say that Republican voters are evil because they don't recognize the legitimacy of their politics in any way, shape or form when [00:40:00] the politics have gotten so polarized. But, uh, there is perhaps a too wide of a yawning gap in there to understand how they can even be speaking about the same institutions.

[00:40:11] Um, this is why we see the rise of, you know, Mass delusions, like he went on, uh, where, where people legitimately believe that the globe is run by a vast cabal of, of child traffickers. Um, because there's just zero trust among those people at all. In the legitimacy of the social project of the state project of the politics that, that exist in the real world.

[00:40:39] They don't like it. They don't understand that they don't trust it. So there must be something much different, right? It's this very dangerous moment where, um, there there's a case that needs to be made that, uh, there is a, you know, there's reality and then there's a non-reality right. And reality [00:41:00] includes moderate politics of all stripes.

[00:41:02] Reality includes. Um, you know, arguments over budgets, reality includes arguments, uh, over, um, you know, the, the, the extent of, of, of foreign aid, the, the, you know, the, the military involvement in various places around the world. Reality doesn't include, uh, the notion that the, that the democratic politicians are, uh, Child traffickers.

[00:41:30] Right. And then, so there's this bizarre, um, challenge to the legitimacy of sort of the collective Western project that's been ongoing for years, but has culminated now and, and see where it goes from here. I don't, I maybe culminate is not the right word that has led to us where we are, where there's these, uh, ever entrenching camps of people who refuse to accept the legitimacy of.

[00:41:57] Uh, the world or the, I [00:42:00] refuse to accept the realities around them and that that's not just a, you know, disillusion of social trust. That's a dilute disillusion of the entire project. Right. And that's so, so, so that's a, that's, that's a strange place where we are now. And I think a lot of it has to do with, um, the sort of, you know, broadening of.

[00:42:22] Uh, of the ask of people, right? That, that, that you're asked to account for more people and different kinds of people, uh, in your, in your sphere of social trust. Um, but then you, you don't see, you know, then you say, well, if, if the institutions are now going to work for them, does that mean they're not working for me?

[00:42:41] And there's a lot of that, you know, sort of white working class anger that says, uh, these institutions that used to work for me, public schools, um, You know, now, now public schools are all about, uh, helping out underprivileged people, some of that, but you know what happened to me?

[00:42:58] **Alison Innes:** [00:42:58] So, so in [00:43:00] terms of, of, of social trust, is, is there a way back from, from it being lost?

[00:43:05] And, and again, I'm not asking you to try to predict the future here, but, but are there. Places that you've looked at, um, even bologna for, uh, for example, um, where they're able to rebuild social trust in the week of, uh, people.

[00:43:21] **Colin Rose:** [00:43:21] Historically, I'm going to be honest with you, Alison, uh, historically this violence.

[00:43:26] Right. Uh, I mean, uh, the, then in bologna, there's 30 years of increasing civil conflict, but the culminates with the mass exile of the heads of households are what half the elite families, um, in England, in the 17th century, there's 10 years of civil war. Uh, right. And then, you know, and, and that pattern plays out in a lot of places that there is, um, that there's violence.

[00:43:50] Right then in, in France, in the 18th century, there was various revolutions. And then again, in the 19th century, right. Um, in, in Russia, in [00:44:00] 1917 there's there's revolution. So, uh, and again, like, I don't want to predict because maybe already stations are stronger than that. And then maybe our institutions are going to be able to sort of reestablish legitimacy with people who believe that they're run by Satan Ms.

[00:44:14] Pedophiles, whose don't often work the first time. And I hate to be a, you know, Depressing about that. But, but what we saw on January six, that politics isn't gone, just because Joe Biden's in office. Uh, and, and, and, and, you know, just because Democrats took power and just because, you know, a COVID bill got passed, uh, just because people are getting relief checks doesn't mean that the politics that led people to storm the Capitol in order to.

[00:44:44] Uh, attempt to prevent the counting of legitimate democratic votes. I mean, those politics are gone. Um, and it also doesn't mean that, that, you know, that, that they're not going to research in, in, in some contexts somewhere. I hope I'm wrong about that. Right. And, [00:45:00] and I, and I hope that actually they do just fade away having one of the things that, one of the things that I've noticed about sort of the modern, extreme right.

[00:45:08] Is. Is not terribly resilient. It does. I mean, a lot of it is born online and it turns out it actually doesn't function very well in the real world. Um, which is great, but it's, it's still a

very potent force. So I don't know how the, how, how to re-establish social trust. Um, You can give and give and give and give and give.

[00:45:29] Uh, but that doesn't necessarily mean that people are going to change their minds at all. Right. And, and it's difficult to convince people that that institutions are working for them when they expense so long being convinced and convincing themselves otherwise.

[00:45:42] **Alison Innes:** [00:45:42] Yeah. Well, maybe we'll check in in 10 years.

[00:45:45] **Colin Rose:** [00:45:45] I, you know what I hope so. I hope that I hope that we can check it in 10 years. That'd be great. That'd be great. I'd love to have this conversation again in 10 years in a, in a stable democratic society where universities are well-funded

[00:45:57] **Alison Innes:** [00:45:57] speaking of universities. Um, I just [00:46:00] want to pivot for, for, for our last, our last bit here.

[00:46:03] Um, you ran an exciting new course. On, uh, pandemics and plagues and, uh, various crises that societies have lived through. And I was just wondering if you could plug the course for us a little bit.

[00:46:20] **Colin Rose:** [00:46:20] Uh, absolutely. I'd love to, uh, first of all, so speaking of pandemics, I'm working from home. You're about to hear my children coming in, in the background from, from playing outside at the park.

[00:46:28] Uh, so there, there will be small people shouting in a minute. It's, it's certainly a part of life these days. Uh, the course that I taught, I had planned as an under planning it for a few years, this kind of really, um, grab them when they're, when they get there. History course on, you know, like death disease and disaster in, in, in history.

[00:46:50] And it was going to be one of these sort of 10 days that shook the world, uh, kind of courses where I was going to pick, you know, a plague here and a war there and a natural [00:47:00] disaster there and, you know, whatever and, and sort of have this, you know, history through the rock. Parts course. And it was on the books for, for fall 2020, or we in 2018, I had put it on my slate of courses to teach as a, as you know, my big first-year course.

[00:47:16] Um, and then of course in March, 2020, uh, we, we, we entered our own pandemic lockdown and I sat on it for a month or two, and then I realized it in April or may. It was definitely going to be teaching this course in the midst of a pandemic. And I was likely going to be teaching this course to online. And I was likely going to be teaching this course, or there was 200 plus students in it.

[00:47:39] There were going to be people whose, uh, who had been sick or whose family members have been sick. There were bigger going to be people who had lost family members or friends or people they knew, um, you know, teaching a course called death disease and disaster no longer made sense. Uh, so I, I rapidly redesigned the course.

[00:47:58] Um, I would not recommend [00:48:00] taking the course and you've been working on for three years and in the space of, you know, three months, uh, redesigning it

for your class of 200, moving it online and redoing the whole thing. Um, and I called it a big task. So it was, it was tough, especially I was working at home with no childcare.

[00:48:17] Right. Cause there I was, I was designing it in the context of a pandemic and daycares were shut down and then. There was so much fear in the, in the spring and early summer of you can't even be anywhere. Right? So it, so I was at home with my kids just all the time, trying to figure out what I was going to do.

[00:48:33] Um, and it was, it was, it was, it was a rough summer, but the point is I, I D I redesigned this course to be called life in and after hard times how disasters shaped societies and I. Built it from the ground up as kind of a coping mechanism for myself, uh, and hopefully for my students as well that I wanted to, um, give my students a really long [00:49:00] perspective on how often and how many societies had gone through.

[00:49:06] You know, like really sort of earth shaking disasters and then, you know, earth shaking to the ashes. I started with Pompei, uh, right. I started with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius at Pompei and how the refugee communities that survived the, the eruption of Pompei settled around the bay of Naples and different communities.

[00:49:24] Um, and we moved through, uh, different natural disasters, earthquakes looking at Haiti, um, and, and Lisbon and Lima. Uh, and we looked at sort of hurricanes looking at Katrina and it was a great opportunity to, you know, to take advantage of some, some recent pop culture. When, when Disney released Hamilton, the musical on, uh, on Disney plus over the summer, um, I put the, I went onto the library of Congress website and found the.

[00:49:53] The letter that, that Alexander Hamilton wrote to the, the local newspaper, uh, on the island of San CWA [00:50:00] describing his experience in the, in the hurricane of, um, 17, uh, 17 70, 80, I think it was, you know, that, that, that, that, that hurts. Okay. That, that, that letter that he writes his way out, as he says, it's all you, I integrated that into it.

[00:50:14] And I, and then we went and we moved from there. We looked at some civil wars, and then we spent the last bit of the course I left pandemic and disease until sort of. Third of the course, because I wanted to know where we were going to be before I delivered it. And it was, it was really, I think, cathartic for, it was cathartic for me to teach at least.

[00:50:33] Um, and I hope it was cathartic for some of the students to sort of see the. I mean in many ways, see the cyclical nature of these things in past societies and see how there have always been, uh, as, as much as, you know, disease and disaster challenge, the structures of a society. There are always, uh, as Mr.

[00:50:53] Rogers would say, look for the helpers. Um, and, and there's always, you know, sort of built [00:51:00] in safe mechanisms, hopefully that. Bring people back in the wake of these things and the way that societies organize themselves historically in order to come back, um, you know, sort of, sort of taking the opposite tack of a lot of my research that says, you know, what goes wrong?

[00:51:17] Uh, this was how does it get right again? And, and so it was, it was really quite, and even if not, not how does it get right again, but at least how do people cope and how do people manage it? So we developed. Themes of, uh, um, sort of, you know, resiliency and, and sort of, uh, taking care of each other and, uh, you know, looking, looking at what we've lost fondly and looking ahead with hope sorta, you know, kind of hokey stuff, but stuff that I think came really clearly out of the historical record and historical materials that we were looking at, um, that I hope my students understood.

[00:51:53] I didn't teach it the way I would like to. Entirely asynchronously online just because it was a class [00:52:00] of 200 plus first year students. Um, and I didn't want to, um, no one, no one really knew what was happening still in the fall. Right. We didn't know what, uh, what, what the fall was going to bring. We didn't know how our students, you know, how many students were going to have internet that would allow them to get online and do seminars where there were so many unknowns still that I just said, okay, let's do this as easy as I can.

[00:52:22] I prerecorded lectures. I gave readings. I had a lot of, you know, Written assignments, uh, you know, reading responses and stuff like that. I had a short paper. I tried to keep it as sort of low labor on the students as I could, because I knew that everyone was dealing with other stuff. And I just wanted this to be, um, sort of a helpful perspective.

[00:52:42] And, and I, I hope, I hope that students. Found it helpful. I think some did at least. Uh, and then I'm going to do it again next year, you know, hopefully as a retrospective and then, but I'll do it, you know, I'll try and do more sort of a hybrid synchronous asynchronous course [00:53:00] this time round. Um, just to. Try to get to know people it's very difficult to teach when you don't get to meet your students at all.

[00:53:07] I found that hard that I only met them a couple of times when I, when I had meetings with them over teams and stuff like that. Uh, but, but I think it was, I think it was, I think it was helpful. It was helpful me. I hope it was all for our students. She was tough. And I think, I think students found a lot of a challenge.

[00:53:29] **Alison Innes:** [00:53:29] Well, thank you very much for joining us today. Um, it has been a real pleasure to talk.

[00:53:35] **Colin Rose:** [00:53:35] My pleasure. Thank

[00:53:36] **Alison Innes:** [00:53:36] you for having me and thank you as well to all of our lists. And if our listeners, if you're enjoying our episodes, please subscribe to the podcast on whatever your app of choice is and give us that coveted five star rating on apple podcasts.

[00:53:51] So others can find us too. And we'd love to hear from you on social media at Brock humanities as well. So I will see you for our next episode.

[00:54:04] [00:54:00] **Nicole Arnt:** [00:54:04] Thank you so much for listening to forward. Find all of our footnotes links to more information, transcripts and past episodes on our website. Rock u.ca forward slash humanities. We love to hear from our listeners. So please

join us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at rock humanities, please subscribe and rate us as well on your favorite podcasting app.

[00:54:29] So you will never miss an episode forward. It's hosted and produced by Alison Ines for the faculty of humanities at Brock university, I was sound design and editing is done by Nicole errand. Theme. Music is by special. Thanks to Brock universities, Makerspace and broccoli. Marketing and communications for studio and web support.

[00:54:56] This podcast is financially supported by the faculty [00:55:00] of humanities at Brock university.