

David S. Saurman
**Provocative Lecture
Series 2021–2022**



Erik O. Kimbrough, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Economics in the Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy at Chapman University's Argyros School of Business and Economics

Ideology, Norms, and the Prospects for Democracy

"A large body of evidence about Americans' political views shows that people often favor policies that seem to contradict their self-reported ideology. Self-identified conservatives often favor some liberal policies, and self-identified liberals often favor some conservative policies. Scholars worry that this lack of ideological consistency reflects ignorance or confusion, which might provide cause for concern about democratic governance. We design a survey to show that a substantial share of this inconsistency actually reflects what we call "pragmatic disagreement". Using an experiment we show that ideological consistency itself may be more worrisome than any evidence of "ignorance" since it is driven, in part, by pressure to conform to ideological group norms. Calls to encourage more ideological discipline by voters can also be seen as calls for mere conformity, which could give elites more influence over democratic politics.

Bio: Erik O. Kimbrough, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Economics in the Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy at Chapman University's Argyros School of Business and Economics. Kimbrough's research uses experiments to study the economics of rule-following, social norms, conflict resolution, cooperation and institutions, among other topics. He sometimes follows rules, even when doing so is costly.

**Wednesday,
November 10th
6:00–7:30pm (PST)**

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The Department of Economics invites students, faculty, and the general public to consider intellectual arguments on controversial topics. This series fosters the tradition of higher education to challenge ideas and develop critical thinking in an environment of respect for intellectual discourse. Our goal is that you engage critical thinking skills to reach your own informed position on controversial issues. We invite you to attend, relax, ponder, and enjoy the thought process.

For more information, please contact: Justin.Rietz@sjsu.edu

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