

An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road that curves through vibrant green fields. The road is flanked by rows of tall, thin trees, possibly cypresses, which cast long shadows on the grass. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with a clear blue sky visible at the top.

PM GLYNN  
INSTITUTE

**Greg  
Craven  
Lecture on**

**Ethics and  
Politics**

26 October 2022



**ACU**

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

# Greg Craven Lecture on Ethics and Politics

In 2022, the PM Glynn Institute established a new lecture named after its founder, Emeritus Professor Greg Craven.

The purpose of the lecture is to advance the university's role in leading important national conversations on ethical questions in public policy which affect our life in common. Ethics is one of the three key focus areas of ACU's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023, which seeks to encompass a wide and generous view of the common good, the insights of Catholic faith and tradition, and curiosity about different ideas to make a rich contribution to ethics, and a substantial and enduring scholarly contribution to public debate.

The lecture is named after Professor Craven to recognise his years of distinguished leadership at ACU and his establishment of the PM Glynn Institute, together with his long-standing interest in public policy and his role as an important public intellectual. He has made an immense and influential contribution in many areas, not least in education, constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the place of religion in a democratic society.

The inaugural Greg Craven Lecture on Ethics and Politics has been made possible through the generosity of an anonymous donor.



## EMERITUS PROFESSOR GREG CRAVEN AO GCSG

Greg Craven served as the third vice-chancellor of Australian Catholic University from 2008 to 2021.

His academic career began at the University of Melbourne in 1982, where he was successively a tutor, lecturer and reader. He was appointed foundation dean and professor of law at the University of Notre Dame Australia in 1997, after having served as Crown Counsel in the Victorian Attorney-General's Department between 1992 and 1995.

His publications include *Secession, The Convention Debates, Australian Federation, Future Proofing Australia, Shadow of the Cross* and, with Frank Brennan and Michael Casey, *Chalice of Liberty*.

He is an Officer of the Order of Australia and a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Gregory the Great.

In 2016, as ACU's Vice-Chancellor, he established the Patrick McMahon Glynn Institute as the university's public policy think tank.

# Mary Eberstadt

The inaugural Greg Craven Lecturer on Ethics and Politics is Mary Eberstadt, who holds the Panula Chair in Christian Culture at the Catholic Information Centre and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Faith and Reason Institute, both in Washington DC.

Mrs Eberstadt is an American writer whose contributions to the intellectual landscape traverse genres.

An essayist, novelist and frequent public speaker, she is author of several books of non-fiction, including *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization*, *Adam and Eve after the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution*, and *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics*.

Her social commentary draws from fields including anthropology, intellectual history, philosophy, popular culture, sociology and theology.

Her books and essays have been translated into Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Arabic, Dutch, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Hungarian and Turkish, and her novel, *The Loser Letters: A Comic Tale of Life, Death, and Atheism*, premiered as a stage play at the Catholic University of America in 2016.

Central to Mrs Eberstadt's diverse interests are questions concerning the philosophy and culture of Western civilisation and the fate and aspirations of postmodern humanity.





# Ethics and politics



The Craven Lecture examines the ethical dimensions of politics and their practical implications for public policy. It forms part of a range of initiatives at ACU making the university's expertise in ethics available to engage the most important issues for the future of Australia and the life of free societies.

## **ETHICS AT ACU**

As a Catholic university, ACU is explicit in its commitment to ethics as an area of study, reflection, debate and practice. This commitment is realised through the ACU Ethics Strategy.

The Ethos and related programs administered by the PM Glynn Institute are key components of the ACU Ethics Strategy. Ethos is a series of major events focusing on big public ethics questions for the future of Australia.

## **PUBLIC ETHICS**

Public ethics concerns what makes a good society, the values we need to share to sustain it, and what needs to be done to make it a reality.

Through Ethos and other new initiatives, ACU and its international partners draw on their shared ethical

expertise to address some of the most significant challenges facing democratic societies, reorienting our focus around the things that really matter for human fulfilment and the common good.

## **ETHICS AND POLITICS**

The Craven Lecture extends this work to include a specific focus on politics. We build our politics on the answers we give to questions which are ultimately ethical: What is a good society? How do we live together and manage disagreement? What does it mean to respect the dignity of the person? How do we foster friendship and a strong sense of a life in common?

These are the sort of questions the Craven Lecture will explore by reflecting on some of the major issues affecting politics, culture and society today.

# Ethos

Ethos is a new series of major events focused on the big public ethics issues of the day and what they mean for the future of Australia.

## LEADING DEBATES

Ethos events bring together leading thinkers and figures shaping public discussion to tackle current and emerging challenges for our life in common.

Speakers and participants are drawn from Australia and around the world, ranging across academia, politics, government, business, the media, culture and the arts.

## CONNECTING THINKERS

Each event connects thought-leaders and practitioners from a wide range of fields with ACU scholars and experts to discuss the issues shaping the national conversation and some of the questions they raise for public ethics.

## AUSTRALIA'S IDENTITY AND THE AUTHORITARIAN CHALLENGE

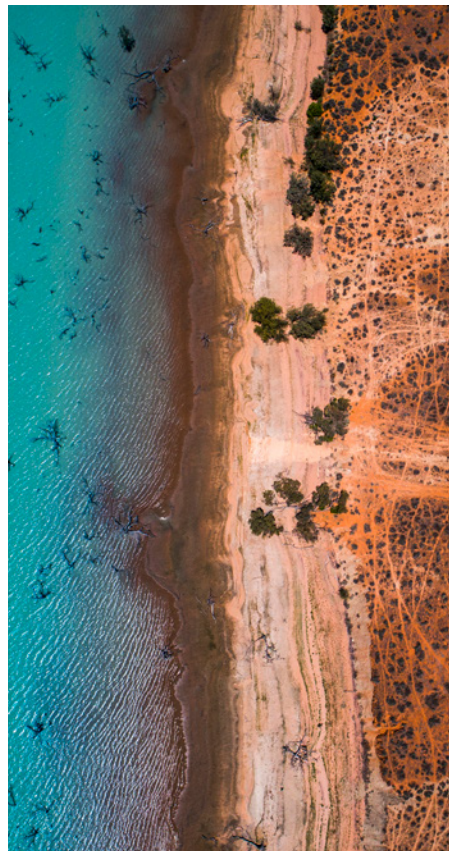
Ethos was launched in 2021 at an event with Nine Network political editor Chris Uhlmann and CEO of the Cyber Security Cooperative Research Centre Rachael Falk, where they discussed the need to strengthen a shared identity to meet the challenge posed by the rise of authoritarian regimes led by China.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The first Ethos 2022 event will look at the role of social media in Australian society, the ethical challenges it poses for politics, debate and wellbeing, and what social accountability means for social media.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WORK-LIFE VALUES

The second Ethos 2022 event will discuss the changing nature of work and the shift in values that is reshaping our expectations and our attitudes to it, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



# The 2022 Greg Craven Lecture: “Understanding secularization in the census”

According to the 2021 census, the proportion of Australians who now identify themselves as Christian has dropped below 50 percent for the first time. Meanwhile, respondents identifying as non-religious has now reached the 39 percent mark – almost double the percentage only 10 years ago.

These shifting religious coordinates are especially striking in a nation whose first census, in 1911, revealed that 96 percent of its people considered themselves Christian. Even so, the same dramatic conjuncture of rising irreligiosity and declining churches has become characteristic across all the nations of the West.

What is happening here? In this Craven Lecture, Mary Eberstadt – Panula Chair in Christian Culture at the Catholic Information Centre in Washington, D.C., and Senior Fellow at the Faith and Reason Institute – examines in detail the social and historical variables contributing to Western godlessness.

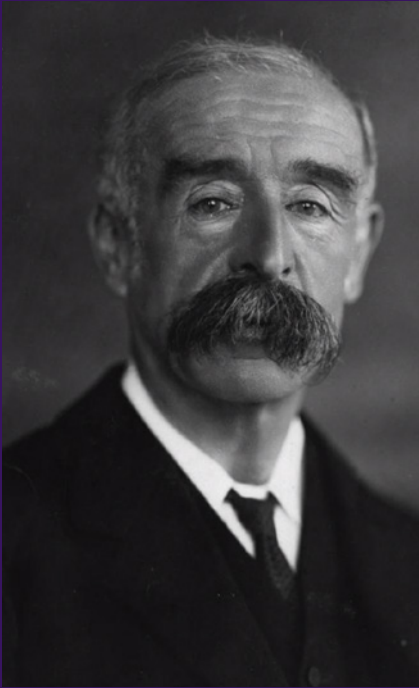
Using up-to-the-minute evidence from Australia and elsewhere, alongside her book “How the West Really Lost God”, she advances a new theory of religious decline. The falloff in organised religion, she argues, has more than one cause, but none is as explanatory as the one most often overlooked, the effect of familial shrinkage and dissolution on transmission of the faith.

Mrs Eberstadt discusses the waxing and waning religious backdrop that continues to shape Australia and the West, and offers her thoughts on why it matters vitally to the future.

Mary Eberstadt

HOW  
THE WEST  
REALLY  
LOST  
GOD

# PM Glynn Institute



The PM Glynn Institute was established in 2016 as a public policy institute paying careful attention to the philosophical and ethical questions in public debate. Building on the success of this work, the institute now also serves as ACU's think tank for public ethics.

## BRIDGING DIVIDES

The institute's focus is public policy for the common good, and its contributions to policy discussions and public debates encourage discussion across the divides of political, intellectual and religious life, to help build a good society where everyone can flourish.

## PUBLIC POLICY

The institute has produced recommendations on policy issues such as protecting religious freedom, the provision of palliative care, constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of schools in fostering social cohesion.

## PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Through its imprint, The Kapunda Press, the institute has also produced a range of publications discussing larger issues such as religion and democracy, the future of human rights, political tribalism, and the major political traditions in Australia.

## INTERNATIONAL ADVISORS

The institute is supported by international advisors drawn from North America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, with expertise in public ethics encompassing law, history, higher education, philosophy, sociology, public policy, interreligious affairs and political science.

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Cover image: Road of Monticello Siena.

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