

# The Ellsberg Initiative for Peace and Democracy

Proposal submitted by Professors  
**Christian G. Appy and Kathy Roberts Forde**  
April 2022



Ellsberg emerging from a National Liberation Front tunnel system. ca. 1966

“

With democracy in peril at home and abroad—and civilization itself threatened by the prospects of environmental catastrophe and nuclear warfare—I welcome the UMass proposal to create an Ellsberg Initiative for Peace and Democracys. ”

— DANIEL ELLSBERG

## Introduction

America’s most famous whistleblower, Daniel Ellsberg has devoted his life to the nonviolent struggle for peace, truth, and democracy. In 1971, he risked his freedom by releasing to the press and public a 7000-page top-secret history of the Vietnam War—the Pentagon Papers—exposing decades of government lies and deceit. Since then, Ellsberg’s principled activism shows us how dissent can be the highest form of patriotism and citizenship.

## Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote public awareness, education, scholarship, and activism on the overlapping causes that define Ellsberg's legacy: peace, anti-imperialism, democracy, truth-telling, nuclear disarmament, and social and environmental justice. We will work with new generations to explore the historical challenges these goals have faced and how we might overcome them.

## Our Inspiration

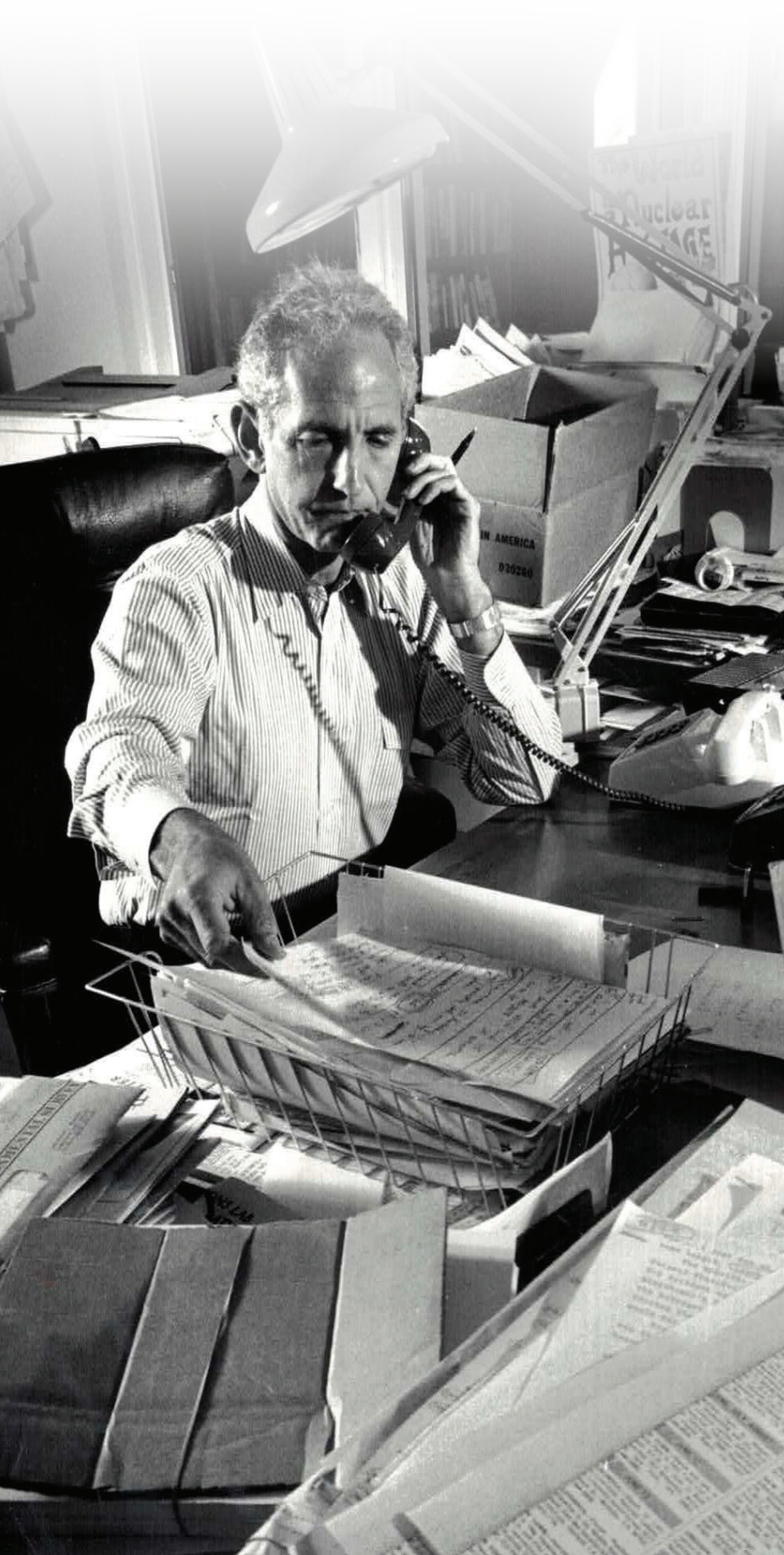


2019 Daniel Ellsberg WGBH Event

In 2019, Ellsberg, impressed by the longstanding UMass commitment to social justice, chose to make it the home for his papers, and the University, with the help of an anonymous donor, invested \$2.2 million in the acquisition.

The Ellsberg collection is a vast treasure trove—500 boxes of materials—that documents the still relevant issues of his long life: the threats posed by nuclear weapons, the expansion of U.S. imperial ambition, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the proliferation of state secrecy, freedom of the press and First Amendment rights, the struggle for a more democratic and accountable foreign policy, and the challenges of civic courage and nonviolent dissent.

In 2020-2021, inspired by the arrival of Ellsberg's papers, the University of Massachusetts sponsored a host of historic ventures to explore his life and legacy—a year-long seminar, the creation of a website (the Ellsberg Archive Project), a series of podcasts by The GroundTruth Project, and a two-day, international, online conference with more than two-dozen high profile scholars, journalists, former policymakers, whistleblowers,



Ellsberg seated at his office desk ca. 1982

and activists that was attended by thousands. Videos of conference sessions hosted on the website have drawn more than 25,000 viewers.

We now have an extraordinary opportunity to build on the momentum established by those projects to create something more enduring, an initiative that will continue to draw attention to the Ellsberg archive, the university, and, most importantly, to the vital and still relevant issues so central to Ellsberg's legacy: the history and ongoing reality of US military intervention overseas, the existential threats posed by nuclear weapons and environmental catastrophe, and the challenges and potential of civil struggle to oppose these fundamental risks to humanity and the earth itself. With democracy under attack at home and abroad—and the dangers posed by climate change, disease, and warfare as great as ever—the need for this initiative could not be more urgent.

The events of the past two years alone suggest the need for universities to engage students and the public in serious learning and discussion about the historical roots of our most pressing problems and the actions we might take now to resolve them: a global pandemic exacerbated by public lies and misinformation, a national movement to challenge the flagrant persistence of racial injustice, the effort to overturn a lawful presidential election with big lies and a violent assault on the U.S. Capitol, a bitterly divisive presidential impeachment trial, and the defeat of the world's greatest military superpower in its undeclared twenty-year war to preserve a corrupt, unpopular client state in Afghanistan. Understanding these events, and thinking through solutions, speak to the core mission of the Ellsberg Initiative for Peace and Democracy.

## Why This Initiative is Distinctive

We are not aware of another organization focused on the vital threats to freedom and democracy posed by war, authoritarianism, imperialism, nuclear weapons, and environmental catastrophe. There are centers and institutes devoted to Peace Studies, Nonviolent Activism, War and Society, Climate Change, Nuclear Weapons Abolition, and Democracy, but none that seeks to advance public knowledge of, and political engagement with, the ways these issues intersect, and why they must be considered together.

For example, what would happen if the U.S. dramatically reduced its military spending (now greater than the next eleven most militarized nations combined)? What if it closed many of its 750 bases on foreign soil (no other nation has more than fifteen)? What if it ceased conducting annual operations in two-thirds of the world's countries and began to dismantle its nearly 4000 nuclear warheads? What if, in short, the U.S. took dramatic steps to scale back its imperial ambition and global footprint?

The Ellsberg Initiative will put into public discussion the contention that these changes are essential to the advancement of international diplomacy and peace, and the creation of a more democratic, transparent, and accountable foreign policy. These changes would also vastly reduce the over-classification of documents and advance the struggle against climate change (the U.S. military is the world's largest consumer of fossil fuels).



2019 Daniel Ellsberg Special Collections Library

## How This Initiative Advances the Goals and Strengths of the University of Massachusetts

The Ellsberg Initiative will advance the UMass Amherst mission to instill in our students and broader community the knowledge, skill, and commitment to create a more peaceful and just world. We share the university's goal to build a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus and commit ourselves to its furtherance by partnering with the widest possible range of students, departments, and programs in ways that minimize hierarchical and top-down relationships. We are equally serious about enhancing the university's efforts to expand its outreach and engagement with off-campus communities from the local to the global.

We will always seek to maximize our impact through collaborations on and off campus. We have begun that process already with Special Collections and University Archives, the Initiative for Digital Public Infrastructure, the University of Massachusetts Press, the UMass iCons Program, the Radius radio project, Security in Context, the Freedom of the Press Foundation, and Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. We have also reached out to The W.E.B. Du Bois Center, The Energy Transition Institute, the Political Economy Research Institute, the World Studies Interdisciplinary Project, as well as many individual scholars, journalists, activists, and policymakers.

## Staff and Structure:

We propose the following institutional structure to best deliver the Initiative's mission and program of activities:

- Director, with endowed chair
- Associate Director, tenured faculty member
- Administrative Coordinator, full time professional staff position
- Affiliated faculty/advisory board



Seminars for Research Students



## Anticipated Activities and Accomplishments:

The Initiative will build and deliver a vibrant portfolio of mission-based programs that include outreach, scholarship and learning, and advocacy. Each year, the Initiative will focus its programming on an issue of vital importance that reflects Ellsberg’s major concerns and legacy. We have a five-year agenda of topics: U.S. imperialism, whistleblowing, democracy, secrecy and surveillance, and existential threats. Every other year we will, in addition to regular programming, organize a major conference. Despite the annual changes in topical focus, each year will include the following activities:

- A public “Ellsberg Lecture” by a prominent scholar, journalist, activist, whistleblower, or public figure. To be recorded and posted online as well as on the Initiative website.
- Public panel discussions and presentations featuring experts and activists committed to creating publishable, cutting-edge scholarship. Available online for international audience.
- Workshops for students and the general public to provide training, support, and advocacy for reforms relevant to the annual topic. Recorded for broad distribution.
- A week-long teaching institute for high school and community college educators. We will use a case study approach and focus on creating specialized course curricula and standards-based lesson plans, with attention to materials in the Ellsberg Archive. New curricula will be widely promoted and distributed.
- A UMass in-person course and a University Without Walls online course relevant to the annual topic.
- A certificate program in Peace and Democracy Studies for UMass undergraduates.
- A fellowship program for visiting scholars and graduate students to do research in Special Collections and University Archives at the W.E.B. Du Bois Library on topics relevant to the year’s topical focus and urgent contemporary relevance.
- Grants to undergraduates to conduct research on interdisciplinary topics relevant to the year’s topical focus and help locating a publisher for their work.
- A cultural exhibit or performance relevant to the topic in collaboration with UMass partners such as the Fine Arts Center (e.g., an art or photography exhibit, a dramatic or musical performance, etc.)
- A public film series of important but not widely available documentaries and features relevant to the topic. Each screening will be followed by a moderated discussion, when possible, with the director or others involved in the film.
- Best-practices news reporting standards for the topic, created in collaboration with journalists, scholars, activists, and relevant experts.

## Year One: The Foreign Policy Project



Daniel Ellsberg in Vietnam, ca. 1966

What is United States imperialism? What are its institutions, resources, practices, goals, justifications, and consequences? How did it evolve and where is it going? How does U.S. imperialism benefit or harm different groups at home and abroad? How does it reshape relations and experiences of class, race, gender, and sexuality? What ideas and forces have opposed U.S. imperialism? Can imperialism and democracy co-exist? How does U.S. imperialism compare to other historical forms and practices of imperialism? How can foreign policy be made more peaceful, democratic, and accountable?

## OUTREACH:

- Annual “Ellsberg Lecture” by leading expert on U.S. imperialism and anti-imperialism.
- One-week summer teaching institute held at UMass, bringing together area high school, community college, and university faculty, on the topic of U.S. imperialism—how to define it, discuss it, and debate it. We will use a case study approach and focus on creating specialized course curricula and standards-based lesson plans, with attention to materials in the Ellsberg Archive.
- An international webinar in late January, 2023, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Paris Peace Accords ending direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. With Daniel Ellsberg and a panel of other experts and antiwar leaders.
- A dramatized tribunal in March, 2023, on the legality of the U.S. War in Iraq to mark the 20th anniversary of the war’s start.
- A one-day program for veterans and refugees from U.S. war zones. Programming on the experience of war, war-related trauma, moral injury, displacement, and recovery. Available online to an international audience.
- A public film series of important but not widely available documentaries and features relevant to U.S. imperialism, followed by discussion with people associated with the film. Discussions of films will be videotaped and posted on the Initiative website.
- A reading by renowned poets who have written about the Vietnam War (e.g., Yusef Komunyakaa, Ocean Vuong, Carolyn Forché, W.D. Ehrhart, and Le Thi Diem Thuy)

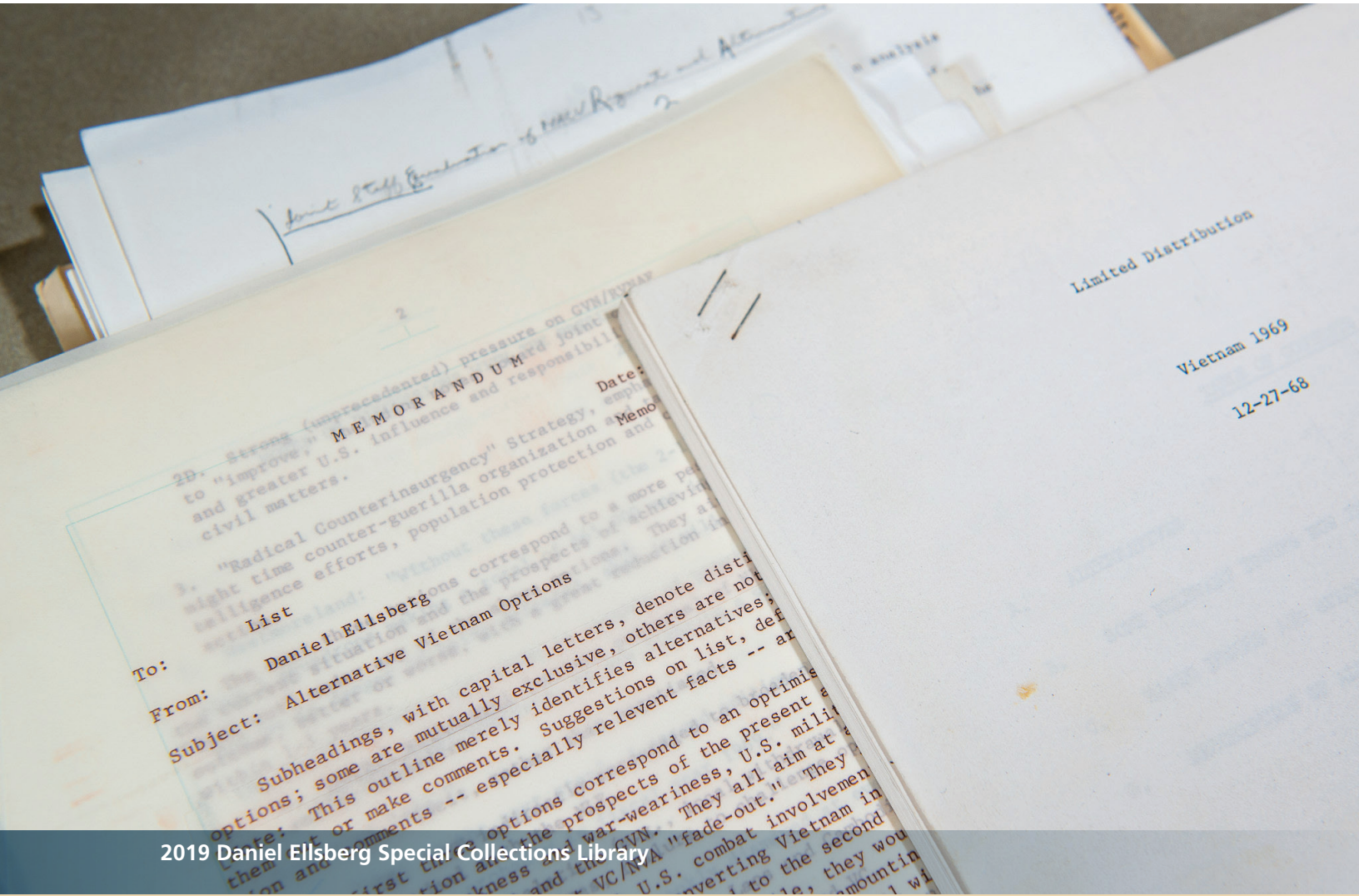
## SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION:

- Promote new scholarship with a series of presentations and roundtable discussions on the history of U.S. imperialism with the goal of publishing a collection of essays.
- Create and offer an undergraduate course on U.S. imperialism. Collaborate with an area community college, where a professor would teach a similar course, sharing curriculum and special guest lectures using digital technology as well as in-person classes.
- Create and offer a course on U.S. imperialism for University Without Walls to be taught by an HFA or SBS doctoral student in collaboration with Institute directors.

## ADVOCACY:

- Convene wide range of antiwar activists and resistance organizations for roundtable discussions of how peacework can be most effective, with the goal of building mutual mentoring networks and collaborations.
- Convene a one-day gathering of U.S. Congressional representatives to discuss the relationship between the public, Congress, the executive branch, and the military-industrial complex with a focus on how to democratize foreign policy.
- Convene news leaders and journalists, media studies scholars, and historians of U.S. imperialism with the goal of producing best-practices news standards for covering U.S. foreign policy and military interventions.

## Year Two: The Whistleblower Project



2019 Daniel Ellsberg Special Collections Library

What is whistleblowing? In what circumstances does it advance democracy? In what ways is whistleblowing a sign of democratic dysfunction? How can whistleblowing inspire collective forms of dissent? How can positive whistleblowing be encouraged and supported?

**CONFERENCE:**

- Keynote lecture by Daniel Ellsberg—this year’s “Ellsberg Lecture.”
- Panel of government/foreign policy whistleblowers (e.g., Terry Albury, Reality Winner, Alexander Vindman, Chelsea Manning, Katherine Gunn, Edward Snowden, Daniel Hale, Coleen Rowley). Available online for an international audience.
- Panel of corporate whistleblowers (e.g., Frances Haugen, Sherron Watkins, Cynthia Cooper, John Kopchinski). Available online for an international audience.
- Panel of journalists on the coverage of whistleblowing, its legal, ethical, and practical challenges and demands. Available online.
- Panel of legal experts on whistleblower protection laws, the use of the 1917 Espionage Act to prosecute whistleblowers, and legal reforms to support truth-telling, transparency, and democracy. Available online.

**OUTREACH:**

- Create one-week summer teaching institute held at UMass, bringing together area high school, community college, and university faculty on the topic of whistleblowing, truth-telling, and civic courage. We will use a case study approach and focus on creating specialized course curricula and standards-based lesson plans, with attention to materials in the Ellsberg Archive.
- In collaboration with the new Initiative for Digital Public Infrastructure, offer workshops for UMass students and interested community members on the dangers of, and solutions to, secrecy and surveillance.
- Offer a public film series of important but not widely available documentaries and features relevant to the topic.

**SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION:**

- Create and offer an undergraduate course on whistleblowing. Collaborate with an area community college, where a professor would teach a similar course, sharing curriculum and special guest lectures using digital technology as well as in-person classes.
- Create and offer a course on whistleblowing for University Without Walls to be taught by an HFA or SBS doctoral student in collaboration with Institute directors.
- Offer a graduate fellowship program devoted to scholars working on relevant topics.
- Research state and federal legislation designed to protect whistleblowers, describe their strengths and weaknesses, and suggest reform measures. Provide a database of these laws and the study itself on Institute website to be used by policymakers and change makers. Collaborate with some of the many organizations that support whistleblowers, including the National Whistleblower Center, Empower Oversight Whistleblowers & Research (EMPOWR), and Whistleblower and Source Protection Program (WHISPeR).

**ADVOCACY:**

- Hold a high-profile press conference and a public event to share study of whistleblower laws and suggest reform measures. Build partnerships with news media outlets like Democracy Now!, Mother Jones, and CNN’s Reliable Sources to share findings with their audiences.
- Convene news leaders and journalists, legal scholars, whistleblower and media attorneys, leaders of whistleblower organizations, and journalism scholars to produce best-practices news standards for covering whistleblowers and whistleblowing.

## Year Three: The Democracy Project



2019 Daniel Ellsberg WGBH Event

At the end of the Cold War many commentators announced the final triumph of democratic capitalism. Yet democracy has been profoundly threatened in recent decades at home and abroad by authoritarian regimes of every stripe, as well as the profound inequalities—economic, political, and racial—that have persisted in many capitalist nations, including the United States. What have been the major threats to the survival and enrichment of democracy and what are some of the most effective movements of the past and present to overcome them? How can journalism standards and practices be reformed to serve the goal of achieving a multiracial and just liberal democracy?

**OUTREACH:**

- Annual “Ellsberg Lecture” by leading authority on how to defend and enrich democracy in the United States and elsewhere in the world.
- One-week summer teaching institute to be held at UMass, bringing together area high school, community college, and university faculty on the topic of threats to democracy and movements to enrich and extend it. We will use a case study approach and focus on creating specialized curricula and standards-based lesson plans.
- Develop and deliver, in possible collaboration with the W.E.B. Du Bois Center, a program on the challenges to voting rights in the United States, now and in the past, with a focus on racial justice and inclusion, featuring activists, scholars, political leaders, and journalists.
- Public film series of important but not widely available documentaries and features relevant to the topic.

**SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION:**

- Create and offer an undergraduate course on U.S. democracy, with a focus on democratic threats and democratic reforms. Collaborate with an area community college, where a professor would teach a similar course, sharing

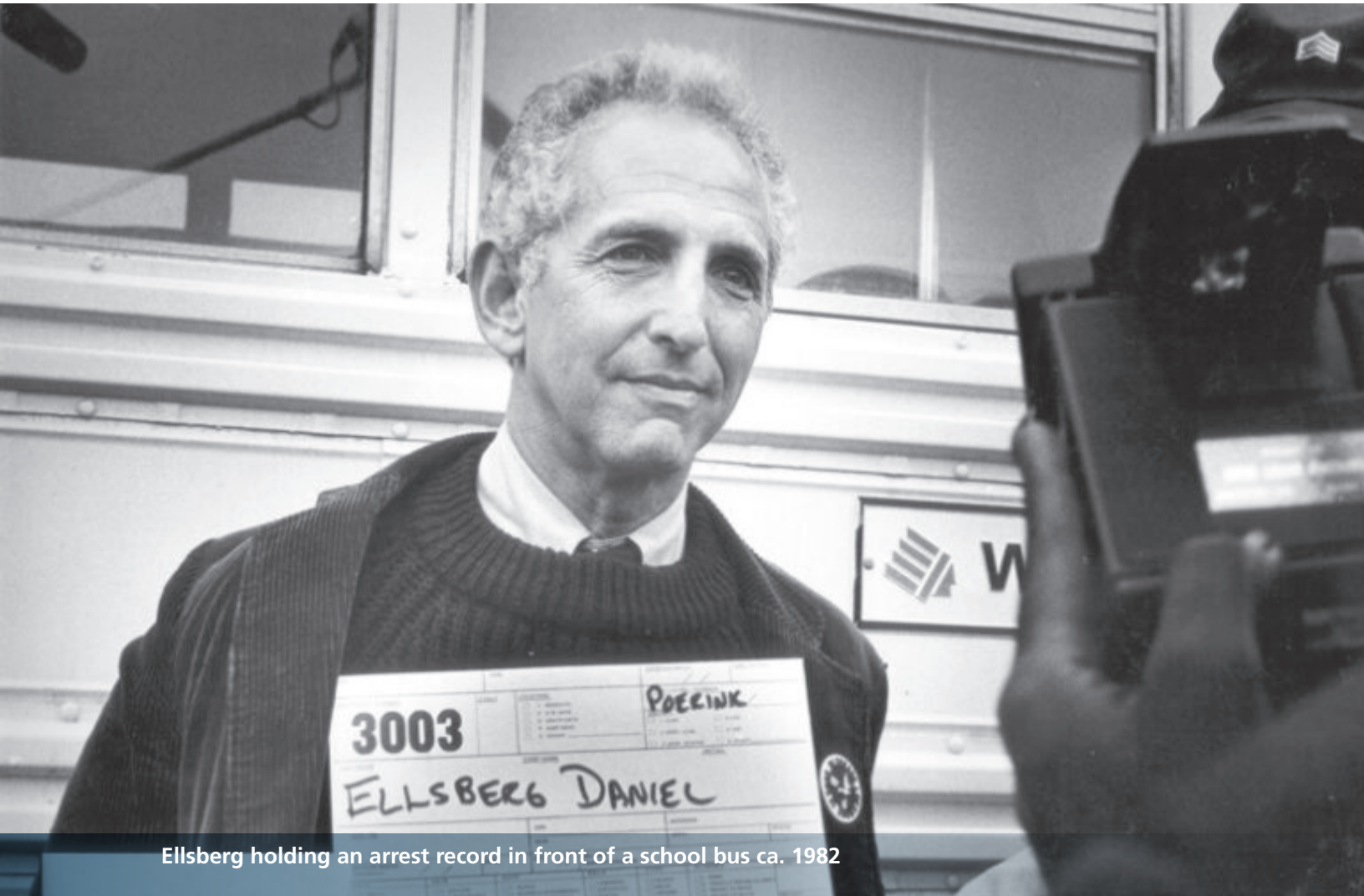
curriculum and special guest lectures using digital technology as well as in-person classes.

- Create and offer a course on U.S. democracy for University Without Walls to be taught by an HFA or SBS doctoral student in collaboration with Institute directors.
- Offer a graduate fellowship program devoted to scholars working on relevant topics.
- Collaborate with the University of Massachusetts Press to publish a book of essays by scholars, journalists, and activists for the series “Journalism and Democracy.”

**ADVOCACY:**

- Convene news leaders and journalists, political scientists, political communication scholars, activists, and policy makers to produce best-practices news standards and practices for covering political conflict, elections, voting rights, and democratic threat, with an orientation to serving the values of a multiracial, just liberal democracy.
- Collaborate with the UMass Initiative for Public Digital Infrastructure on advocacy work promoting the urgent need for the development of a digital infrastructure oriented toward the public good in the U.S. and the world.

## Year Four: The Secrecy and Surveillance Project



Ellsberg holding an arrest record in front of a school bus ca. 1982

Since 9/11, state and corporate secrecy and surveillance in the United States has greatly expanded. What are the consequences? How, and to what extent, have constitutional rights and freedoms been eroded? How much secrecy and surveillance should citizens of a democracy tolerate? Under what circumstances? What steps have been taken or proposed to make our institutions and organizations more transparent and accountable and our technology more democratic?



### CONFERENCE:

- Keynote lecture—the annual “Ellsberg lecture” by a leading expert on government and/or corporate secrecy and surveillance.
- Panel on the history of government secrecy and surveillance (experts on the history of the CIA, the NSA, and the FBI).
- Panel of journalists and scholars on mass surveillance and efforts to curb it and make it accountable (possible panelists: Jochai Ben-Avie, Eben Moglen, Yana Welinder, Yochai Benkler, Cindy Cohn, Stephen Anderson, John Penny).
- Panel on defending privacy (possible panelists: Bruce Schneier, Cynthia Wong, Jonathan Zittrain, Shoshana Zuboff).
- Panel on democratizing technology, in collaboration with the UMass Initiative for Digital Public Infrastructure (possible panelists: Ethan Zuckerman, Francine Berman, leaders from organizations like the Center for Democracy & Technology).

### OUTREACH:

- Create one-week summer teaching institute to be held at UMass, bringing together area high school, community college, and university faculty on the topic of social media—its history, innovations, and dangers. How can educators help students understand the potential of social media to make life better as well as how it can

encourage misinformation, violence, shaming, and isolation. We will use a case study approach and focus on creating specialized course curricula and standards-based lesson plans.

- Offer public film series of important but not widely available documentaries and features relevant to the topic.

### SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION:

- Create and offer an undergraduate course on secrecy and surveillance. Collaborate with an area community college, where a professor would teach a similar course, sharing curriculum and special guest lectures using digital technology as well as in-person classes.
- Create and offer a course on secrecy and surveillance for University Without Walls to be taught by an HFA or SBS doctoral student in collaboration with Institute directors.
- Sponsor a graduate fellowship program devoted to scholars working on relevant topics.

### ADVOCACY:

- Convene news leaders and journalists, activists, experts, and leaders of the UMass Initiative for Digital Public Infrastructure to produce best-practices news standards for covering the massive problem of state and corporate secrecy and surveillance.

# Year Five: The Existential Threat Project



2019 Daniel Ellsberg Special Collections Library

The greatest threats to humanity remain climate change and nuclear weapons. How did these threats develop, what damage have they already done, and how can the ongoing threats they pose be eliminated?

### **OUTREACH:**

- Annual “Ellsberg Lecture” by leading expert on climate change or nuclear weapons.
- Possible collaboration with PERI on public programs about the political economy of the military industrial complex and the struggle for climate stabilization.
- Collaborate with scientists and students in the UMass iCons Program and The Energy Transition Institute to explore political and scientific responses to climate change and other catastrophic environmental threats.
- One-week summer teaching institute held at UMass, bringing together area high school, community college, and university faculty, on the topic of climate change and nuclear weapons. We will use a case study approach and focus on creating specialized course curricula and standards-based lesson plans.
- Public film series of important but not widely available documentaries and features relevant to the topic.

### **SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION:**

- Create and offer an undergraduate course on existential threats, with a focus on nuclear weapons and climate change. Collaborate with an area community college, where a professor would teach a similar course, sharing curriculum and special guest lectures using digital technology as well as in-person classes.
- Create and offer a course on existential threat, with a focus on nuclear weapons and climate change, for University Without Walls to be

taught by an HFA or SBS doctoral student in collaboration with Institute directors.

- Offer panel discussion focused on the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, featuring antinuclear activists, scholars, and journalists (e.g. Beatrice Fihn, Joe Cirincione, Zia Mian, Kate Brown).
- Offer a graduate fellowship program devoted to scholars working on a project relevant to this year’s theme.

### **ADVOCACY:**

- Create workshop to train students and the public on antinuclear and climate change activism.
- Hold one-day event for antinuclear advocates (policymakers, journalists, scholars, and activists) to raise awareness of ongoing efforts to take nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert, to press for a no first strike pledge, to eliminate ICBMs, and other concrete steps that could be taken on the road to full abolition.
- Hold one-day event for climate change advocates (policymakers, journalists, scholars, and activists) to raise awareness of ongoing efforts to halt global warming and address the negative effects of climate change through mitigation, adaptation, and global cooperation.
- Convene news leaders and journalists, climate change and nuclear weapons activists and experts, and leaders of organizations working to solve these existential threats to produce best-practices news standards for covering climate change and nuclear weapons.

# Budget

Ellsberg Institute for Peace and Democracy

Goal: \$15 million endowment to support \$600,000 annual expenses

## BUDGET

Category	Description	Annual expense
Faculty	Director (endowed chair) Associate Director (tenured faculty member) Program manager (professional staff)	\$380,000
Programming	Lectures, panel discussions, workshops, institute for high school teachers	\$120,000
Outreach	Mt. Ida campus activities, community colleges, high schools, Prison Education Initiative	\$50,000
Research awards	Undergraduate (2 @ \$2K), graduate (2 @ \$3K), faculty (2 @ \$5K)	\$20,000
Workshops	Legislators and journalists	\$10,000
Conference	Biennial	\$10,000
Misc.	Tech, office, production	\$10,000

The background of the entire page is a photograph showing several men in suits and jackets gathered around a table, looking at documents and a large green box. The scene appears to be an archival or library setting. In the top left corner, the University of Massachusetts Amherst logo is displayed, featuring a portrait of a woman in a small framed picture.

University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst **BE REVOLUTIONARY™**

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April 2022

UMassAmherst

Libraries  
Special Collections  
and University Archives

UMassAmherst

College of Humanities  
& Fine Arts  
History

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