

MIZZOU

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**MEDIA OF THE
FUTURE**



Imagine democracy

Making civil discourse civil

Political debate, central to any healthy democracy, is alive and well in this country. But to many Americans, today's media pundits from the left and right are acerbic, having lost any semblance of civility. The rhetoric seems increasingly polarizing, which can be paralyzing.

“People seem to be at each other's throats,” says Randall Smith, professor and Donald W. Reynolds endowed chair of business journalism. “We're trying to encourage civil conversations through a number of different communication methods.”



Imagine Democracy hopes to bring the founding fathers to your hi-def screen.

Enter the [DemocracyChannel](#), a multi-platform media project and Mizzou Advantage grant-winner headed by Smith.

A two-pronged approach, the DemocracyChannel project will begin with a documentary by filmmakers Harry Wiland and Dale Bell, co-CEOs of the Media Policy Center in Santa Monica, Calif. Film crews will retrace and build upon Alexis de Tocqueville's 19th-century journeys across America in search of democracy — from a 2011 perspective.

The project also seeks to become a confluence of “digital tributaries” available online and to cable providers worldwide, while offering a learning environment for Mizzou journalism and business students on the production side.

Programming ideas include civic education shows for young people, a program focusing on the Constitution’s upcoming 225th birthday and other C-SPAN-meets-The-History-Channel type shows.

“We want to do this during a presidential election year [2012], hoping that we can play a role in beginning to turn the conversation in the U.S. to a more civil one,” Smith says. “It’s a big dream.”

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