

Comments Summaries

Jeremy Shapiro

Changing American Attitudes on Foreign Policy

Sarasota 1-7-25

Attendance: 201

evaluations received: 85 (42%)

including comments: 11

Positive Comments

-Excellent!

-Excellent speaker

-Great presentation

-Excellent

-Ambassador Speckhard gave an informative and inspirational presentation. His talk was like an introductory class to a year long course. So many areas covered and each could be the basis for a separate presentation

-Coherent and well-organized presentation. This year was an overview. If back next year(s), maybe a narrow focus on 1-2 problems/solutions/nations

Areas for Improvement

-Maybe some case studies for success or failures

-Mistake on one slide: Re: hunger. 118 billion children should be 118 million". (There are only 8 billion humans in the world today. Since the beginning of time, only 110 billion people have lived on this earth)

-Too General. Didn't learn anything new. No concrete ideas of how to affect change. Who should we support? Who is affecting non-political solutions?

-Need more opinion about where to go vs. canned talk. More depth if he comes back. Would like more specifics micro loans etc

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc

-There should be more time allotted for questions. The interaction within that forum often brings the topical discussion to concrete local/US concerns and application. Often the Presenter stays another 15 minutes as individual participants ask questions and speaks on a 1:1 basis when the whole participant group could benefit

-Make these talks 1 hour and 15 or 20 minutes for extra time to ask questions

-I was surprised that there are still issues with the sound system. Please try to check this system prior to the start of the program

Charles Lane
The President's Inbox
Sarasota 1-14-25

Attendance: 235

evaluations received: 82 (35%%)

included comments: 18 (5% of evals received)

Positive Comments

-Excellent. Have him speak again!

-The best speaker in our many SILL years!

-Good speaker please invite back.

-Excellent!!

-Terrific

-Excellent – Topic well presented.

-A+

-He's great

-Encouraged open thinking. Enjoyed demeanor.

-5 for a review.

He was a good speaker and was very likeable, but his subject was uninteresting.

Areas for Improvement

-I didn't learn much that was new or inciteful – particularly regarding foreign affairs.

-Cocky, content-free "journalism at its worst. Punditry that's self-absorbed. Not really a lecture – miscellaneous thoughts.

I didn't realize how liberal the group is/and the audience. (sad face)"

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

-You could add half an hour to the morning for even more good information

Wendy Whitman Cobb
Space as a Warfighting Domain
Sarasota 1-28-25

Attendance: 171

evaluations received: 88 (51%%)

included comments: 15 (5% of evals received)

Positive Comments

- Bring her back! Larger print on slides needed.
- Would like her to return if she has new information.
- Speech was excellent and really appreciated, just not sure we need it yearly unless things really get active in the news.
- Great overview. Would like to see greater digging into key current policy issues facing U.S. government today.
- Conveyed her message very effectively.
- Very impressive quality, information and presentation. Extraordinary!
- Terrific!
- The speaker has a good command of knowledge! Enlightening. Speaker should repeat questions so we could hear more fully.
- Excellent knowledge and presenting ability. Slides unreadable should be larger.
- 11 of 10. % Star! Six not 5 rating in all categories.

Areas for Improvement

- Not sure of how to go from overview to more issue specific talk. So maybe bring her back in 2 years instead of 1.
- Terrible small slides – unreadable.
- Slides are helpful, these were not readable even from front row.
- Walking across the stage was distracting.
- Slides are very difficult to read.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- Sound was loud and metallic.

Gaisu Yari

Rights and Leadership in Afghanistan: Struggles and Resilience

Sarasota 2-4-25

Attendance: 147

evaluations received: 66

included comments: 19

Positive Comments

-Very bright woman – and inspiring. Difficult for me to understand, but still interesting.

Incredible story of strength!

-Great speaker!!

-Interesting! Very informative! Excellent!

-Topic is relevant. It would be good to hear from another speaker. I'm not sure this speaker has much more to contribute.

-The series has been very informative. We have been attending 2 times a week. Thank you!

Areas for Improvement

-Too general, mostly well-known history. Not enough Individual stories.

-Too difficult to understand.

-The speaker needs to re-write and re-think her message to better communicate and impact a western minded audience. Her language handcuffs her message as she speaks too fast for the audience to integrate and translate her wording into regular English. The slides were poorly written and the typing was way too small. I think a strong message is in there, but it takes way too much work to weed through these obstacles to get to it. Editing and revising is in order.

-Wished speaker spoke more about the condition of the women in Afghanistan now rather than history of Taliban take over.

-Read talk very quickly – hard to understand." Mentioned organizations to look up but weren't on slides – nor did she share the website. Couldn't read the slides.

-Should be addressed again, but update.

-Terribly hard to read slides.

-This speaker's voice resonated so poorly that it made it difficult and understand everything she said.

-The topic us if extreme interest, but the speaker's pronunciation and clarity was not easily understood. We lost a lot of her content (speech).

-Needs bigger font on screen."

-Language, accent." (They gave all 5's on evaluatio

-Graphics were difficult to read – to further understand comments by speaker.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

-Feedback from microphone makes it difficult to hear and understand what is being said.

-Difficult for me to hear all that was said. Hearing problems loop.

-Parking situation is deplorable. I do not wish to arrive an hour early to get to a parking space. How about another venue with more parking – the Van Wezel, Cinebistro at Westfield Mall, or

the Asolo. Since I walk with a cane, handicap parking is good but can do without it. Speakers are usually always good – so worth hearing, but the microphone was too loud – so took my hearing aids out. Still too loud.

-The hearing loop system was much different than previous sessions. Much too loud and background noise was transmitted through the system.

-If the speaker could always repeat the questions, it would be very helpful for all to understand. This is my request for a second time.

Katharine Donato

Faces, New Places: Global Migration in a Complex World

Venice 2-14-25

Attendance: 227

evaluations received: 121 (53%)

included comments: 29 (24% of evals received)

Positive Comments re: Speaker Performance and Materials

-She really knows her topic impressive

-Good communicator

-Appropriate topic. Donato was adept at navigating a political topic to a general audience

-Speaker was informative

-Questions more interesting than migration” (2 people)

Areas for Improvement

-Mike too close

-Boring

-Too many “and an ums” etc. distracting

-Voice would drop

-Too much like a class lecture. Needed to be more spontaneous

-The speaker knows the material but the pace of the presentation was painfully slow

-She did not address economic aspects of legal and illegal migration or the fact that American drug users cause migration

-Complicated topic, some charts confusing

-Could have offered “story” to illustrate trends

-1/2 of what she presented; 1/2 of what global migration means to the US and the world. Please interpret, not just statistics

-I would have liked her viewpoint of where things go from here-although I don’t really know, may well be accurate

-Subject is important but this type of lecture was not helpful

-Would have preferred

-analysis, highlighting trends consequences and challenges and future needs/probable movement

-Very dry presentation

-Improvement of slides” -10 people mentioned

6 suggested to use larger font for easier view

4 stated too many graphs were used

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- Room was too cold
- Our guest wearing hearing aids and felt the speaker was hard to hear
- Perhaps a better sound system-2 people mention

Frank Ostroff

Intelligence: Changing How We Work

Sarasota 2-25-25

Attendance: 237

evaluations received: 84

included comments: 29 (24% of evals received)

Positive Comments

- The topic was highly relevant to the workplace (and the title said that), but it was not so relevant for a retired audience. A topic we all need to know about it's positives, potential and risks.
- Intro background was excellent. The focus on workplace applications is less useful for retirees. Although that aspect had its useful parts, ie where they could be applied in a larger context. AI as a topic is very important to be included in future seminars.
- If the audience only gets a bit of his conclusions, it is still worth it. This is the future.
- Very patient and interesting speaker.
- Answers to questions were the best part.
- Very clear in his presentation. Have him back next year!! Topic relevant!
- Make AI presentation educating on all aspects of the impact on humans.
- Hope for more specific examples of how business will use and benefit from Gen AI

Areas for Improvement

- Visuals too small. Slides are useless, illegible unless you sit in the front row. All speakers should be told to make the text large and readable." SILL should explain to speakers that the audience is big and cannot see PowerPoint slides with small print." (Commented by 12 people)
- Don't know if he should return in 2 years, His left hand is shaking.
- Too long!
- Great topic poorly organized and confusingly presented. Lacked order and thread. Graphics unreadable. Far to long. Illegible.
- Speakers monotone delivery made it difficult to grasp his topic. He wandered off the topic of AI. He does not understand his audience. Presentation method was distracting.
- Don't need a consultant pitch.
- Speaker had no idea who is audience is-we're almost all retired. AI is a good topic – just a bad presentation.

- Very disappointing that speaker does not even give himself the benefit of a light pointer to direct attention to slides. In sum, this gentleman is “past it” with regard to being a “useful source of understanding of a complex topic. Younger folks are available who have more knowledge and experience. We deserve to hear them.
- Voice monotone. May know subject matter, but very poor communicator. Does not meet the level of excellence of SILL lecturers. Very repetitive.
- He understates the downside of AI according to AI experts like Geoffrey Hinton and Mustafa Suleyman where there is a desperate need for guardrails to prevent the “bad guys” from creating havoc and worse.
- Slides were too technical and not explained enough by Prof. Ostroff. It would be interesting to have him return with updates if he can correct the above.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- I’d like to get copies of his slides. Is this possible?” This was requested in evaluations by 4 people. I was asked by several people as well. I asked Frank and Bob Boorstein and was told this will not happen

**Dr. Keir Lieber
The Next Nuclear War
Venice 2-28-25**

Attendance: 230
of evaluations received: 103 (48%)
with comments: 6 (.06%)

Positive Comments

- Excellent
- SUPERB

Areas for Improvement

- The speaker failed to clearly enunciate
- The subject matter was not followed
- Never stuck to it-referring to question #3
- He stopped speaking at 10:42-too early. He needs to speak for a full hour. We need to get value
- Speech did not flow. Was not orderly too disjointed
- Maps to be displayed would have been helpful
- He was rambling

Toshiko Kaneda
Understanding Global Demographic Changes
Sarasota 3-6-25

Attendance: 200

of evaluations received: (47%)

OF Comments Received 12 (13%)

Positive Comments

- This is the best SILL talk I've ever attended. Excellent speaker, clear presentation, frank answers on a vital, overlooked topic.
- Her slides are the best prepared of all the speakers that weve seen this here this year.
- Good slides.
- Talk was brief and well organized, but not enough. Instructor organized. Speaker was quite entertaining, humorous.

Areas for Improvement

- Covered material well, but delivery was less than stellar. Relied on slides too much and didnt elaborate on any aspect.
- Hard to understand. Read basically from notes and slides.
- It was difficult to understand her.
- Language was an issue foreign accent.
- Too much time spent plugging other organizations.
- It was well done, however, it could have been improved by having someone who could discuss policy implications beyond the demographics (perhaps the CEO of PRB.
- Possible solutions should be discussed.
- Sure, of interest, but leaving out political migration seems a bit ridiculous. Lovely speaker, surface presentation when she must have a much deeper understanding/opinions.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- Microphone interference effected speaker responding.

Ellen Laipson
The Middle East You Don't Know
Lakewood Ranch 3-12-25

Attendance: unknown

of evaluations received: 55

with comments: 15

Positive Comments

- Speaker should definitely return in the next two years!! Every year!
- So informative!
- Very interesting complex issues/history of ongoing interest. Thoughtful discussion.
- I wish the Q&A s were longer.
- Excellent
- Every SILL lecture is worthwhile, but this was exceptionally clear and comprehensive.
- One of the best presentations of the year. Structured well presented. Didn't walk out depressed!
- Superb!
- The best so far this year!
- Excellent insights and presentation.
- She was the best of the best.

Areas for Improvement

- More on the political relations in the middle east.
- Very biased speaker. Couldn't do what Dennis Ross did. Never invite her to return!
- She should have more bullet point slides and we should be able to take photos of them to help with spreading her info to others.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- Need more female speakers.

Dr. John Bruno

The Brain and Cognitive Control in Health and Disease

Venice 3-14-25

Attendance: 266

of evaluations received: (51.5%)

with comments: 19 (13.9%)

Positive Comments

- Clear and useful information
- Great speaker
- Difficult subject simplified and injected with humor
- Excellent speaker-Mentioned by 5 people
- Especially interesting talk -Mentioned by 2 people
- Appreciated the slides. All speakers should have some slides
- I love the topic and the speaker
- Held everyone's attention and conveys his knowledge exceedingly well and presents it clearly
- Easy to follow
- Very good

- Clarity of presentation+
- Astonishingly clear and well presented. Reminded me of the best of college lectures
- A+

Areas for Improvement

- Id like more depth on Parkinsons and stem cell treatment
- Several people wanted to ask questions. Questions were stopped with speaker seemed ready to keep going. Suggest you let questioning go longer if both parties are interested
- Less science more early prevention
- Need to help hi with volume
- Content was complex for people without medical, chemical or disease. Somehow it should be simpler=Perhaps two lectures ie Part I Necessary knowledge have Part II Todays lecture:

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- While I enjoy the global issues-Most of the topics have political/current affairs slant and is a news junkie. The topics like populations, some art, science make a welcome change. Extra screens in community center in Venice needed to be able to read slides more easily . Maybe too much detail on Alzheimer section

Daniel Tichenor

Chasm: Governing Immigration in a Fractured Nation Sarasota 3-18-25

Attendance: 219
of evaluations received: (39%)
with comments: 23 (32%)

Positive Comments

- Useful overview of immigration historic perspective. Maybe return visit to focus on current reality and future prospects.
- Was GREAT, bust so-far.
- An academic overview categories of ideological camps very good. Very good slides without them, I'd have been totally lost.
- Great concept of advocates on immigration. Great slides.
- The subject matter was very relevant and should be addressed in future series.
- Great speaker!
- Good historical perspective. But no mention of illegal immigration today.
- Excellent!

Areas for Improvement

- Did not have enough time for Q&A
- Disappointed in focus. Interesting recap of American history. But was interested in hearing how we

handle immigration now. Invite speaker to return if he can be more current.

- Many slide graphics were unreadable and therefore ineffectual.
- Not enough time more concise - less history. Should have explained asylum, HIB, etc.
- Not clear speaker. Several slides too busy and not clear to read.
- Hard to read slides.
- Topic needs more time to address. I wish he had spent a little less time on history and more on what is and what can be done today.
- Lecture needs to be better organized.
- Slides could not be read too small.
- Broad topic and need more detail perhaps two-part talk.
- Mike volume should be louder when some say it is okay. Hearing loss is common in older ages like me or other. Even make the mike louder when few say it is ok. Ask should I make it louder.
- I would have liked a longer presentation 90 minutes at least for all lectures! Today, a more detailed look at immigration challenges post Biden would have been relevant and interesting.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- Please do not rush the speaker at the end. If people need to leave early they can.
- Please let speaker continue and don't limit time. Complicated subject.
- 90 minute talk crammed into 55 (not 45) minutes. First 30 minutes good. Next 25 minutes spoke too fast. Couldn't bring it in for a landing.
- The sound system is poor. Loud enough, but with an echo, blurring words and impeding understanding. What a shame! And a waste! Q&A a total waste on me! No slides and echoing speech. Without improved sound and hearing quality, you will lose me and others unfortunately
- I feel that SILL should try to take advantage of online viewers from out of area through many colleges/OLLI programs. It would be another money stream for SILL with a larger viewing audience. It might bring in person attendance up and in person prices down. Just a thought, \$20 a person is a lot.

Jeffrey Moon

The U.S & China: Inseparable Frenemies

Sarasota 3-20-25

Attendance: 250

of evaluations received: 90 (36%)

with comments: 21 (23%)

Positive Comments:

- One of the best lectures in the 2025 season. Well organized and presented. Learned a lot.
- Think that a non-college professor is often a better speaker.
- Mr. Moon told us his plan of presentation and followed through with a clear and concise presentation.
- Conveyed message very effectively.
- Very knowledgeable and organized.
- Another excellent talk. End of the SILL talks I have attended have been excellent-informative, engaging, challenging and well delivered. I look forward to next year.
- Thank you!
- The speaker should be invited to return. Should he return, more current issues like what the question

period brought should be in the talk instead of the history part of the talk.

- Very well organized. Excellent graphics. Master of his information.
- Excellent presentation! Subject should absolutely be addressed again in next years series.
- Great historical perspective.
- Big topic made very understandable. Thank you!
- Fantastic.
- Very good speaker and topic.
- Excellent speaker. X3
- The best.
- Excellent slides!
- Well done!
- Mr. Moon was excellent and well prepared.

Areas for Improvement

- Speaker read from his slides a bit too much.
- Mr. Moon packed too much detail into his talk.
- Slides could be with larger print!

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

[none]

Amb. John Tefft

Vladimir Putin. In the tradition of Brutal Russian Autocrats or Unique Leader Sarasota 3-27-25

Attendance: 320

Comments: 37

Positive Comments

- Excellent (2)
- Stunningly good speaker. Thank you.
- Tefft and moderator were excellent.
- Invite this speaker back with a different format. Moderator was too talkative.
- The speaker was very knowledgeable but could have been more organized with a different format.
- Really enjoyed listening to speaker. Not a fan of long-winded questions. Affected the speakers flow.
- Not pushing political bent as some speakers this year.
- I liked the format.
- Excellent speaker.
- Ambassador Tefft was very good and interesting. I think it would have been better to just let him speak.
- Speaker was great, but not the format or person who asked the questions.

Areas for Improvement

-Don't use the interview format!! We came to hear the ambassador, not the interviewer who talked too much. If he was the expert, I would listen to HIM, but I think the ambassador was the expert. Go back to

the lecture format!

- Why is the moderator dominating the discussion? Ask questions without lecturing! The format of conversation is less effective than an organized lecture by experts.
- The moderator was not very effective too much commentary. (6)
- Nothing new! Interviewers political bias was inappropriate re: Trump.
- I am not in favor of the Q&A format rather have lecture (3)
- I prefer when the speaker is alone on stage to address the subject.
- Format was limited.
- This would have been better as a lecture, not a discussion.
- Do not use the conversation format. Lecture better.
- Introduction was too long! Prefer to hear speaker instead of moderator questions!
- Please limit to 1 question.
- SILL guy talked too much. (2)
- I thought the interviewer was far too long winded and rambled too much.
- Wasted too much time cut off audience questions was terrible!
- The moderator completely took away from the speaker. Very slow questions were too long and not ones that many of us would have welcomed hearing about. This fascinating subject not current until individuals in audience asked specifics.
- Questions by moderator were confusing.
- The format the questions and answers were totally inadequate and ineffective. First have a lecture followed by a Q&A format.
- I do not like the interview format. Very much prefer normal speaker presentations. Please reconsider this format.
- Prefer presentations without Q&A rather than answering prepared questions.
- Q&A resulted in less organized set of ideas.

Comments regarding SILL, technology, logistics, sound, lighting, etc.

- Maybe ask questioners to be seated after asking question so that speaker can address whole audience.