# DESIGNING GOVERNMENT

For the 21st Century, by Robert A. Knisely

A Chautauqua Special Studies Course – Week One, 2017

# What is the problem?

- As our civilization has become more complex, so have its problems.
- In order to respond to these problems, we need:
  - in depth understanding of the problems, and
  - the most thoughtful, creative solutions possible.
- We also need a process that enables our political and administrative systems to craft solutions more easily and more transparently.

*"He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars:
General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite & flatterer,
For Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars
And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power."*

William Blake, Jerusalem (1820)

# Thank You for Being Late (book)
## -- Thomas L. Friedman, 2016

We're in the " age of accelerations" --
    Moore's Law (technology) – the "supernova"
    Markets (globalization)
    Mother Nature (climate change & biodiversity loss)

# Moore's Law

"Without clear knowledge of the future potential or future unintended consequences of new technologies, it is nearly impossible to draft regulations that will promote important advances – while still protecting ourselves from every bad side effect."

Eric Teller, Captain Moonshot, Google X's R&D lab
(From Friedman)

"If it now takes ten to fifteen years to understand a new technology and then build out new laws and regulations to safeguard society, how do we regulate when the technology has come and gone in five to seven years?"

Friedman, page 33

# "Markets" (globalization):

Per McKinsey in 2016:

    50 million small businesses on Facebook
    10 million small/medium enterprises on Alibaba (China)
    2 million small businesses on Amazon
    900 million people have international connections on social media
    360 million take part in cross-border e-commerce

-- Friedman, page 127

We need: "the ability to approach politics and problem-solving in the age of accelerations with a mind-set that is entrepreneurial, hybrid, and heterodox and nondogmatic – mixing and coevolving any ideas or ideologies that will create resilience and propulsion, no matter whose 'side' they come from."

-- Friedman, page 310

# The Fourth Revolution --
# The Global Race to Reinvent the State
# (book). -- Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2014

Thomas Hobbes and the Rise of the Nation-State
    -- the ability to solve the problem of public order
John Stuart Mill and the Liberal State
    -- a world in which power was constrained by individual liberty
Beatrice Webb and the Welfare State
    -- tangible securities in a world that could be horrifically harsh
Milton Friedman's Paradise Lost
    -- the modern welfare state, stagnating under its own weight

"The danger to democracy's health today, at least in the West, comes in three more subtle forms:
The state will keep on expanding;
The state will surrender ever more power to special interests;
And the state will keep making promises it cannot keep."

-- Micklethwait, page 265

# America in the 21$^{st}$ Century

- 89,476 units of government
- Ongoing wars
- Financial cycles
  - Glass-Steagall
  - Dodd-Frank
- Kondratiev cycles

**From the 2007 Census of Governments:**

Units of Government:
89,476 USA (was 155k in 1942)
 3,033 Counties
36,011 Cities & Townships
37,381 Special Districts
13,051 Public School Systems

Units by state:
6,994  IL
4,871  PA
4,835  TX
4,344  CA
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177  AK
19   HI

Number of Counties:
254    TX
154    GA
118    KY
114    Mo
104    KS
102    IL
100    NC
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19     AK
3      HI
0      CT
0      RI

# We will bring together:

- Systems theory and cybernetics
- The exploding world of design
- Innovation diffusion and "patterns"

…and too many stories from my years in Washington!

The Bottom Line:

Designing government is not a lost art –
it's an undiscovered science.

# Shorthands:

- A *System* is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something. -- Donella Meadows

- "*Design* is basic to all human activities – the placing and patterning of any act towards a desired goal constitutes a design process." -- Victor Papanek

- *Governance* includes all of the processes of the actors involved in collective problems leading to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions. -- Wikipedia

# "Interventions"

I use "intervention" to describe an action taken to change an existing condition or situation in a society.

"Intervention" covers such tools as contracts, grants, regulations, government corporations, taxes, tort liability, nudges, and lots more, both in current practice and as imagined.

The common term "program" is far too general.

There are graduate degrees in systems, in design, and in governance, and we have just three days!

So we'll take each subject from "a few words," to "in the weeds," and then off "into the woods."

(See www.government-reform.info & http://www.albany.edu/~gpr/ for more!)

# Nota Bene:

- We will have a number of class exercises or "practicums" as they're known in more academic circles. They're fun.
- We are NOT talking today's "politics" here. We are PREsuming the government given by the Founders, or any other set of actors engaged in creating interventions to better their society. We may, however, get into some historical political stories…
- We can talk about today's politics the rest of the week -- on Bestor Plaza, at Afterwords, Food for Thought, or the Brickwalk Cafe, or in the penumbras of the Amphitheater and the Hall of Philosophy. Lots to talk about!

I am joined by George P. Richardson, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus at SUNY/Albany, an internationally known system dynamics modeler, of the school of Jay Forrester of M.I.T., author of <u>Urban Dynamics</u> (1969) and <u>World Dynamics</u> (1971). George's thesis, <u>Feedback Thought in Social Science and Systems Theory</u>, is still available in book form.

George has been a friend and companion for almost 59 years – he began yelling at me in the fall of 1958!

George will lead today's discussion of systems thought & modeling.