

*The Fox Leadership Program and Program for Research on Religion & Urban Civil
Society (PRRUCS) present:*

**State vs. Individual?
Robert Nisbet and the Freedom of Association**

A luncheon with Dr. Luke Sheahan,
Post-Doctoral Associate, Department of Political Science, Duke University

**Wednesday, February 21st
12noon**

Fox-Fels Hall, Leadership Conference 1
Lunch will be served

Talk Abstract:

Robert Nisbet was one of the most prominent sociologists and public commentators of the twentieth century, making significant contributions to the study of the history of sociology, higher education, and political theory. He famously critiqued the notion that statism and individualism were opposing forces. Nisbet saw them working in tandem, the state asserting the rights of the individual against a variety of social groups. As a corrective to the state/individual paradigm, he argued for pluralism and a "laissez-faire of groups." Nisbet's thesis has played out in the Supreme Court's treatment of the freedom of association where the Court has collapsed the right of association into the right to free speech. His idea of the laissez-faire of groups may provide a philosophical grounding for the constitutional right of association, one that broadens the right into a meaningful protection for voluntary associations.