

Award-Winning Radio Documentarian to Present a Listening Session of a New Report about Texas Education Battles at the Columbia Journalism School

“We cannot lose Texas. If we lose the education in Texas we lose the entire country.” —Glenn Beck, television and radio host

“In Texas, we have a kind of petri dish where they grow the cultures to see which of those ideological aspects will be most easily adopted into the classroom and which ones need more tweaking.” —Kathy Miller, President of the Texas Freedom Network

Trey Kay, a 2011-12 Spencer Fellow for Education Reporting, will present his new radio documentary, ***The Long Game: Texas’ Ongoing Battle for the Direction of the Classroom*** on **Wednesday, November 13**, in **Room 607B** at the **Columbia School of Journalism**.

Long Game had its premiere on Austin Public Radio – KUT on October 13, 2013 and is currently being played on public radio stations throughout the country.

In 2009, Kay produced, for West Virginia Public Broadcasting, the radio documentary ***The Great Textbook War***, which earned three prestigious broadcasting awards: the George Foster Peabody Award, a regional and national Edward R. Murrow Award and an Alfred I. duPont/Columbia University Silver Baton.

Peabody judges cited ***Textbook War*** as a “thoughtful, balanced and gripping radio documentary that shows how a 1974 battle over textbook content in rural West Virginia foreshadows the ‘culture wars’ still raging.” Columbia’s duPont jury said that Kay’s work foreshadowed “today’s populist revolt and polarizing political debate.”

As a Spencer Fellow, Kay continued his research into culture war battles over education by focusing on the fights that have ebbed and flowed in Texas over the past 50 years.

“For more than a half a century, citizens of the Lone Star State have had intense, emotional battles over what children should and shouldn’t be taught in public school classrooms,” said Kay. “While there have been fights over just about every academic subject, debates over history, evolution, God and country generate the most heat. In many ways, Texans are stuck. Some believe teachers should lay out relevant facts

before students and have them draw their own conclusions. Others believe there should be particular values —perhaps absolute values— added into the mix to help guide students.”

Kay spent nearly two years gathering interviews and acquiring archival audio in Texas. During this process, he was present to capture a new controversy that erupted over a Texas-generated curriculum system known as CSCOPE. Tea Party parents were outraged when they discovered there were CSCOPE lessons that equated Boston Tea Party participants to terrorists and encouraged students to design a flag for a new communist country. These parents were also troubled by lessons that taught the fundamental principals of Islam. When they asked to see more of their children’s lessons, they were told that CSCOPE material was protected by a non-disclosure agreement and that parents couldn’t have access. The controversy reached critical mass after conservative talk show host Glenn Beck began speaking to his national audience about CSCOPE as a form of leftist indoctrination that was running rampant in Texas and could potentially appear in public schools in other states. After about six months of intense media and political pressure, the lesson plan wing of CSCOPE —used in over 70% of Texas schools— was disbanded.

Kay’s report also examines Texas’ perennial battle over science standards and in particular, how the state chooses to teach all things related to the origins of the universe and theory of evolution. This fall, the Texas Board of Education is selecting biology textbooks for use by high school students over the next decade, the panel responsible for reviewing submissions from publishers has stirred controversy because a number of its members do not accept evolution and climate change as scientific truth.

The listening session at Columbia will consist of Kay playing portions of **Long Game** and fielding questions about education reporting and the production of long form audio reports. Students will be given access to **Long Game** prior to the listening session and are encouraged to come prepared with questions.

The event, which is open to the public, is being co-sponsored by the duPont Awards and the Spencer Fellowship Program.