



**Frederick County, Maryland**

# **Language and Politics: How Polarizing Talk Endangers Democracy**

**Join us for a workshop led by linguist  
Kathryn Ruud**

**Sunday, April 10, 2011  
1:30 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.  
C. Burr Artz Public Library  
110 East Patrick St.  
Frederick, MD 21701**

## The Workshop

It is not just what we say, but how we say it that makes us persuasive. But it is not always easy to detect that the methods used by some speakers and writers can inflame passions beyond what the facts support.

Increasingly, in Congress, at town halls and at the kitchen table, our political conversations are affected by polarizing linguistic strategies used on some political talk programs. These strategies, which draw on underlying language structures (frames, metaphors, etc.), go beyond policy debates to pit groups against one another and to manipulate public opinion.

Kathryn Ruud studied the manipulative language used by fascists in interwar Germany and by communists in post-World War II East Germany. In this workshop she applies her understanding to the analysis of polarized political discourse, arguing that many of the tactics used by propagandists from both extremes are undermining political discussion in the U.S. today.

Using clips from talk radio and TV programs, Kathryn will outline seven major strategies of polarization. Each strategy and its effects will be identified and discussed. Then Kathryn introduces a range of personal strategies for public and private communication, to counter destructive political talk. Workshop participants will then practice identifying polarizing strategies, and we will seriously, and playfully, employ countering linguistic strategies.

Kathryn is a contributing author to the book, *At War with Words*, published in NY and Berlin, 2003. She has an M.S. in German and Linguistics and has given presentations on this topic at colleges, universities, the Maryland League of Women Voters and other civic organizations.