

Misinformation, Political Rumors, and Conspiracy Theories

POSC 210 – Spring 2020

Online (and if we return to campus Leighton 426)

(TTH 10:10-11:55a.m. central – 2-3c Schedule)

Carleton College

Instructor: Professor Christina Farhart

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00p.m.-2:00p.m. or by appointment

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I. Course Description

Why do people believe in conspiracy theories, hold on to misinformed beliefs even in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, and/or spread political and social rumors that may have little basis in fact? Why are these beliefs so difficult to change or correct? Who is most vulnerable to political misinformation and conspiracies? What are the normative and political consequences? This course explores the psychological, political, and philosophical approaches to the study of the causes, consequences, and tenacity of misinformation, political rumors, and conspiracy beliefs, as well as possible approaches that journalists and government officials could employ to combat misperceptions.

II. Course Objectives

This course will introduce you to various scholarly explanations for misinformation and the influence on political beliefs and behavior. Like many political science courses, the aim of this class is not to teach you *what* to think about politics nor to provide a venue for you to attempt to convince others of your political views. Rather, the goal of this class is to teach you *how* to think about how people think about politics in the United States, e.g., through information search, social media outlets, casual conversations...etc.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Critically analyze political inputs (public opinion, polls... etc.) and outputs (claims made by political elites, the media... etc.)
- Identify psychological factors that promote belief in misperceptions
- Understand why conspiracy theories often arise under conditions of uncertainty or anxiety
- Discuss how elites may promote false or unsupported claims
- Evaluate approaches to countering misperceptions and conspiracy theories
- Assess implications for democracy

III. Required Course Readings

REQUIRED TEXT (E-BOOK VIA GOULD LIBRARY):

Uscinski, Joseph E. and Joseph M. Parent. 2014. *American Conspiracy Theories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Uscinski, Joseph E. 2020. *Conspiracy Theories: A Primer*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Edelman, Murray. 2001. *The Politics of Misinformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Southwell, Brian G., Emily A. Thorson, and Laura Sheble. 2018. *Misinformation and Mass Audiences*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

ACADEMIC ARTICLES, BOOK CHAPTERS, NEWS ARTICLES, AND BLOG POSTS:

- All readings will be available on Moodle or through e-book. This means that material for paper responses will come the required text (e-book) and from lectures and Moodle readings.
- For some topics, recommended enrichment readings are listed. These will be provided along with the required readings for each week, but are NOT required. However, students may find them to be useful in gaining additional perspectives or helpful for their papers.
- As we will be applying contemporary context, I also strongly encourage you to pay attention to a quality daily newspaper (recommended papers include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Hill*, and *The Wall Street Journal*).
- Other fact checking websites and resources may be of interest: <https://www.factcheck.org/>, <https://www.politifact.com/>, <https://www.snopes.com/>, along with @MediaWise training through Poynter. Org, NPR's efforts to combat mis- and disinformation, and Harvard Misinformation Review.
- Reliable podcasts are also recommended (and your recommendations are always welcome)!
- I recognize the potential financial burden of book purchases, course fees, supply requirements, and travel costs. If you are in need of assistance to cover expenses, please speak with me.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW TO GO ABOUT READING COURSE MATERIAL:

- Be an active reader: take notes, jot down questions that occur to you as you are reading, highlight passages that you find particularly interesting, troubling, or surprising. Note similarities or inconsistencies across the various readings. Think about the implications of the readings for understanding current political contexts and material covered in other weeks.

IV. Class Structure and Expectations

This term, as most of our work will take place asynchronously, most classes will consist of the following structure, but we will be flexible if particular events or topics need more attention. If schedules work out, we will also have some recorded guest speakers throughout the term. However, you are expected to watch all lectures and participate actively in all discussions. **Please do not download, record or share any class sessions, lectures or conversations from this course.**

- Discussions via Moodle (and informal, not required, discussions via Slack)
- Watch recorded lectures

I expect you to complete the assigned readings before engaging in Moodle discussions. I also expect you to seek to apply our course material to new contexts, e.g., current events. You can expect me to arrive to online discussions on time (if scheduled), to return assignments in a timely manner, to be accessible during my office hours, and available to meet by appointment outside of office hours. I will strive to make this course understandable and accessible for all students. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to ask. I am always happy to help if you come to me before assignments are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date. Come talk to me before if you are struggling.

V. Course Requirements and Grading

The requirements for this course involve both the completion of assignments on your own outside of our class meetings and your active and informed contributions to our discussions in class. Some of your assignments will be submitted electronically. It is your responsibility to make sure the file is not corrupted (you should be able to download and view the file after you upload it to Moodle). If you use .pages, rather than Word (.doc or .docx) please convert to .pdf before submitting completed assignments. Corrupted files will be treated as though they are late until they are correctly uploaded. Your grade will be based on the following requirements:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS: (30% TOTAL) Students will be required to post 4 sets of thought questions throughout the term, due by 5:00pm on Friday of each week. For weeks that students do not post questions, they are required to respond to two students' questions by midnight on Sunday.

FOUR PAPERS: (15% EACH; 60% TOTAL) You will be required to complete four papers throughout the term. More information will be provided in class.

PARTICIPATION: (10% TOTAL) The final portion of your grade is based on your willingness to contribute to our class discussions on Moodle. What does this require? Please prepare for and participate meaningfully in discussions on Moodle. "Meaningful" participation comes in a number of forms: asking questions to clarify course topics, answering questions that are posed in the forum, drawing connections between course topics and current events, and participating respectfully in class discussions. In other words, good participation is simply being a good member of our class community. Everyone's experience in this course is enhanced by active participation; conversely, everyone's experience suffers if individuals do not participate. Remember that a sincere question often adds as much (if not more) to our understanding of the course material as an explanation of the week's readings. So, please do not be afraid to ask!

GRADING SCALE: This course is graded on a Satisfactory/Credit/No Credit. At Carleton, this type of grading is affectionately referred to as "scrunch" grading, based on the abbreviation S/Cr/NC. Underneath the Satisfactory/Credit/No Credit grading system, is still an assessment of whether achievement on the assignment was outstanding relative to the basic course requirements (A: 90-100%), was successful significantly above the basic requirements (B: 80-89%), met the basic course requirements (C: 70-79%), or was below the basic requirements (D/F: <69%).

To earn a Satisfactory (S) grade in this course I expect you to:

- Submit and receive a "Satisfactory" (>70%) on each thought question assignment., either as a poster or as a responder, depending on your weekly assignment.
- Submit and receive a "Satisfactory" (>70%) on all four papers.

ADDITIONAL GRADING POLICIES:

1. I will not consider grade complaints if more than one week has passed after the assignment has been returned to you. Before I review your grade, you must first:

- Wait 24 hours from when I return the assignment.
- Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
- Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think

your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not vague reasons like “I worked really hard.” The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments will not be accepted unless official documentation is provided. Your grade will be lowered 10 percentage points for each day it is late. That is if the assignment is due on Monday at 1:50 p.m. and you turn it in sometime between 1:50 p.m. and Tuesday 1:50 p.m., the highest grade you can achieve is 90/100. This comes into play with the new grading policy such that if the assignment is late multiple days, the assignment may not be counted as completed and satisfactory.

- The only acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time only if you communicate with me before the assignment is due and/or you provide documentation of the circumstance.

VI. Notes

You are expected to read the entire syllabus at the beginning of the term. While you are encouraged to print out a hardcopy to read and reference through the term, you will also want to have an electronic version to access external websites and resources. Depending on class dynamics or campus emergency, the information on this syllabus may be modified by the instructor. Students will be notified promptly of any changes via Announcements on the course Moodle page.

VII. Academic Honesty

In writing course papers, students must document all passages, paraphrases and/or ideas that are borrowed from any source, and direct quotations must be placed within quotation marks. Similarly, papers must represent research conducted for the course in which they are assigned and no other; it is not appropriate to submit a paper that has already been or will be submitted to another course. Finally, papers must be the product of students' own work. Papers written by anyone other than the student, including those purchased from commercial research services, are unacceptable.

All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources! A discussion of plagiarism may be found at: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/>.

VIII. Thought Question Schedule

Some of the readings for this class will be challenging. I expect that some of our Moodle discussions will be focused on clarifying confusing aspects of the readings. To facilitate these discussions, you will be required to turn in **four** sets of “thought questions” about the readings during the term (see below to find out when your particular thought questions are due). Thought questions will need to be **submitted on Moodle by 5:00p.m. on the Friday that they are due**. It is your responsibility to make sure that your questions uploaded correctly, as the Moodle site will be the only record of whether you submitted your questions and responses on time or not.

What are “thought questions”? These questions may arise directly from one or more of the readings for that week – you may be confused about something and want clarification, or you might disagree with something an author says. Alternatively, they may be broader questions that link the issues raised in the readings with other topics already considered in the course or with current/past events or from other classes you’ve taken. You should plan to post **3-5 thought questions** per week’s readings (so, not 3-5 questions per reading, but 3-5 questions total, across the readings).

For weeks you are not posting questions, you are to respond to **two** students’ questions for credit that week. You have until **Sunday at midnight** to respond to the questions posted the previous day.

*It is important to keep in mind that thought questions are not graded like other assignments – when you turn them in, you get full credit. If you don’t turn them in, you won’t get credit. Late thought questions and/or discussion responses will not be accepted except for extenuating circumstances.

When to Post	Content to Cover	Last Name
Friday, 04/10, 5:00pm	Week 1 Readings	--
Friday, 04/17, 5:00pm	Week 2 Readings	A through K
Friday, 04/24, 5:00pm	Week 3 Readings	L through Z
Friday, 05/01, 5:00pm	Week 4 Readings	A through K
Friday, 05/08, 5:00pm	Week 5 Readings	L through Z
Friday, 05/15, 5:00pm	Week 6 Readings	A through K
Friday, 05/22, 5:00pm	Week 7 Readings	L through Z
Friday, 05/29, 5:00pm	Week 8 Readings	A through K
Wednesday, 06/03, 5:00pm	Week 9 Readings	L through Z

IX. Course Schedule

Below, you'll find a list of all readings and weekly topics we will discuss. You should include any questions that you have in a discussion forum on Moodle or in our class Slack channel. In the event that deviations from this schedule are necessary, they will be posted to Moodle under *Announcements*.

Readings should be completed BEFORE you watch the brief lectures.

WEEK 1 (04/07) – INTRODUCTION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND DEFINITIONS

HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND DEFINITIONS

Hofstadter, Richard. 1965. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. New York: Knopf.

Uscinski & Parent (Chapters 1 and 2)

Sunstein, Cass R. and Adrian Vermeule. 2009. "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17(2): 202–227.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES/FUN

Andersen, Kurt. 2017. "How America Lost Its Mind," *The Atlantic*, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/how-america-lost-its-mind/534231/?utm_source=atfb

Lytvynenko, Jane. 2017. "If You Get 41/55 On This Quiz, Fake News Didn't Fool You This Year," *Buzzfeed*, https://www.buzzfeed.com/janelytvynenko/massive-2017-fake-news-quiz?utm_term=.ftmYP7mZa

"Quiz: How well can you tell factual from opinion statements?" Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/news-statements-quiz/>

*** DUE SUNDAY (04/12): BRIEF CLASS SURVEY FOR PAPER #1 ***

WEEK 2 (04/14) – PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS (DON'T PANIC... MOST ARE SUPER SHORT!)

*** DUE FRIDAY (04/17): PAPER #1, PART I ***

PART I

Uscinski & Parent (Chapters 3 and 4)

van der Linden, Sander. 2013. "Why People Believe in Conspiracies." *Scientific American*.

Swami, Viren and Rebecca Coles. 2010. "The Truth Is Out There: Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *The Psychologist* 23(7): 560–563.

Part II

Abalakina–Paap, Marina, Walter G. Stephan, Traci Craig, and W. Larry Gregory. 1999. "Beliefs in Conspiracies." *Political Psychology* 20(3): 637–47.

Wood, Michael J., Karen M. Douglas, and Robbie M. Sutton. 2012. "Dead and Alive: Beliefs in Contradictory Conspiracy Theories." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3:767-773.

PART III

Sullivan, Daniel, Mark Landau, and Zachary K. Rothschild. 2010. "An Existential Function of Enemyship: Evidence That People Attribute Influence to Personal and Political Enemies to Compensate for Threats to Control." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98: 434- 449.

Whitson, Jennifer A. and Adam D. Galinsky. 2008. "Lacking Control Increases Illusory Pattern Perception." *Science* 322: 115-117.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Gilbert, Daniel T., Romin W. Tafarodi, and Patrick S. Malone. 1993. "You can't not believe everything you read." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65(2): 221–233.

WEEK 3 (04/21) – POLITICAL SCIENCE EXPLANATIONS (AGAIN DON'T PANIC... MOST ARE SHORT!)

PART I

Kunda, Ziva. 1990. "The Case for Motivated Reasoning." *Psychological Bulletin*.

Prior, Markus, Gaurav Sood, and Kabir Khanna. 2015. "You Cannot be Serious: The Impact of Accuracy Incentives on Partisan Bias in Reports of Economic Perceptions." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 10(4): 489–518.

Flynn, D. J., Nyhan, Brendan, and Reifler, Jason. 2017. "The nature and origins of misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics." *Political Psychology*, 38(S1), 127-150.

PART II

Uscinski & Parent (Chapters 5 and 6)

Oliver, J. Eric and Thomas J. Wood. 2014. "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4): 952-966.

PART III

Uscinski, Joseph E., Casey Klofstad and Matthew D. Atkinson. 2016. "What Drives Conspiratorial Beliefs? The Role of Informational Cues and Predispositions." *Political Research Quarterly*, 69: 57-71.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

Nyhan, Brendan. 2012. "Political Knowledge Does Not Guard Against Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *Model Politics*, November 5.

<https://today.yougov.com/news/2012/11/05/political-knowledge-does-not-guard-against-belief/>

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Marks, Joseph, Eloise Copland, Eleanor Loh, and Cass R. Sunstein, and Tali Sharot. 2018. "Epistemic Spillovers: Learning Others' Political Views Reduces the Ability to Assess and Use Their Expertise in Nonpolitical Domains" *Harvard Public Law Working Paper* No. 18-22.

Kahan, Dan M., Ellen Peters, Erica Cantrell Dawson, and Paul Slovic. 2013. "Motivated Numeracy and Enlightened Self-Government" *Yale Law School, Working Paper* No. 116, *Behavioral Public Policy* 1: 54-86.

WEEK 4 (04/28) – SYMBOLISM AND THE POLITICS OF SCIENCE

*** DUE FRIDAY 05/01: PAPER #1, PART II ***

PART I – CLIMATE CHANGE

Suhay, Elizabeth and James N. Druckman. 2015. "The Politics of Science: Political Values and the Production, Communication, and Reception of Scientific Knowledge." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658:6-15.

Saunders, Kyle L. 2017. "The impact of elite frames and motivated reasoning on beliefs in a global warming conspiracy: The promise and limits of trust." *Research and Politics*, July-September: 1-9.

OR

Schuldt, Jonathon P., Sungjong Roh, and Norbert Schwarz. 2015. "Questionnaire Design Effects in Climate Change Surveys: Implications for the Partisan Divide." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658: 67-85.

PART II – HEALTH (VACCINES AND HEALTH BEHAVIORS)

Iyengar, Shanto and Douglas S. Massey 2019. "Scientific communication in post-truth society." *PNAS*, 116 (16): 7656–7661.

Oliver, J. Eric and Thomas J. Wood. 2014. "Medical conspiracy theories and health behaviors in the United States." *JAMA internal medicine*, 174(5), 817-818.

Motta, Matthew, Timothy Callaghan and Steven Sylvester. 2018. "Knowing less but presuming more: Dunning-Kruger effects and the endorsement of anti-vaccine policy attitudes." *Social Science & Medicine*. 211: 274-281.

OR

Lunz Trujillo, Kristin, Matthew Motta, Timothy Callaghan, and Steven Sylvester. 2020. "Correcting Misperceptions about the MMR Vaccine: Using Psychological Risk Factors to Inform Targeted Communication Strategies." *Political Research Quarterly*, online 1–15.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

Coronavirus deniers and hoaxers persist despite dire warnings. Some say the pandemic shutdown is a plot to get President Trump. 2020. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-deniers-outbreak-hoax/2020/03/19/46bc5e46-6872-11ea-b313-df458622c2cc_story.html

Badger, Emily and Kevin Quealy. 2020. "Red vs. Blue on Coronavirus Concern: The Gap Is Still Big but Closing After initially being dismissive, Republicans are starting to move closer to matching Democrats' level of worry." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/21/upshot/coronavirus-public-opinion.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Blum, Dani. 2020. "Don't Fall for These Myths About Coronavirus: Misconceptions about what can protect you are becoming just as contagious as the virus." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-myths.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bolsen, Toby, James N. Druckman, and Fay Lomax Cook. 2015. "Citizens', Scientists', and Policy Advisors' Beliefs about Global Warming." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658: 271-295.

Nisbet, Erik C., Kathryn E. Cooper, and R. Kelly Garrett. 2015. "The Partisan Brain: How Dissonant Science Messages Lead Conservatives and Liberals to (Dis)Trust Science." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658: 36-66.

Jasanoff, Sheila. 2012. "Contested Boundaries in Policy-Relevant Science." *Social Studies of Science*, 17(2): 195-230.

Uscinski, Joseph, Karen Douglas, and Stephan Lewandowsky 2017. "Climate Change Conspiracy Theories" *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*.

Fowler, Erika Franklin and Sarah E. Gollust. 2015. "The Content and Effect of Politicized Health Controversies." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658:155-171.

WEEK 5 (05/05) – MISINFORMATION, FACTS AND FAKE NEWS

*** DUE FRIDAY 05/08: PAPER #2 ***

Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder and Robert F. Rich. 2000. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship." *The Journal of Politics*, 62(3): 790-816.

Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Buddy Peyton, Jay Verkuilen. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *The Journal of Politics*, 69(4): 957-974.

Lazer, David M. J., Matthew A. Baum, Yochai Benkler, Adam J. Berinsky, Kelly M. Greenhill, Filippo Menczer, Miriam J. Metzger, Brendan Nyhan, Gordon Pennycook, David Rothschild, Michael Schudson, Steven A. Sloman, Cass R. Sunstein, Emily A. Thorson, Duncan J. Watts, Jonathan L. Zittrain. 2018. "Science of Fake News." *Science*, 359(6380): 1094-1096.

**Watch via Netflix and Read Debunking “What the Health”, *Vox*
<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/7/25/16018658/what-the-health-documentary-review-vegan-diet>

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Hochschild, Jennifer L. and Katherine Levine Einstein. 2015. *Do Facts Matter? Information and Misinformation in American Politics*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, (Chapters 1, 2, 3-5)

WEEK 6 (05/12) – CORRECTIONS, FACT-CHECKING, AND THE MEDIA

(REMINDER OF GENERAL ADVISING DAYS 05/11-05/19)

CORRECTIONS

Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010. “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions.” *Political Behavior*, 32(2): 303-330.

Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2013. “Which Corrections Work? Research Results and Practice Recommendations.” *New America Foundation Media Policy Initiative Research Paper*.

FACT-CHECKING

Cappella, Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 1994. “Broadcast Ad-watch Effects: A Field Experiment.” *Communication Research*, 21(3):342-365.

Amazeen, Michelle A. 2013. “Making a Difference? A Critical Assessment of Fact-checking in 2012.” *New America Foundation report*.

Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2015. “The Effect of Fact-checking on Elites: A Field Experiment on U.S. State Legislators.” *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3): 628–640.

THE MEDIA

Malka, Ariel, Jon A. Krosnick, Matthew DeBell, Josh Pasek, and Daniel Schneider. 2009. “Featuring Skeptics in News Media Stories About Global Warming Reduces Public Beliefs in the Seriousness of Global Warming.” *Woods Institute for the Environment*, Stanford University. <http://climatepublicopinion.stanford.edu/sample-page/research/featuring-skeptics-in-news-media-stories-reduces-public-beliefs-in-the-seriousness-of-global-warming/>

Nyhan, Brendan. 2012. “Countering Misinformation: Tips for Journalists.” *Columbia Journalism Review*, February 29.
http://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/countering_misinformation_tip.php?page=all

Allcott, Hunt and Matthew Gentzkow. 2017. “Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2): 211–236.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

[Understanding and Addressing the Disinformation Ecosystem](#). 2020.

Guess, Andrew, Dominique Lockett, Benjamin Lyons, Jacob M. Montgomery, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2020. “Fake news’ may have limited effects beyond increasing beliefs in false claims.” *Harvard Misinformation Review*.
<https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/fake-news-limited-effects-on-political-participation/>

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2017. “Why Facts Don’t Change Our Minds,” *The New Yorker*, available at <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds>

Stencel, Mark. 2015. “The Weaponization of Fact-Checking.” *Politico Magazine*, May 13.

Hunt, Elle. 2017. “Disputed by multiple fact-checkers’: Facebook rolls out new alert to combat fake news.” *The Guardian*, March 21.

Kludt, Tom. 2016. “News media struggles to cover Trump’s tweets and falsehoods.” *CNN*, November 28, 2016.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Swire, Briony, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, and Stephan Lewandowsky. 2017. The role of familiarity in correcting inaccurate information, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 43(12), 1948–1961.

Dixon, Graham N. and Christopher E. Clarke. 2013. “Heightening Uncertainty Around Certain Science: Media Coverage, False Balance, and the Autism-Vaccine Controversy.” *Science Communication* 35(3): 358–382.

Lewandowsky, Stephan, Ullrich K.H. Ecker, and John Cook. 2017. “Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the ‘Post-Truth’ Era.” *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*.

Nyhan, Brendan, Jason Reifler, Sean Richey, and Gary Freed. 2014. “Effective Messages in Vaccine Promotion: A Randomized Trial.” *Pediatrics* 133(4): e834-e842.

WEEK 7 (05/19) – CTs AND MISINFO: IS THE POLITICAL RIGHT MORE SUSCEPTIBLE?

MAYBE

Pasek, Josh, Tobias H. Stark, Jon A. Krosnick, and Trevor Tompson. 2015. “What motivates a conspiracy theory? Birther beliefs, partisanship, liberal- conservative ideology, and anti-Black attitudes.” *Electoral Studies* 40: 482–489.

PROBABLY NOT

Miller, Joanne M., Kyle S. Saunders, and Christina E. Farhart. 2016. “Conspiracy Endorsement as Motivated Reasoning: The Moderating Roles of Knowledge and Trust.” *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 824-844.

MOST LIKELY

Mooney, Chris. 2012. *The Republican Brain: The Science of Why They Deny Science and Reality*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Introduction, Chapters 3 and 6, and Conclusion

Blank, Joshua M. and Daron Shaw. 2015. "Does Partisanship Shape Attitudes toward Science and Public Policy? The Case for Ideology and Religion." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658: 18-35.

Edelson et al. 2017. "The effect of conspiratorial thinking and motivated reasoning on belief in election fraud." *Political Research Quarterly*, 70(4): 933–946.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

Carey, Benedict. 2018. "Fake News?: Wide Reach but Little Impact, Study Suggests" *The New York Times*, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/02/health/fake-news-conservative-liberal.html>

Ehrenreich, John. 2017. "Why Are Conservatives More Susceptible to Believing Lies?" *Slate*, available at http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2017/11/why_conservatives_are_more_susceptible_to_believing_in_lies.html

WEEK 8 (05/26) – RUMORS

*** DUE FRIDAY 05/29: PAPER #3 ***

Allport, Gordon W. and Leo Postman (1946). "An Analysis of Rumor." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10(4): 501–517.

Sunstein, Cass. 2009. *On Rumors*. NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Shin, Jieun, Lian Jian, Kevin Driscoll, and François Bar. 2016. "Political rumoring on Twitter during the 2012 US presidential election: Rumor diffusion and correction." *New Media & Society* 1–22.

DiFonzo, Nicholas. 2008. *The Watercooler Effect: A Psychologist Explores the Extraordinary Power of Rumors*. NY: Avery. Chapters 1, 3, and 5

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

Clark, Taylor. 2008. "The 8 1/2 Laws of Rumor Spread." *Psychology Today*, November/December, 2008, pgs. 80-86.

Nyhan, Brendan. 2014. "Why Rumors Outpace the Truth Online." *The New York Times*, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/30/upshot/its-so-much-more-fun-to-spread-rumors-than-the-truth.html>

Zeitz, Joshua. 2017. "Lessons From the Fake News Pandemic of 1942." *Politico Magazine*, March 12, 2017.

“Blue Feed, Red Feed.” *Wall Street Journal* <http://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/>

WEEK 9 (06/02) – IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY
Uscinski and Parent (Chapter 7)

Hochschild, Jennifer L. and Katherine Levine Einstein. 2015. *Do Facts Matter? Information and Misinformation in American Politics*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press (Chapter 5)

Shapiro, Robert Y. and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon. 2008. “Do the Facts Speak for Themselves? Partisan Disagreement as a Challenge to Democratic Competence.” *Critical Review*, 20(1–2): 115–139

Jolley, Daniel and Karen M. Douglas. 2014. “The Social Consequences of Conspiracism: Exposure to Conspiracy Theories Decreases Intentions to Engage in Politics and to Reduce One’s Carbon Footprint.” *British Journal of Psychology*, 105:35–56.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

Resnick, Brian. 2017. “‘Motivated ignorance’ is ruining our political discourse,” *Vox*, available at <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/5/15/15585176/motivated-ignorance-politics-debate>

Lee, Timothy B. 2016. “How social media creates angry, poorly informed partisans.” *Vox*, October 26, 2016. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/10/26/13413292/social-media-disrupting-politics>

Davies, William. 2016. “The Age of Post-Truth Politics.” *New York Times*, August 24. “Yes, I’d lie to you.” September 10, 2016. *The Economist*.

Musgrave, Paul. 2017. “Democracy requires trust. But Trump is making us all into conspiracy theorists.” *Washington Post*, March 7, 2017.

Collins, Nathan. 2018. “How to tackle conspiracy theories in politics.” *Pacific Standard*. August 8, 2018. <https://psmag.com/news/how-to-tackle-conspiracy-theories-in-politics>

WEEK 10 (06/08) – FINALS WEEK

*** DUE MONDAY 06/08: FINAL PAPER #4 BY 5:00PM TO MOODLE ***

X. Additional Carleton Policies and Student Support

I strive to create an inclusive and respectful classroom that values diversity. Our individual differences enrich and enhance our understanding of one another and of the world around us. This class welcomes the perspectives of all ethnicities, genders, religions, ages, sexual orientations, disabilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, and nationalities.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - HELPDESK

The ITS helpdesk is a centralized support center for all students, staff and faculty on campus. For students, we support their personally-owned devices including a drop-off repair service for software and some minor hardware issues. The helpdesk also supports and maintains 13 [public computer labs](#) and their associated printers across campus. To contact the ITS helpdesk, go to <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/services/helpdesk/> or you can call, email, or contact the helpdesk directly by phone at 507-222-5999 (x5999 from on campus). Phone is best for time-sensitive requests. You can also email helpdesk@carleton.edu (Any email sent to this address automatically opens a support ticket) or contact the Web Help Desk: <https://helpdesk.carleton.edu/> to open your own ticket.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact disability@carleton.edu or call Sam Thayer (10), Accessibility Specialist (x4464) or Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services (x5250) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

The Assistive Technologies program brings together academic and technological resources to complement student classroom and computing needs, particularly in support of students with physical or learning disabilities. Accessibility features include text-to-speech (Kurzweil), speech-to-text (Dragon) software, and audio recording Smartpens. If you would like to know more, contact aztechs@carleton.edu or visit go.carleton.edu/aztech.

LEARNING STRATEGIES AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Oscar Alvarez, Academic Skills Coach, is eager to help you develop learning strategies that work in the Carleton context. His goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. For details on how to schedule a videoconference with Oscar, visit: [Learning Strategies & Time Management](#). If you prefer to learn these skills and strategies on your own, visit "[Helpful DIY Resources](#)."

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Your librarian for Political Science is Sean Leahy. Ask a librarian for help with your research in this class. You can drop by the library's [Research/IT desk](#) to ask any question you have, at any point in your process, or chat with a librarian online 24/7. Librarians help students find and evaluate

articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the Gould Library website at go.carleton.edu/library.

WRITING SUPPORT

The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their [online appointment system](#). Walk-ins are welcome, though writers with appointments have priority.

If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, [Multilingual Writing Coordinator](#), call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

QUANTITATIVE SKILLS AND REASONING SUPPORT

The Quantitative Resource Center (QRC) collaborates with DataSquad and Statistics faculty to provide daily appointments and drop-in support for help with reading, graphing, interpreting, and using numbers and data in QRE courses, comps, or any other work involving QR. Get help understanding basic statistics for your writing, creating graphs, brushing up on math for your non-math classes, and using statistical software. Not sure what you need help with? Come to an all-staff Data Drop-in, every Wed 2:00-4:00 pm. Click on the Hangouts Meet link or call in to join any drop-in!

CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

Speech coaching is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related events. Jenny Portis '20 can assist you with speech & communication skills including clarity, organization, articulation, projection, body language, eye contact, and effective use of aids (e.g., notes, PowerPoint, Keynote, etc.). Depending on your goals, your coach can also work with you on the content of the presentation: organization, voice, clarity, and, ultimately, persuasive impact. **Jenny will coach students remotely, using Zoom.** If you'd like to schedule a coaching session, just fill out this [brief, online form](#). For more information, visit go.carleton.edu/speakeasy

STUDENT HEALTH

Carleton College urges you to make yourself--your own health and well-being--your priority throughout this ten-week term and your career here. It is important to recognize stressors you may be facing, which can be personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. Sleep, exercise, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you flourish at Carleton. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, feel free to contact me and/or pursue other resources, such as [Student Health and Counseling](#) or the [Office of Health Promotion](#).

Carleton College seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual harassment/misconduct/assault we encourage you to report this. If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify our college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about your options at Carleton, please go to: https://apps.carleton.edu/dos/sexual_misconduct/.