Misinformation, disinformation and other digital fakery

Syllabus

Lecturer:

Prof. Dr. Andreas Jungherr

andreas.jungherr@uni-bamberg.de

www.uni-bamberg.de/politikdigital

Office: FMA/01.12, Feldkirchenstraße 21, 96052 Bamberg

Office Hours:

By appointment via Ms. Katharina Kachelmann

(katharina.kachelmann@uni-bamberg.de)

Secretary:

Katharina Kachelmann

katharina.kachelmann@uni-bamberg.de

Phone: +49 951 863-2738

Office: FMA/01.11, Feldkirchenstraße 21, 96052 Bamberg

1 Course description:

Misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of digital deception have become central concerns in both academic inquiry and public debate. News outlets regularly spotlight incidents of disinformation; political actors accuse each other of spreading falsehoods; and regulatory initiatives often cite the threat of digital disinformation to justify increased oversight of communication environments. However, effective regulation requires a careful balance between mitigating these threats and safeguarding democratic freedoms.

Addressing this challenge demands an empirically grounded understanding of the reach, effects, and mechanisms of digital disinformation. The social sciences play a vital role in developing concepts and methods to reliably identify, measure, and analyze these phenomena.

This course equips students with a robust conceptual toolkit to critically engage with core issues surrounding misinformation, disinformation, and digital fakery. Through structured readings, presentations, and guided research projects, students will explore the actors, strategies, and effects associated with digital disinformation and develop their own research inquiries in the field.

Please address your questions regarding the course to Ms. Katharina Kachelmann (katharina.kachelmann@uni-bamberg.de).

Learning objectives:

- Independent development and execution of an empirical research project;

- Independent development of research question, hypotheses, and research design on the basis of current theoretical discussions in the field;

- Independent execution of illustrative empirical analysis demonstrating the strength of the underlying research design.

2 Course requirements

2.1 Regular and active participation

This course is structured around in-depth discussions of the required readings. To fully benefit from these sessions, students are expected to read all assigned texts in advance and come prepared to engage actively in class discussions. Taking notes while reading will help you retain key arguments and contribute more effectively to seminar dialogue. *Background Readings:*

- On taking notes: Ahrens, S. (2022). *How to take smart notes: One simple technique to boost writing, learning and thinking* (2nd ed.). (Original work published 2017).

To guide your reading and prepare for discussions, consider the following questions (not all questions might be applicable to all texts):

- What theoretical framework do the authors draw on, and how does it shape their analysis?

- How are key concepts defined and applied?

- What are the central research questions?

- What hypotheses do the authors propose, and how are these developed?

- What methodological approach is used, and why is it appropriate for the research question?

- What phenomena do the authors investigate?

- What types of evidence are presented?

- What mechanisms do the authors suggest explain the observed outcomes?

- What are the key findings?

- How persuasive is the overall argument? (e.g., How do the findings relate to or challenge other work? How do they align with your own observations?)

- Are there alternative approaches or methods you would recommend to address the same question?

- In which aspects does the text succeed particularly well?

- Which elements of the text do you find unclear or difficult to understand?

- What is the broader significance of the text — for scholarly debates, policy discussions, or societal issues?

If any of the terms or concepts used above are unfamiliar, you may find the following background readings helpful:
Background Readings:

- Gerring, J. (2012). *Social science methodology: A unified framework* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139022224 (Original work published 2001).

- Howard, C. (2017). *Thinking like a political scientist: A practical guide to research methods*. The University of Chicago Press.

2.2 Presentation

Each participant will be responsible for a short presentation on one of the assigned texts related to the weekly topics. The goal of the presentation is to introduce the assigned text, summarize its core argument, identify the phenomenon under investigation, and explain the methodological approach taken by the authors. Please refer to the presenters' guide below to support your analysis.

To prepare your presentation, start with the text assigned to you and connect it to the required readings for your session. The background readings may also be useful—especially if you plan to explore this topic further in your written essay. However, these texts are only a starting point. You are expected to go beyond them by consulting relevant academic literature and, where appropriate, high-quality journalistic coverage or policy reports.

During the first session, each student will be assigned a topic from the listed readings for presentations. Please keep the following considerations in mind in preparing your presentation:

- Please center your presentation on the question provided for each section under "Presentation Prep." Each session includes a different set of texts—review them carefully and identify the key elements needed to answer the guiding question. For the purpose of your presentation, you may disregard aspects of the texts that are not directly relevant.

- Please plan your presentation to take about 10-15 minutes;

- Please prepare a slide deck with a presentation program of your choice (except for Prezi);

- In preparing the presentation please follow the guidelines discussed in the first session;

- Discuss your plan for the presentation with the lecturer at least one week before your presentation date;

- Please prepare a handout of one to two pages for your fellow students, summarizing the main points of your presentation;

- Upload the handout on the day your presentation is due to the assignment folder on the course's VC repository. Use the following template for the filename `"your_last_name-handout.pdf"`;

- The presentation will be graded and contribute 30% to your final grade.

If you do not follow these guidelines this will be reflected in your grade.

Background Readings:

- Schwabish, J. (2017). *Better presentations: A guide for scholars, researchers, and wonks*. Columbia University Press.

2.3   Research Project

The seminar offers students a hands-on introduction to the research process. Working in small teams, students will develop a research project on a topic related to the themes covered in the course. Projects may either address an original research question or replicate findings from studies discussed in the seminar. Throughout the semester, students will receive ongoing feedback on their project ideas and progress.

Students will present their work during sessions dedicated to the following components:

- Research question and hypotheses,

- Research design,

- Illustrative empirical analysis.

When preparing your presentations, please consider the following:

- Plan for a presentation length of approximately 5–10 minutes;

- Prepare a slide deck using a presentation software of your choice (excluding Prezi);

- Presentations are a required component of the course but will not be graded.

2.4   Term paper

Participants will be asked to hand in a term paper. Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Style Guidelines:**

    - Font: Times New Roman, 12 pt;
    - Line spacing: 1.5;
    - Margins: 2.5 cm left and right, 2 cm top and bottom;
    - Text alignment: Block format;
    - Paragraphs: First line of each paragraph should be indented.

- **Citation Style:** Please follow the American Psychological Association (APA) citation guidelines. You may use the APA style available in your reference management software.

- **Cover Page:** Include the following information: university, department, course title, paper title, your full name, matriculation number, current semester, study program, and email address.

- **Length:** Approximately 5,000 words (±10%).

- **Submission Deadline:** The paper must be uploaded to the VC platform by **September 30**. Extensions will only be granted in the case of officially certified illness.

- **File Naming Convention:** Please name your file using the following format: `your_last_name-paper.pdf`

- **Grading:** The term paper will be assessed and will account for 70% of your final grade.

Background Readings:

- Basbøll, T. (2018). The paper. *Inframethodology*. https://blog.cbs.dk/inframethodology/?page_id=614

- Becker, H. S. (1998). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. The University of Chicago Press.

- Becker, H. S. (2020). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1986).

- Gerring, J., & Seawright, J. (2022). *Finding your social science project: The research sandbox*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009118620

- Howard, C. (2017). *Thinking like a political scientist: A practical guide to research methods*. The University of Chicago Press.

2.5 Policy on AI-enabled applications (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and others)

You have likely encountered discussions about the potential of tools like ChatGPT to assist with writing and other academic tasks—and perhaps you've already experimented with them. This is strongly encouraged. There is every reason to believe that AI-enabled assistants will become integral to future work and research environments, whether in software development, data analysis, or administrative tasks. Familiarizing yourself with these tools, and understanding their capabilities and limitations, is both valuable and necessary.

That said, their use in academic contexts requires careful consideration. Research papers are assigned not simply to produce a final product, but to give you repeated opportunities to practice, develop, and refine essential academic skills. These include formulating arguments, structuring complex ideas, synthesizing evidence, and writing with clarity and precision. If you rely too heavily—or too early—on AI-generated content, you risk undermining your own learning.

A productive approach to using AI tools is to treat them as partners in reflection rather than authors. First, complete a task independently. Then, compare your work with AI-generated output. Reflect on the differences: Is your approach clearer? More accurate? Does the AI reveal blind spots in your own thinking—or vice versa? This kind of critical engagement not only deepens your understanding of the topic but also helps you assess the reliability and usefulness of the tool itself.

A word of caution: Do *not* use ChatGPT or similar applications to draft or initially write sentences and paragraphs in your paper. While such output may sound polished, it is often clichéd, vague, or factually incorrect. Worse, it can obscure your own voice and thinking. Revising or disentangling AI-generated text is often more time-consuming than writing your own. Avoid the trap of outsourcing your intellectual work to a probabilistic echo of what others have said.

Instead, let AI serve as a reflective aid—not a replacement for your own reasoning.

2.5.1 Transparency in the use of AI-enabled applications

For reasons of academic integrity and transparency, we ask students at the *Chair for Political Science, especially Digital Transformation*, to include a short disclaimer in all submitted papers indicating whether—and how—they used AI-enabled applications (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) in the preparation of their work.

Possible tasks where AI tools may be used responsibly include:

1. Exploring a phenomenon, mechanism, or relevant literature;

2. Stress-testing or refining a research question;

3. Reviewing the clarity and coherence of theory-driven hypotheses;

4. Writing or debugging code for data analysis;

5. Structuring the paper or outlining sections;

6. Language editing and improving phrasing.

Your disclaimer must include:

- Whether you used ChatGPT or any other large language model (LLM);

- For which specific tasks the model was used;

- How your own original work was improved with input from the model;

- A selection of your prompts and the model's responses (included in an online appendix or submitted as a separate PDF).

This disclaimer should be included either on the cover page or in a separate appendix of your paper. You may use the following sentence as a template:

"I used [AI-enabled service of choice] (version X, accessed on [date]) to support [specific task(s)] in the preparation of this paper. The final content and arguments are my own. See Appendix for a list of prompts and AI-generated outputs."

Important:

- You are fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and academic integrity of your submission. Undocumented use of AI tools, as well as plagiarism, fabricated sources, or misattributed content, will be treated as violations of academic standards. Submissions containing non-existent references, fabricated quotations, or unattributed AI-generated passages will result in an automatic failure of the course.

- When grading, we may place greater emphasis on aspects where AI models typically perform poorly (e.g., originality of argument, conceptual framing) and may discount sections where AI excels (e.g., generic summaries, surface-level edits).

If you are unsure whether your use of AI is appropriate, please ask in advance or reach out during office hours.

3   Course plan

Mondays 10:00–12:00 c.t. | Room: FMA/00.08

Weekly Overview

Week 1: Introduction and Housekeeping (April 28)

Week 2: Mis-, Disinformation, and Fake News (May 05)

Required Readings:

- Budak, C., Nyhan, B., Rothschild, D. M., Thorson, E., & Watts, D. J. (2024). Misunderstanding the harms of online misinformation. *Nature*, *630*, 45–53. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07417-w

- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017, September 27). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking.* Council of Europe. https://edoc.coe.int/en/media/7495-information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research-and-policy-making.html

Session Prep:

- Following Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), what are misinformation?

- Following Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), what are disinformation?

- Following Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), what are Fake News?

- Compare arguments by Budak et al. (2024) and Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) How big of a problem are mis- and disinformation?

- Please propose a research project that reliably identifies mis- and disinformation.

Presentations:

- Alcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *31*(2), 211–236. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211

- Allen, J., Watts, D. J., & Rand, D. G. (2024). Quantifying the impact of misinformation and vaccine-skeptical content on Facebook. *Science*, *384*(6699), eadk3451. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adk3451

- Grinberg, N., Joseph, K., Friedland, L., Swire-Thompson, B., & Lazer, D. (2019). Fake news on twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *Science*, *363*(6425), 374–378. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aau2706

- Guess, A., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, *5*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586

- Guess, A. M., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2020). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 US election. *Nature Human Behavior*, *4*, 472–480. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0833-x

- Moore, R. C., Dahlke, R., & Hancock, J. T. (2023). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2020 US election. *Nature Human Behavior*, *7*, 1096–1105. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01564-2

- Porter, E., Velez, Y., & Wood, T. J. (2023). Correcting COVID-19 vaccine misinformation in 10 countries. *Royal Society Open Science*, *10*, 221097. https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.221097

- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, *359*(6380), 1146–1151. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559

- Vraga, E. K., & Bode, L. (2020). Defining misinformation and understanding its bounded nature: Using expertise and evidence for describing misinformation. *Political Communication*, *37*(1), 136–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1716500

Presentation Prep:

- Have a critical look at the studies by Alcott and Gentzkow (2017), Allen et al. (2024), Grinberg et al. (2019), A. Guess et al. (2019), A. M. Guess et al. (2020), Moore et al. (2023), Porter et al. (2023), and Vosoughi et al. (2018). Focus only on how they identify misinformation. Now connect these measurement approaches to the definitions discussed by Vraga and Bode (2020) and identify where these measures succeed and where they fall short.

Background Readings:

- Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, *33*(2), 122–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760317

- Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2024). *Post-truth, fake news and democracy: Mapping the politics of falsehood* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (Original work published 2019).

- Jin, S. L., Kolis, J., Parker, J., Proctor, D. A., Prybylski, D., Wardle, C., Abad, N., Brookmeyer, K. A., Voegeli, C., & Chiou, H. (2024). Social histories of public health misinformation and infodemics: Case studies of four pandemics. *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases*, *24*(10), E638–E646. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(24)00105-1

- Jungherr, A., & Schroeder, R. (2021). Disinformation and the structural transformations of the public arena: Addressing the actual challenges to democracy. *Social Media + Society*, *7*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121988928

- Nyhan, B. (2020). Facts and myths about misperceptions. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *34*(3), 220–236. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.34.3.220

Week 3: Truth in politics? (May 12)

Required Readings:

- Arendt, H. (1968). Truth and politics. In *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought* (pp. 227–264). Viking Press. (Original work published 1967).

- Sperber, D., Clément, F., Heintz, C., Mascaro, O., Mercier, H., Origgi, G., & Wilson, D. (2010). Epistemic vigilance. *Mind & Language*, *25*(4), 359–393. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.2010.01394.x

Session Prep:

- Following Arendt (1967/1968), what are truths?

- Following Arendt (1967/1968), what are opinions?

- Are all opinions equally valid and how can "epistemic vigilance" (Sperber et al., 2010) help?

- What is the role of epistemic institutions?

- Please propose a research project that identifies processes by which epistemic institutions establish "epistemic vigilance". How can their workings be evaluated?

Presentations:

- Li, J., Foley, J. M., Dumdum, O., & Wagner, M. W. (2022). The power of a genre: Political news presented as fact-checking increases accurate belief updating and hostile media perceptions. *Mass Communication and Society*, *25*(2), 282–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1924382

- Mattozzi, A., Nocito, S., & Sobbrio, F. (2024). Fact-checking politicians. *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4258130

- Slaughter, I., Peytavin, A., Ugander, J., & Saveski, M. (2025). Community notes moderate engagement with and diffusion of false information online. *arXiv*. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2502.13322

- Walter, N., Cohen, J., Holbert, R. L., & Morag, Y. (2020). Fact-checking: A meta-analysis of what works and for whom. *Political Communication*, *37*(3), 350–375. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1668894

Presentation Prep:

- Looking at the arguments and evidence presented in Li et al. (2022), Mattozzi et al. (2024), Slaughter et al. (2025), and Walter et al. (2020), are fact checking and community notes epistemic institutions in the sense of (Sperber et al., 2010)? If so, why? If not, what is needed to make them so?

Background Readings:

- Cram, I. (2022). *Liberal democracy, law and the citizen speaker: Regulating online speech*. Hart Publishing.

- Friedman, J. (2020). *Power without knowledge: A critique of technocracy*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190877170.001.0001

- Graves, L. (2016). *Deciding what's true: The rise of political fact-checking in American journalism*. Columbia University Press.

- Kosseff, J. (2023). *Liar in a crowded theater: Freedom of speech in a world of misinformation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2021). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect* (4th ed.). The Crown Publishing Group. (Original work published 2001).

- McIntyre, L. (2018). *Post-truth*. The MIT Press.

- Rauch, J. (2021). *The constitution of knowledge: A defense of truth*. Brookings Institution Press.

- Russell, J. H., & Patterson, D. (2025). *The weaponization of expertise*. The MIT Press.

Week 4: Sources & Tactics (May 19)

Required Readings:

- Marwick, A., & Lewis, R. (2017, May 15). *Media manipulation and disinformation online*. Data & Society. https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/

- Golebiewski, M., & boyd, d. (2019). *Data voids: Where missing data can easily be exploited*. Data & Society. https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Data-Voids-2.0-Final.pdf

- Illing, S. (2020). "Flood the zone with shit": How misinformation overwhelmed our democracy. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/1/16/20991816/impeachment-trial-trump-bannon-misinformation

- Myers, S. L., & Thompson, S. A. (2025). In his second term, Trump fuels a 'machinery' of misinformation. *The New York Times*. https://doi.org/2025-03-24

- Nielsen, R. K. (2024). Forget technology – politicians pose the gravest misinformation threat. *Financial Times*. https://www.ft.com/content/5da52770-b474-4547-8d1b-9c46a3c3bac9

- Subramanian, S. (2017). Inside the Macedonian fake-news complex. *Wired*. https://www.wired.com/2017/02/veles-macedonia-fake-news/

Session Prep:

- Who are the actors who are actively turning to disinformation?

- What are their motives?

- What are their tactics and strategems?

- What are possibilities for interventions and should we differentiate between actors?

- The core reading (Marwick & Lewis, 2017) is from 2017. How relevant are the arguments and observations in our contemporary media environment?

- Please propose a research project that looks at the activities of selected actors and identifies disinformation tactics and stratagems.

Presentations:

- Beauchamp-Mustafaga, N., Green, K., Marcellino, W., Lilly, S., & Smith, J. (2024, October 1). *Dr. Li Bicheng, or how China learned to stop worrying and love social media manipulation*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2679-1.html

- Harold, S. W., Beauchamp-Mustafaga, N., & Hornung, J. W. (2021). *Chinese disinformation efforts on social media*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4300/RR4373z3/RAND_RR4373z3.pdf

- Treyger, E., Cheravitch, J., & Cohen, R. S. (2022). *Russian disinformation efforts on social media*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4300/RR4373z2/RAND_RR4373z2.pdf

- Treyger, E., Williams, H. J., Matthews, L. J., Holynska, K., Matveyenko, J., Cunningham, D., Goode, T., & Migacheva, K. (2025, January 16). *The denazify lie: Russia's use of extremist narratives against Ukraine*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3450-1.html

Presentation Prep:

- Examine China's and Russia's information shaping tactics discussed in Beauchamp-Mustafaga et al. (2024), Harold et al. (2021), and Treyger et al. (2022, 2025). What are their goals? Is this disinformation? How are they similar or different from tactics used by domestic actors portrayed in the required readings?

Background Readings:

- Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001

- Green, J. (2017). *Devil's bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the storming of the Presidency*. Penguin Press.

- Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2022). *Spin dictators—the changing face of tyranny in the 21st century*. Princeton University Press.

- Oreskes, N., & Conway, E. M. (2010). *Merchants of doubt: How a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*. Bloomsbury Press.

- Phillips, W. (2015). *This is why we can't have nice things: Mapping the relationship between online trolling and mainstream culture*. The MIT Press.

- Phillips, W., & Milner, R. M. (2017). *The ambivalent internet: Mischief, oddity, and antagonism online*. Polity Press.

- Rid, T. (2020). *Active measures: The secret history of disinformation and political warfare*. Farrat, Straus; Giroux.

Week 5: No meeting (May 26)

Week 6: Reach (June 02)

Required Readings:

- Alcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *31*(2), 211–236. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211

Session Prep:

- What is the reach of disinformation?

- What are different ways, disinformation can reach people?

- How can we measure the reach of disinformation?

Presentations:

- Allen, J., Howland, B., Mobius, M., Rothschild, D., & Watts, D. J. (2020). Evaluating the fake news problem at the scale of the information ecosystem. *Science Advances*, *6*(14), eaay3539. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aay3539

- Badrinathan, S., & Chauchard, S. (2024). Researching and countering misinformation in the global south. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *55*, 101733. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101733

- Grinberg, N., Joseph, K., Friedland, L., Swire-Thompson, B., & Lazer, D. (2019). Fake news on twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *Science*, *363*(6425), 374–378. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aau2706

- Guess, A., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, *5*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586

- Guess, A. M., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2020). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 US election. *Nature Human Behavior*, *4*, 472–480. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0833-x

- Moore, R. C., Dahlke, R., & Hancock, J. T. (2023). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2020 US election. *Nature Human Behavior*, *7*, 1096–1105. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01564-2

Presentation Prep:

- Looking at the cumulative evidence presented across Alcott and Gentzkow (2017), Allen et al. (2020), Grinberg et al. (2019), A. Guess et al. (2019), A. M. Guess et al. (2020), and Moore et al. (2023), what can we say about the reach of disinformation? Is there variation across time? What evidence is missing?

Background Readings:

- Webster, J. G. (2014). *The marketplace of attention: How audiences take shape in a digital age*. The MIT Press.

Week 7: No meeting (June 09)

Week 8: Psychology of false beliefs (June 16)

Required Readings:

- Flynn, D. J., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics. *Political Psychology*, *38*(Supplement S1), 127–150. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12394

- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2021). The psychology of fake news. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *25*(5), 388–402. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2021.02.007

Session Prep:

- Why do people hold false beliefs?

- Why do people share false beliefs?

- Why is it so difficult to persuade partisans?

- Please propose a research project that identifies the effects of disinformation considering the psychological mechanisms discussed by Flynn et al. (2017) and Pennycook and Rand (2021).

Presentations:

- Funkhouser, E. (2022). A tribal mind: Beliefs that signal group identity or commitment. *Mind & Language*, *37*(4), 444–464. https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12326

- Li, J., & Wagner, M. W. (2020). The value of not knowing: Partisan cue-taking and belief updating of the uninformed, the ambiguous, and the misinformed. *Journal of Communication*, *70*(5), 646–669. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaa022

- Petersen, M. B., Osmundsen, M., & Arceneaux, K. (2023). The "need for chaos" and motivations to share hostile political rumors. *American Political Science Review*, *117*(4), 1486–1505. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422001447

- Peterson, E., & Iyengar, S. (2021). Partisan gaps in political information and information-seeking behavior: Motivated reasoning or cheerleading? *American Journal of Political Science*, *65*(1), 133–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12535

Presentation Prep:

- Identify the different psychological processes discussed by Funkhouser (2022), Li and Wagner (2020), Petersen et al. (2023), and Peterson and Iyengar (2021) leading people to belief, proclaim, or share false beliefs.

Background Readings:

- Berinsky, A. J. (2023). *Political rumors: Why we accept misinformation and how to fight it.* Princeton University Press.

- Funkhouser, E. (2017). Beliefs as signals: A new function for belief. *Philosophical Psychology*, *30*(6), 809–831. https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2017.1291929

- Mercier, H. (2020). *Not born yesterday: The science of who we trust and what we believe.* Princeton University Press.

- Kahan, D. M. (2016a). The politically motivated reasoning paradigm, part 1: What politically motivated reasoning is and how to measure it. In R. A. Scott & M. C. Buchmann (Eds.), *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 1–16). John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0417

- Kahan, D. M. (2016b). The politically motivated reasoning paradigm, part 2: Unanswered questions. In R. A. Scott & M. C. Buchmann (Eds.), *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 1–15). John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0418

Week 9: The thing to fear is fear itself (June 23)

Required Readings:

- Jungherr, A., & Rauchfleisch, A. (2024). Negative downstream effects of alarmist disinformation discourse: Evidence from the United States. *Political Behavior*, *46*(4), 2123–2143. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-024-09911-3

Session Prep:

- What is disinformation discourse?

- What are unintended effects of disinformation discourse on people's democratic attitudes?

- Please propose a research project that identifies downstream effects of disinformation?

Presentations:

- Li, J., Foley, J. M., Dumdum, O., & Wagner, M. W. (2022). The power of a genre: Political news presented as fact-checking increases accurate belief updating and hostile media perceptions. *Mass Communication and Society*, *25*(2), 282–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1924382

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- Jones-Jang, S. M., Kim, D. H., & Kenski, K. (2021). Perceptions of mis- or disinformation exposure predict political cynicism: Evidence from a two-wave survey during the 2018 US midterm elections. *New Media & Society*, *23*(10), 3105–3125. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820943878

- Stubenvoll, M., Heiss, R., & Matthes, J. (2021). Media trust under threat: Antecedents and consequences of misinformation perceptions on social media. *International Journal of Communication*, *15*, 2765–2786.

- Ross, A. R. N., Vaccari, C., & Chadwick, A. (2022). Russian meddling in U.S. elections: How news of disinformation's impact can affect trust in electoral outcomes and satisfaction with democracy. *Mass Communication and Society*, *25*(6), 786–811. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2022.2119871

- Van Duyn, E., & Collier, J. (2019). Priming and fake news: The effects of elite discourse on evaluations of news media. *Mass Communication and Society*, *22*(1), 29–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2018.1511807

Presentation Prep:

- Identify the different downstream effects of misinformation discourse identified in Jones-Jang et al. (2021), Li et al. (2022), Ross et al. (2022), Stubenvoll et al. (2021), and Van Duyn and Collier (2019).

Background Readings:

- Bernstein, J. (2021). Bad news: Selling the story of disinformation. *Harper's Magazine*, 25–31. https://harpers.org/archive/2021/09/bad-news-selling-the-story-of-disinformation/

- Camargo, C. Q., & Simon, F. M. (2022). Mis- and disinformation studies are too big to fail: Six suggestions for the field's future. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, *3*(5), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-106

- Jungherr, A. (2024). Foundational questions for the regulation of digital disinformation. *Journal of Media Law*, *16*(1), 8–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17577632.2024.2362484

Week 10: Research questions and hypotheses (June 30)

Background Readings:

- Howard, C. (2017). *Thinking like a political scientist: A practical guide to research methods*. The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 13-92).

Week 11: Research design (July 07)

Background Readings:

- Howard, C. (2017). *Thinking like a political scientist: A practical guide to research methods*. The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 (pp. 93-116).

- Kellstedt, P. M., & Whitten, G. D. (2018). *The fundamentals of political science research* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108131704 (Original work published 2009). Chapter 4 (pp. 77-103).

Week 12: Questions and feedback (July 14)

Week 13: Presentation of study prototype (July 21)

Background Readings:

- Schwabish, J. (2017). *Better presentations: A guide for scholars, researchers, and wonks*. Columbia University Press.