

Theme 5: Disinformation, Epistemic Vices & Online Harm

Thursday, 6 May 2021

13:55-14:00	Welcome
14:00-15:00	Alessandra Tanesini: Arrogance and Anger on Social Networking Site (1 pm GMT) <i>10 min break</i>
15:10-16:10	Quassim Cassam: Disinformation, Narratives and Radicalization (2 pm GMT) <i>10 min break</i>
16:20-17:20	Anastasia Kozyreva: Psychology of disinformation and cognitive tools against online manipulation <i>10 min break</i>
17:30-17:30	Kevin Zollman: TBA (11:30 am EST) <i>10 min break</i>
18:40-19:40	Cailin O'Connor: Retraction in Scientific Network (9:30 am PST)
19:30-20:15	Optional round-table discussion

Friday, 7 May 2021

13:55-14:00	Welcome
14:00-15:00	Stephan Lewandrosky: The Knowledge Dementors (1 pm GMT) <i>10 min break</i>
15:10-16:10	Mihaela Popa-Wyatt, Tatjana Scheffler, Veronika Solopova: Online Harm <i>10 min break</i>
16:20-17:20	Eric Beerbohm: Gaslighting Citizens (10.20 am EST) <i>10 min break</i>
17:30-18:30	Michael Lynch: Social Media, Conspiracy and Bald-Faced Lies (11:30 am EST) <i>10 min break</i>
18:40-19:40	Ray Drainville & Jennifer Saul: Visual and Linguistic Dogwhistles (12:40 pm EST)
19:40-20:15	Optional round-table discussion

ABSTRACTS: DAY 1

Arrogance and Anger on Social Networking Site

ALESSANDRA TANESINI (Cardiff University)

2:00 pm CET — 1:00 pm GMT

Anger dominates debates in the public sphere. Discussions especially on social media quickly and frequently become shouting matches whose participants are not afraid to express their contempt for each other. My focus is especially on two types of anger that I label respectively arrogant and resistant. The first is the characteristic defensive response of those who unwarrantedly arrogate special privileges for themselves. The second is often a source of insight and a form of moral address. I detail some discursive manifestations of this two types of anger. I show that arrogant anger is responsible for attempts to intimidate and humiliate others with whom one disagrees. Whilst resistant anger can be intimidating, it is also essential in communicating moral demands. I conclude the talk by demonstrating that calls for civility, especially on-line, always risk perpetrating injustices.

Disinformation, Narratives and Radicalization

QUASSIM CASSAM (University of Warwick)

3:10 pm CET — 2:10 pm GMT

In this talk I'll examine the role of narratives in online radicalization. I will introduce and explore the notion of a radicalization narrative and focus on the question whether it is helpful to think of such narratives as consisting of disinformation. I will argue that counter-radicalization requires the development of effective counter-narratives that are deep, credible, relevant, and resonate with their target audiences. I will conclude by examining the role of truth in anti-extremist counter-narratives.

Psychology of disinformation and cognitive tools against online manipulation

ANASTASIA KOZYREVA (Max-Planck Institut, Berlin)

4:20 pm CET

In this talk, I will discuss psychological underpinnings of why disinformation spreads online and how to address this imbalance with interventions that empower Internet users to gain some control over their digital environments, for instance by boosting their information literacy and their cognitive resistance to manipulation.

TBA

KEVIN ZOLLMAN: (Carnegie Melon University)

5.30 pm CET — 11:30 am EST

TBA

Retraction in Scientific Network

CAILIN O'CONNOR (UC Irvine)

6:40 pm CET — 9:40 am PST

Sometimes retracted or thoroughly refuted scientific information is used and propagated long after it is understood to be misleading. Likewise, sometimes retracted news items spread and persist, even after it has been publicly established that they are false. In this paper, we use agent-based models of epistemic networks to explore the dynamics of retraction. In particular, we focus on why false beliefs might persist, even in the face of retraction. We find that, paradoxically, sometimes a delay in retraction may make it more relevant. We also find that the network location of retraction is very important in determining its impact.

ABSTRACTS: DAY 2

The Knowledge Dementors

STEPHAN LEWANDROSKY (University of Bristol)
2:00 pm CET — 1 pm GMT

TBA

Online Harm

MIHAELA POPA-WYATT, TATJANA SCHEFFLER, VERONIKA SOLOPOVA (ZAS Berlin, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Freie Universität Berlin)
3:10 pm CET

TBA

Gaslighting Citizens

ERIC BEERBOHM (Harvard University)
4:20 pm CET — 10.20 am EST

Gaslighting, as an interpersonal wrong, brings its victims to doubt the sources of their evidence. This paper holds that political gaslighting, by leading citizens to hold beliefs disconnected from the available evidence, poses a distinctive threat to democratic politics. But holding “audacious beliefs” — beliefs that are ahead of the evidence — can serve as a core ingredient for democratic movements. This creates a dilemma for citizens, who must choose between two kinds of evidential policies. How can they protect themselves from the gaslighting without rendering themselves insusceptible to the mobilizing efforts central to democratic politics? Citizens, then, face a standing challenge: to remain open to the bully pulpit while vigilant against the epistemic bullying that characterizes gaslighting.

Social Media, Conspiracy and Bald-Faced Lies

MICHAEL LYNCH (University of Connecticut)
6:30 pm CET — 11.30 am EST

Social media is widely used to push not only outright conspiracy theories but what we might call “political bald-faced lies”, or the postings of obviously false propositions. Not all such bald-faced lies are made in the context of conspiracy; nor are they plausible efforts to deceive. So what is the purpose of such postings, particularly by those in power? I’ll argue the point is to express that power and to undermine the social-epistemic rules and practices so important to democracy.

Visual and Linguistic Dogwhistles

RAY DRAINVILLE & JENNIFER SAUL (University of Waterloo)

7:40 pm CET — 12.40 pm EST

There is now a burgeoning literature in philosophy of language on dogwhistles—a particular sort of coded utterance, common in (but not limited to) politics. This paper explores the neglected but extremely important visual dimension of dogwhistles.