

Conference: Combating Fake News: An Agenda for Research and Action

Schedule

Friday, February 17, 2017

Harvard Law School
Wasserstein Hall
1585 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02138
Milstein Conference Center West AB

8:00 - 8:30am | Continental breakfast

8:30 - 8:45am | Welcome by Nicco Mele, Introduction by Matthew Baum (Harvard) and David Lazer (Northeastern): The science of fake news: what is to be done?

MORNING SESSION: FOUNDATIONS

How and why is fake news a problem? What are the underlying individual and aggregate processes that underlie its capacity to do harm?

8:45 - 10:30am | Panel 1: The psychology of fake news

How do people determine what information to attend to, and what to believe? How does fake news fit into this picture?

- Moderator: Maya Sen, Harvard
- Panelists: Brendan Nyhan (Dartmouth), Adam Berinsky (MIT), Emily Thorson (Boston College), Steven Sloman (Brown), Gordon Pennycook (Yale), Miriam Metzger (UC Santa Barbara)

10:30 - 10:45am | Coffee break

10:45 - 12:30pm | Panel 2: How fake news spreads

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How does information spread amongst people in the current news ecosystem? How is this driven by our social ties, by social media platforms, and by “traditional” media? What lessons can be learned from history?

- Moderator: Nicco Mele, Harvard
- Panelists: David Lazer (Northeastern), Filippo Menczer (Indiana), Michael Schudson (Columbia), Kelly Greenhill (Tufts and Harvard Belfer Center), Yochai Benkler (Harvard), Duncan Watts (Microsoft Research)

12:30 - 1:20pm | Lunch (bag lunch to be provided)

Keynote Speaker: Cass Sunstein, Robert Walmsley University Professor, Harvard University Law School

AFTERNOON SESSION: IMPLICATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

1:20 – 3:05pm | Panel 3: Responses by public and private institutions

What role is there for public institutions (e.g., local, state and federal government) and private actors (e.g., social media companies, scholars, NGOs, activists) to combat fake news and its harmful effects?

- Moderator: Tarek Masoud, Harvard
- Panelists: Helen Boaden (BBC News & BBC Radio), Katherine Brown (Council on Foreign Relations), Lori Robertson (FactCheck.org), Eli Pariser (Upworthy), David Rothschild (Microsoft Research), Adam Sharp (former head of News, Government, and Elections, Twitter)

3:05 - 3:15pm | Closing remarks (Matthew Baum and David Lazer)

Speakers

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Matthew Baum, Marvin Kalb Professor of Global Communications and Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School – Organizer

Matthew A. Baum (Ph.D., UC San Diego, 2000) is the Marvin Kalb Professor of Global Communications and Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and Department of Government. Baum's research focuses on delineating the effects of domestic politics on international conflict and cooperation in general and American foreign policy in particular, as well as on the role of the mass media and public opinion in contemporary democratic politics. Baum's research has appeared in over a dozen leading scholarly journals, such as the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*. His books include *Soft News Goes to War: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy in the New Media Age* (2003, Princeton University Press), *War Stories: The Causes and Consequences of Public Views of War* (2009, Princeton University Press, co-authored with Tim Groeling), and *War and Democratic Constraint: How the Public Influences Foreign Policy* (2015, Princeton University Press, co-authored with Phil Potter).

Yochai Benkler, Berkman Professor of Entrepreneurial Legal Studies at Harvard Law School, Faculty Co-Director, the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University

Yochai Benkler is the Berkman Professor of Entrepreneurial Legal Studies at Harvard Law School and the Berkman-Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. Benkler's books include *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* and *The Penguin and the Leviathan: How Cooperation Triumphs Over Self-Interest*. Benkler's work can be freely accessed at benkler.org.

Adam Berinsky, Professor of Political Science, MIT & Director of the MIT Political Experiments Research Lab (PERL)

Adam J. Berinsky is a Professor of Political Science at MIT. He is primarily concerned with questions of representation and the communication of public sentiment to political elites, but he has also studied public opinion and foreign policy, the continuing power of group-based stereotypes, the effect of voting reforms, and the power of the media. He is the author of *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* (University of Chicago Press, 2009) and *Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Participation in America* (Princeton University Press, 2004). He has won several scholarly awards, is the recipient of multiple grants from the National Science Foundation, and was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. He currently edits the University of Chicago Press's *Chicago Studies in American Politics* book series. He is also the founding director of the MIT Political Experiments Research Lab. He is a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Helen Boaden, Former Director, BBC News and BBC Radio, Joan Shorenstein Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School

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Helen Boaden is the director of BBC Radio. She spent many years as a journalist in radio and television before moving into senior editorial and executive positions. Boaden was controller of Radio 4 (2000-2004) before becoming director of BBC News (2004-2013), and director of BBC Radio (2013-2017). At BBC News, she was in charge of 8,000 journalists at home and abroad and led the creation of the BBC's multimedia newsroom. She was on the BBC's executive board for the past five years and was responsible for "myBBC" a digital project that delivered personalized BBC content to audiences. While at the Shorenstein Center, Boaden will look at the political and strategic pressures faced by public service broadcasters.

Katherine Brown, International Affairs Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations; Non-Resident Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS); Former Executive Director, U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State

Katherine Brown a 2016-2017 International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and a Non-Resident Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). From 2013-2016, she served as the Executive Director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy at the U.S. Department of State, an office authorized by Congress to appraise and strengthen U.S. engagement activities with foreign citizens. She previously worked at the National Security Council, U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, House Foreign Affairs Committee, The Asia Foundation and Bloomberg View. Katherine received her Ph.D. in Communications from Columbia University in 2013 and is an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Kelly Greenhill, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Tufts University and Research Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center

Kelly M. Greenhill (PhD, MIT) is Associate Professor at Tufts University and Research Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School. A 2017 National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, Greenhill is author of *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*, winner of the 2011 International Studies Association's Best Book of the Year Award; and co-author and co-editor of *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts: The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*; *The Power to Hurt: Coercion in Theory and Practice*; and *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, 8th ed. Her research has also appeared in a variety of journals, media outlets, and in briefs prepared for the U.S. Supreme Court and other organs of government. Outside of academia, Greenhill has served as consultant to the UN and the UNHCR, the World Bank, and the Ford Foundation, as an analyst for the Department of Defense; and as an economic policy intern to Senator John F. Kerry.

David Lazer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Computer and Information Science

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& Co-Director of the NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks, Northeastern University, Visiting Scholar, Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Harvard University – Organizer

David Lazer is Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Computer and Information Science, Northeastern University, and Co-Director, NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks, as well as visiting scholar at the Institute for Quantitative Social Science at Harvard. Prior to coming to Northeastern University, he was on the faculty at the Harvard Kennedy School. Lazer's research focuses on computational social science and networked deliberation, and has been published in such journals as *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, and the *American Political Science Review*, *Organization Science*, and has received extensive coverage in the media, including the *New York Times*, NPR, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *CBS Evening News*. Lazer is cofounder of the citizen science website VolunteerScience.com, and his research is available at davidlazer.com.

Tarek Masoud, Sultan of Oman Professor of International Relations, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School – Moderator

Tarek Masoud is a professor of public policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where he teaches courses on comparative politics and political development in the Middle East. Masoud is the co-author of *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform* (2015) and the author of *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt* (2014), in addition to several articles and book chapters. He is a former Carnegie Scholar and Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow, and currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Democracy*. Masoud holds a Ph.D. from Yale and an AB from Brown, both in political science.

Nicco Mele, Director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School – Moderator

Nicco Mele is the director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy. He took over leadership of the Center in 2016 after serving as Senior Vice President and Deputy Publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* and as the Wallis Annenberg Chair in Journalism at the University of Southern California. He is the author of *The End of Big: How The Internet Makes David the New Goliath* and co-founder of EchoDitto (now Echo & Co.), a leading internet strategy and consulting firm. Mele also is a board member of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard and a Senior Fellow at the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy.

Filippo Menczer, Professor of Informatics and Computer Science and Director of the Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research, Indiana University

Filippo Menczer is a professor of informatics and computer science at Indiana University, Bloomington, with courtesy appointments in cognitive science and physics. He holds a Laurea in Physics from the Sapienza University of Rome and a Ph.D. in Computer Science and Cognitive

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Science from the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Menczer is an ACM Distinguished Scientist and a Senior Research Fellow of The Kinsey Institute. Menczer previously served as division chair in the IUB School of Informatics and Computing, director of the Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research, visiting scientist at Yahoo Research, Fellow of the Institute for Scientific Interchange Foundation in Torino, Italy, Fellow-at-large of the Santa Fe Institute, and on the Senior Leadership Team of the IU Network Science Institute. He has been the recipient of Fulbright, Rotary Foundation, and NATO fellowships, and a Career Award from the National Science Foundation.

Menczer's research, supported by the NSF, DARPA, and the McDonnell Foundation, focuses on Web and data science, social network analysis, social computation, Web mining, and modeling of complex information networks. Menczer's work on the spread of information and misinformation in social media has been covered in many US and international news sources, including The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, NPR, PBS, CNN, BBC, Economist, Guardian, Atlantic, Reuters, Science, and Nature. Menczer received multiple service awards from the ACM and currently serves as associate editor of the Network Science journal and on the editorial boards of EPJ Data Science and PeerJ Computer Science.

Miriam Metzger, Professor, Communication & Information Technologies & Ph.D. Education Director for the Center for Information, Technology and Society (CITS-UCSB), University of California Santa Barbara

Miriam J. Metzger is a Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Her research lies at the intersection of media, information technology, and trust, focusing on how digital communication technologies alter our ability to evaluate the credibility of information and present new challenges in protecting our privacy. Dr. Metzger's work has been published widely in the field of communication, and she has co-edited two volumes investigating issues of digital literacy that are available from MIT Press. Dr. Metzger also serves as Education Director for the Center for Information, Technology & Society at UCSB (CITS-UCSB).

Brendan Nyhan, Professor, Department of Government, Dartmouth College

Brendan Nyhan is a professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College whose research focuses on misperceptions about politics and health care. Before coming to Dartmouth, he was a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar in Health Policy Research at the University of Michigan. Nyhan has also been a contributor to the New York Times website The Upshot since its launch in 2014. He previously served a media critic for Columbia Journalism Review; co-edited Spinsanity, a non-partisan watchdog of political spin that was syndicated in Salon and the Philadelphia Inquirer; and co-authored All the President's Spin, a New York Times bestseller that Amazon.com named one of the ten best political books of the year in 2004.

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Eli Pariser, Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Upworthy

Eli Pariser has dedicated his career to figuring out how technology can elevate important topics in the world – as an author, an online organizer, and most recently, as a co-founder of Upworthy. Pariser served as the Executive Director of MoveOn.org from 2004-2009. MoveOn revolutionized grassroots political organizing by introducing a small-donor-funded and email-driven model that has since been widely used across the political spectrum. MoveOn.org quickly grew to more than 5 million members and raised over \$120 million. During this time he also co-founded Avaaz.org, which is now the largest online advocacy organization in the world totaling over 30 million members. In 2011, Pariser published the New York Times bestseller *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. The book highlights the ways that important content can get lost in the newsfeed era. Pariser founded Upworthy with longtime collaboration Peter Koechley in March of 2012. The pair set out to prove once and for all that what's important can be incredibly popular, even if what's popular isn't usually important.

Gordon Pennycook, Banting Postdoctoral Fellow, Yale University

Gordon Pennycook is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University. His research is primarily focused on the interplay between intuition and reason in decision making. In particular, he is interested in a) determining what causes people to think analytically (as opposed to relying on their gut feelings) and b) isolating the downstream (everyday) consequences of the capacity to think analytically. Pennycook has investigated the role of analytic thinking in domains as diverse as religious belief, morality, creativity, smartphone technology use, and the reception and detection of pseudo-profound bullshit. He completed his PhD in Cognitive Psychology at the University of Waterloo in 2016.

Lori Robertson, Managing Editor, Factcheck.org

Lori Robertson is the managing editor of FactCheck.org, a nonpartisan, nonprofit project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. She joined the staff in 2007. FactCheck.org has won several Webby Awards from the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences for best Politics site and a 2010 Society of Professional Journalists award for reporting on deceptive claims made about the Affordable Care Act. Previously, Lori covered the media for nine years as an editor and writer for *American Journalism Review*, a bimonthly media watchdog magazine, and she was the administrative director of the Casey Journalism Center on Children and Families, a resource center for journalists covering at-risk kids. She is a graduate of Duquesne University.

David Rothschild, Economist, Microsoft Research

David Rothschild is an economist at Microsoft Research. He has a Ph.D. in applied economics from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. His primary body of

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work is on forecasting, and understanding public interest and sentiment. Related work examines how the public absorbs information. He has written extensively, in both the academic and popular press, on polling, prediction markets, social media and online data, and predictions of upcoming events; most of his popular work has focused on understanding the public's sentiment, an economist take on public policy, and choices in news consumption.

Michael Schudson, Professor of Journalism, The Graduate School of Journalism, and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Sociology, Columbia University

Michael Schudson is Professor of Journalism at Columbia Journalism School. He is a sociologist by

official pedigree, a historian by virtue of much of the writing he has done, and an admirer of good

journalism though never a journalist himself. His books include: *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (Basic Books, 1978), *The Power of News* (Harvard, 1995); *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (Free Press, 1998); *The Sociology of News* (Norton, 2003, 2011); *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press* (Polity, 2008); and *The Rise of the Right to Know: Politics and the Culture of Transparency* (Harvard, 2015).

Maya Sen, Assistant Professor of Public Policy, Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Harvard Kennedy School – Moderator

Maya Sen is a political scientist and an Assistant Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School. Sen writes on issues involving the political economy of U.S. race relations, law and politics, and statistical methods. Her research has been published in leading journals such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*, and has been covered by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, National Public Radio, and other outlets. Her current book-length project, under contract with Princeton University Press, explores the lasting impact of U.S. slavery on contemporary politics. Sen holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Government, Harvard University. She also holds an A.M. in Statistics and an A.B. in Economics, both from Harvard University, and a J.D. from Stanford Law School.

Adam Sharp, Founder & CEO, Sharp Things LLC & Former Head of News, Government and Elections, Twitter, Sharp Things LLC

Called "the human embodiment of Twitter" by the *New York Times*, Adam Sharp has forged a distinctive career of more than twenty years at the intersection of politics, journalism, and technology. As Head of News, Government and Elections at Twitter, Sharp led a team driving creative use of the platform by journalists, government officials, and political campaigns around the world. He was the longest-serving member of Twitter's global media partnerships team and its most visible broadcast spokesperson. Sharp joined Twitter in 2010 as the company's first hire

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in Washington, DC, after previous roles at NBC News, the U.S. Senate, and C-SPAN. After the 9/11 attacks, he produced and shot documentary video at "Ground Zero" for the City of New York and went on to work on projects for the U.S. Department of Labor and other clients of Alan Weiss Productions. Sharp is Vice President of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Foundation, a National Press Foundation board member, a Term Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a former President of the bipartisan U.S. Senate Press Secretaries Association. He lives in his childhood hometown of Stamford, CT, with his wife and young daughter.

Steven Sloman, Professor of Cognitive, Linguistic and Psychological Sciences, Brown University

Steven Sloman is a Professor of Cognitive, Linguistic, and Psychological Sciences at Brown University where he has worked since 1992. He did his PhD in Psychology at Stanford University from 1986-1990 and then did post-doctoral research for two years at the University of Michigan. He is currently Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Cognition*. Steven is a cognitive scientist who studies how people think. He has studied how our habits of thought influence the way we see the world, how the different systems that constitute thought interact to produce conclusions, conflict, and conversation, and how our construal of how the world works influences how we evaluate events and decide what actions to take. His book with Phil Fernbach, *The Illusion of Knowledge: Why We Never Think Alone*, will go on sale on March 14.

Cass Sunstein, AB '75, JD '78, Robert Walmsley University Professor

Cass R. Sunstein is the Robert Walmsley University Professor at Harvard Law School. He clerked for Justice Benjamin Kaplan of Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and Justice Thurgood Marshall of the U.S. Supreme Court. He worked as an attorney-advisor in the Office of the Legal Counsel of the U.S. Department of Justice and was a faculty member at the University of Chicago Law School from 1981 to 2008. From 2009 to 2012, he served as Administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. From 2013 to 2014, he served on the President's Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies. Sunstein is the author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books, including *Republic.com* (2001), *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (with Richard H. Thaler 2008), and *Simpler* (2013). His latest books are *The World According to Star Wars* (2016) and *The Ethics of Influence* (2016). Sunstein received his bachelor of arts from Harvard College in 1975 and his doctorate in law from Harvard Law School in 1978.

Emily Thorson, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Boston College

Emily Thorson is an assistant professor of political science at Boston College. Emily Thorson joined the Boston College political science department in 2015. Before that, she was an assistant professor at the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University. She received a dual Ph.D in communications and political science at the Annenberg School and

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at the Department of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. Prof. Thorson's research focuses on information effects in politics, both on the aggregate and individual level. Specifically, she traces how political information and misinformation reaches citizens (through traditional and new forms of media as well as through informal interactions) and the conditions under which this information affects their attitudes and behavior. Her recent publications include "Belief Echoes: The Persistent Effects of Corrected Misinformation," forthcoming in *Political Communication*; and "Beyond Opinion Leaders: How Attempts to Persuade Foster Awareness and Campaign Learning," in *Communication Research*, February 2014. She is an editor of *Misinformation and Mass Audiences*, forthcoming from the University of Texas Press, and is working on a book about policy misperceptions in the American public.

Duncan Watts, Principal Researcher, Founding Member of MSR-NYC Lab, & AD White Professor at Large at Cornell University, Microsoft Research

Duncan Watts is a principal researcher at Microsoft Research NYC and an AD White Professor at Large at Cornell University. Watts' research on social networks and collective dynamics has appeared in a wide range of journals, from *Nature*, *Science*, and *Physical Review Letters* to the *American Journal of Sociology* and *Harvard Business Review*. He is also the author of three books: *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (W.W. Norton, 2003) and *Small Worlds: The Dynamics of Networks between Order and Randomness* (Princeton University Press, 1999), and most recently *Everything is Obvious: Once You Know The Answer* (Crown Business, 2011).