



Conspiracy, Misinformation, AND THE Infodemic

CAS 2021-22 INITIATIVE

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans are facing another challenge—an “infodemic” of “fake news,” disinformation, and conspiracy theories spreading at an unprecedented rate, exacerbating anxiety and widening political divides. Dishonest communication has plagued democratic societies across the millennia, but new technologies broaden its reach, accelerate its spread, and demand new approaches to governing public discourse. The Center for Advanced Study invites you to participate in a series of public conversations about the origins of conspiracy theories; the dissemination of misinformation; rumors and fake news; the uses of propaganda; and other forms of information manipulation that change behavior and public opinion.

CAS Director May Berenbaum and Deputy Director Masumi Iriye oversee this new initiative featuring UI faculty as well as invited guests.

Co-hosted by the Center for Advanced Study and the Office of the Provost.

Tracking and Network Analysis of the Spread of Misinformation Regarding COVID-19

September 30, 2021 | 3:00pm–4:30pm CST

Kevin Leicht (Sociology), **Brant Houston** (Journalism),
Joseph Yun (Business), **Loretta Auvil** (NCSA),
Eamon Bracht (iSchool)

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted some of the social and cultural flaws in our ability to communicate about vital issues of public health. In this presentation we examine how COVID-19 misinformation has spread and the effectiveness of different social media platforms in combating it. We provide an overview of the history of facts-checking directed toward the COVID-19 pandemic, and then discuss theoretical reasons, from behavioral science and social psychology, explaining why labeling social media misinformation may or may not work as a mitigation strategy.

We then discuss our own analysis of the effectiveness of misinformation labeling by Facebook and Twitter, with some surprising results. Finally, we discuss a broader research and development program designed to expand social media research, increase the potential for labeling misinformation on social media sites, and the effects these activities might have on the entire social media ecosystem.

Registration is required for this Zoom event.
Scan the code or visit
<http://cas.illinois.edu/node/2552>

For more information please consult cas.illinois.edu

