

DRAAIBOEK ELIOT HIGGINS (19 nov) - College Tour, de Podcast!

VOOR OPNAME: Hello, Hello! And welcome to College Tour, the podcast! Together with the master's students in Journalism and New Media, here at Leiden University. Tonight's guest is a visionair, a pioneer in the world of investigative journalism, so successful that he is being threatened. He was the very first to discover that the flight from Amsterdam to Malaysia was taken down by Russian separatists. From behind his computer he reveals war crimes like we see in Gaza and Syria and points his guns at Putin. Along with the students here in Leiden, I am interviewing Bellingcat-founder Eliot Higgins!

VOOR PUBLIEK: Hallo, Hallo! En welkom bij College Tour, de podcast! In samenwerking met masterstudenten Journalistiek en Nieuwe Media hier aan de Universiteit Leiden. Onze gast van vanavond is een visionair, een pionier op het gebied van onderzoeksjournalistiek, zo succesvol dat hij wordt bedreigd. Hij ontdekte als eerste dat de vlucht MH17 van Amsterdam naar Maleisië is neergehaald door Russische separatisten. Van achter zijn computer onthult hij met zijn organisatie Bellingcat oorlogsmisdaden zoals in Gaza, Syrië en richt hij zijn pijlen op Poetin. Samen met de studenten hier in Leiden interview ik vandaag Bellingcat-oprichter Eliot Higgins.

Congratulations on your upcoming honorary doctorate from Leiden University in February, what was your reaction upon the news of receiving this?

When you were in high school, what were you like in terms of sex, drugs and rock & roll?

- Were you a smart guy/nerd?
- drop-out?

Can you tell us how this all started,

- Brown Moses
- Office job in Leicester

How does it work?

Is boredom the basis for Brown Moses?

What was your first success as Brown Moses?

INSTANT EH01 ARAB SPRING foto

When did you decide to quit your job and start Bellingcat?

One of the people who you worked with at the start of Bellingcat is Christiaan Triebert from Leeuwarden. Can you describe him?

Christiaan now works for the New York Times, that's where we spoke to him.

INSTANT EH02 - [Filmpje 1.0 Triebert](#)

response

Are you a bit disappointed that he now is working for traditional media the New York Times?(Are they stealing your talent?)

As Christiaan says you changed journalism even though you've never worked for a journalism outlet. Was this change in journalism inevitable?

Why should journalism students study the way Bellingcat operates?

Studentenvragen

In the beginning Bellingcat was not taken seriously, is it true that intelligence agencies are now using your research?

With the current events happening around the world, Trump's re-election, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, is it still possible to bell the cats?

In 2014, Malaysia Airlines-flight MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine. All passengers and crew members lost their lives. After the attack, it was unclear who was responsible and the world was searching for an answer. You and your team found out who did it.

INSTANT EH03 World news MH17

How did you find your information?

Why were you so much faster than traditional media to connect the dots?

What was the impact of this Bellingcat MH17 research?

- did the official JIT team use your data, or was there a collaboration?

What was the impact of your MH17 investigation on your life?

INSTANT EH04 FOTO VAN MH17 WRAK

We spoke with a Dutch cameraman who worked on the crash site and lost someone dear to him on the MH17 flight.

INSTANT EH05 [Filmpje Joris Hentenaar](#)

→ Reageren

Why is it important to do such research if no one is ultimately prosecuted for it?

After your MH17-revelations, Russia Today said you were an “amateur-general, home-garden-and-kitchen expert and former video gamer”: are they afraid of you?

Studentenvragen

Bernette Vraag:

OVERHANDIGEN SCHILDERIJ JORIS (bernette)

Bellingcat also did research on the Russian agents that poisoned Navalny in 2020. In the famous Documentary Navalny that won an oscar, we see Navalny even speaking with the Russian Agent that poisoned him.

INSTANT EH06 Fragment uit navalny belletje

reactie

Your former-CEO who you see in this documentary stated that he paid for information, which normally is the kiss of death of any journalist. Was it in this case acceptable?

INSTANT EH07 Filmpje Christo Navalny

What happens if you attack on the highest level a country or president?

You've said before that you are the target of threats: how do you cope with this?

Even in situations like tonight you have to be carefull, do you always have to hold your guard up?

Have there been any incidents?

Your investigations on for example MH17 and the attempt on Navalny's life really impacted the reputation of Russia. People have been murdered for less... Are you afraid of this?

How does your family deal with this?

Studentenvragen

KIM VRAAG AMSTERDAM

You cannot investigate everything. How do you personally choose the subjects that you investigate?

Door met studentenvragen

Social media is your data gold mine, on the other hand there is an infinite amount of fake news being posted. Do you see social media as a net positive or net negative?

Recently you locked your X-account and started posting on the Twitter alternative Blue Sky: why?
(Elon Musk)

You have said about Elon Musk “He is full of shit”.

INSTART EH08 Twitter Screenshots

What would you want to ask Elon Musk?

In 2018, the documentary *Bellingcat: Truth in a Post-Truth World* hit the screens, spotlighting how Bellingcat takes on misinformation and unravels the truth in an era dominated by falsehoods. We sat down with the director Hans Pool:

INSTART EH09 [Filmpje Hans Pool](#)

→ Vraag Hans beantwoorden (In 5 years, can you still tell which online footage is real and what's not?)

How do you ensure open-source research does not include fake information?

It seems that there is a growing number of people who don't want to see or believe the truth. So then what are the investigations of Bellingcat worth?

Journalists are under attack in Russia, Gaza and even the US are you pessimistic about this profession?

Online you provide an OSINT-toolkit to teach and supply everyone with research methods. What does it contain, how useful has this been for Bellingcat?

Bad actors can use these OSINT tools to find someone's personal information, is there a way to prevent this? How do you respond to this?

Studentenvragen

In an interview with a Dutch newspaper, you've said you don't want your children to post photos of themselves online, because you're afraid of the risks AI could cause. What are you afraid of?

What is the danger of us using all these social media platforms?

You have seen in your work online the most horrific footage for example videos of dead children. How do you cope with this?

You have spoken before about your 'terrible anxiety', what causes this anxiety?

How did your work change your faith and trust in humanity?

New York Times journalist has a very mysterious question to you.

INSTANT EH10 [Filmpje 2.0 Triebert](#)

Before you answer this question what is this all about?

What's your best advice for the students in this lecture hall?

End