

Session plan

Note

Mandatory readings are marked with a star (★).

Note

Many of the course readings are chapters taken from the following handbook:
Butter, M., & Knight, P. (Eds.). (2020). Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories.
Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>

Overview

1. General approaches (4 weeks)
 - Weekly reading responses
 - Develop research questions!
2. Writing task (1 week)
3. Studies & applications (5 weeks)
 - Weekly reading responses
 - Write first drafts!
4. Paper drafts (2 weeks)

Introduction

1) Introduction (2023-04-20)

- Introduction to the topic.
- Syllabus
- Requirements

Approaches to researching conspiracy theories

- In the following four sessions, basic theoretical or empirical approaches to studying conspiracy theories will be revisited.
- Read the mandatory readings and submit reading responses

2) Traditional accounts (2023-04-27)

(★) Hofstadter, R. (1996). *The paranoid style in American politics, and other essays* (1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed). Harvard University Press. <https://faculty.washington.edu/jwilker/353/Hofstadter.pdf>

3) Micro-level: Psychological motives (2023-05-04)

(★) Douglas, K. M., Cichocka, A., & Sutton, R. M. (2020). Motivations, Emotions and Belief in Conspiracy Theories. In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Routledge.

4) Macro-level: Structural predictors (2023-05-11)

(★) Smallpage, S. M., Drochon, H., Uscinski, J. E., & Klofstad, C. (2020). Who are the Conspiracy Theorists?: Demographics and conspiracy theories. In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Routledge.

5) Cultural perspectives: Identification and labeling (2023-05-25)

(★) Husting, G., & Orr, M. (2007). Dangerous Machinery: “Conspiracy Theorist” as a Transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion. *Symbolic Interaction*, 30(2), 127–150. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2007.30.2.127>

Harambam, J., & Aupers, S. (2017). ‘I Am Not a Conspiracy Theorist’: Relational Identifications in the Dutch Conspiracy Milieu. *Cultural Sociology*, 11(1), 113–129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975516661959>

Collaborative writing practice

6) Feedback & writing practice (2023-06-01)

- In groups of 3-4:
 - Read each other's essays (before class).
 - Provide structured feedback to each other.

Task

You have two weeks to incorporate the feedback and upload finalized essays to the discussion forum.

Studies and applications

- In the following 5 sessions, we will cover specific empirical cases and theoretical aspects.
- One goal of this block of sessions is to collect ideas for final seminar papers / essays.

7) COVID-19 / Mass media and misinformation (2023-06-08)

COVID-19, public health and compliance:

- (★) Imhoff, R., & Lamberty, P. (2020). A Bioweapon or a Hoax? The Link Between Distinct Conspiracy Beliefs About the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak and Pandemic Behavior. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 11, 1110–1118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620934692>
- Peitz, L., Lalot, F., Douglas, K. M., Sutton, R., & Abrams, D. (2021). COVID-19 conspiracy theories and compliance with governmental restrictions: The mediating roles of anger, anxiety, and hope. *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 15, 18344909211046650. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18344909211046646>

Mass media and online misinformation:

- (★) Bronner, G. (2015). Why are conspiracy theories doing so well? The case of Charlie Hebdo. *Diogenes*, 62, 8–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192120924532>
- Rooke, M. (2021). Alternative media framing of COVID-19 risks. *Current Sociology*, 69(4), 584–602. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921211006115>

8) Alt-right conspiracy theories / Populism (2023-06-15)

The alt-right and QAnon:

- (★) Bleakley, P. (2021). Panic, pizza and mainstreaming the alt-right: A social media analysis of Pizzagate and the rise of the QAnon conspiracy. *Current Sociology*, 00113921211034896. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921211034896>
- DiMaggio, A. R. (2022). Conspiracy Theories and the Manufacture of Dissent: QAnon, the ‘Big Lie’, Covid-19, and the Rise of Rightwing Propaganda. *Critical Sociology*, 48(6), 1025–1048. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205211073669>

Political ideology and populism:

- (★) Bergmann, E., & Butter, M. (2020). Conspiracy theory and populism. In M. Butter & P. Knight (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories* (pp. 292–303). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>
- van der Linden, S., Panagopoulos, C., Azevedo, F., & Jost, J. T. (2021). The Paranoid Style in American Politics Revisited: An Ideological Asymmetry in Conspiratorial Thinking. *Political Psychology*, 42(1), 23–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12681>

! Assignment

Submit revised 750 words essay

9) CTs in authoritarian regimes (2023-06-22)

Turkish case:

- (★) Nefes, T. S. (2017). The impacts of the Turkish government’s conspiratorial framing of the Gezi Park protests. *Social Movement Studies*, 16(5), 610–622. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2017.1319269>

Post-soviet cases:

- (★) Yablokov, I. (2020). Conspiracy theories in Putin’s Russia—The case of the ‘new World order.’ In M. Butter & P. Knight (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories* (pp. 582–595). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>
- Ortmann, S., & Heathershaw, J. (2012). Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet Space. *The Russian Review*, 71(4), 551–564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2012.00668.x>

10) Gender and Sexuality / Antisemitism (2023-06-29)

Gender and sexuality:

- (★) Goetz, J. (2021). 'The Great Replacement' – Reproduction and population policies of the far right, taking the Identitarians as an example. 16.
- Thiem, A. (2020). Conspiracy theories and gender and sexuality. In M. Butter & P. Knight (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories* (pp. 292–303). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>

Antisemitism:

- (★) Simonsen, K. B. (2020). Antisemitism and Conspiracism. In M. Butter & P. Knight (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories* (pp. 357–370). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>
- Allington, D., & Joshi, T. (2020). "What Others Dare Not Say": An Antisemitic Conspiracy Fantasy and Its YouTube Audience. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*, 3(1), 35–54. <https://doi.org/10.26613/jca/3.1.42>

11) Modernity and Counter-knowledge (2023-07-06)

Modernity and post-truth:

- (★) Aupers, S. (2012). 'Trust no one': Modernization, paranoia and conspiracy culture. *European Journal of Communication*, 27(1), 22–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323111433566>
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond misinformation: Understanding and coping with the "post-truth" era. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 6(4), 353–369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2017.07.008>

Counter knowledge:

- (★) Gosa, T. L. (2011). Counterknowledge, racial paranoia, and the cultic milieu: Decoding hip hop conspiracy theory. *Poetics*, 39(3), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2011.03.003>

! Assignment

Brainstorm 2-3 research questions for your final paper / essay

Research questions and seminar papers / essays

In this last block of sessions, we will work individually and collectively towards your seminar papers or final essays.

12) Research questions (2023-07-13)

- Students work in groups on their research questions. Then each group briefly presents the research questions to the others for discussion.
- Students can use the remaining time to work on abstracts.
- @home work on abstract and introduction

! Assignment

Prepare abstracts until next session

13) Term paper writing session (2023-07-20)

- Peer review of abstracts.
- Time for questions.

! Assignment

Prepare seminar paper drafts / second essays