

## Fachbereich 9 - Medienstudiengänge

Department 9 - Media Courses

### Kommentar zur Lehrveranstaltung im WiSe 2021/22

Description of seminars

**Veranstalter\*in:** Prof. Dr. Cornelius Puschmann

Lecturer:

**Titel (dt.):** ---

**Titel (engl.):** Conspiracy Theories and the Internet

#### **Beschreibung:**

Description:

Conspiracy theories such as QAnon are frequently deployed through social media by fringe political actors that aim to undermine political institutions and boost their own claims to legitimacy. Examples on the right include individual politicians, parties and movements (Engesser et al., 2017; Gerbaudo, 2018; Puschmann et al., 2020). Conspiracy theories relating to controversial political issues in particular appear to activate supporters of both right-wing and left-wing causes by tapping into strong emotions, such as alienation, fear and resentment (Hameleers, 2021). Indeed, conspiracy theories serve as a common denominator to ideologically disparate populist strands (Bergmann and Butter, 2020).

This course will explore the intersection of conspiracy theories, right-wing populism and the internet to explore their political implications. Starting with a definition of conspiracy theories we will study conspiracy theories and their spread on social media in the context of political turbulence and increasing polarization. A key aim of the class will be to systematize the psychological, social and technological factors instrumental in enabling the spread of conspiracy theories.

Students are expected to be broadly politically interested, knowledgeable regarding (Western) contemporary politics in the U.S. and Europe and accustomed to reading English-language research literature. A reader will be digitally provided at the start of the course.

#### **Literatur:**

Literature:

Barkun M (2013) *A Culture of Conspiracy. Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*. 2nd ed. Comparative studies in religion and society 15. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bergmann E (2018) *Conspiracy & Populism: The Politics of Misinformation*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bergmann E and Butter M (2020) Conspiracy theory and populism. In: Butter M and Knight P (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 330–343. DOI: 10.4324/9780429452734-3\_6.

Engesser S, Ernst N, Esser F, et al. (2017) Populism and social media. How politicians spread a fragmented ideology. *Information, Communication & Society* 20(8): 1109–1126. DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1207697.

Gerbaudo P (2018) Social media and populism: An elective affinity? *Media, Culture & Society* 40(5): 745–753. DOI: 10.1177/0163443718772192.

Hameleers M (2021) They are selling themselves out to the enemy! The content and effects of populist conspiracy theories. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 33(1): 38–56. DOI: 10.1093/ijpor/edaa004.

