

PIL's list of Covid-19 misinformation resources

As a supplement to the Project Information Literacy 2020 series, “Covid-19: The first 100 days of U.S. News Coverage,” we have created a select list of resources about Covid-19 misinformation to support learning about information and news literacy.

Resources for building activities: Includes interactive sites, fact-checking resources, and tips and tools for verifying information

Readings: Useful brief articles that work as assigned readings or in-class discussion starters

Podcasts: Brief and longer interviews with experts in the field

Videos: News clips and in-depth reporting on coronavirus misinformation

Resources related to photos, charts, and graphs: Tools and readings related to visuals often used in misinformation campaigns

Background resources: Long reads that feature in-depth reporting, criticism, essays, and government reports about the novel coronavirus outbreak

Resources for building learning activities

- Anatoliy Gruzd and Philip Mai (2020), COVID-19 misinformation portal – A rapid response project from the Ryerson University Social Media Lab, <https://covid19misinfo.org/>. This site includes interactive resources, and engaging infographics:
 - The COVID Global Misinformation Dashboard allows users to click on a list of claims updated daily and fact-checked by a trusted network of agencies;
 - Botswatch looks at Twitter data to see who is spreading what information about Covid-19;
 - Twelve Common Types of COVID-19 Misinformation offers a useful framework for examining claims.
- Jane Lytvynenko (2020), "Here's a running list of the latest hoaxes spreading about the coronavirus," *Buzzfeed News*, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/janelytvynenko/coronavirus-fake-news-disinformation-rumors-hoaxes>. This list focuses on the first 3 months of 2020, provides easy access to a range of misinfo cases with links to articles that debunk the misinformation and often outline the steps reporters took to verify claims.
- Snopes (2020), The coronavirus collection: Fact-checking COVID-19, <https://www.snopes.com/collections/new-coronavirus-collection/>. Offers a categorized list of Covid-19-related claims with detailed fact-checking, and where warranted, debunking.
- Factcheck.org (2020), “Issues: Coronavirus,” <https://www.factcheck.org/issue/coronavirus/>. Work from Factcheck.org on various claims, listed in reverse chronological order.
- World Health Organization (2020), Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Mythbusters, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>. A series of quick fact checks addressing common myths around Covid-19 in plain language, often with supplementary videos.

- Mike Caulfield and Jane Lytvynenko (2020), “Ctrl-F: Find the facts,” CIVIX, <https://ctrl-f.ca/home/>. “The three-part learning module uses the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study to help teach students simple verification skills they can use to determine the reliability of sources and evaluate the accuracy of news and information.” While designed for high school students, this would also work well in a first-year course. The site is linked to a larger resource on News Literacy for teachers.
- Poynter Institute (2020), Covid-19: Poynter resources, <https://www.poynter.org/covid-19-poynter-resources/>. A strong collection of fact-checking resources and frequently updated information that can easily be used as examples or case studies.
- Craig Silverman (Ed.) (2020), *The verification handbook*, 2nd. Ed., <https://datajournalism.com/read/handbook/verification-3>. Comprehensive free online resource with chapters by experts in the field on verifying news content, case studies, and tools for various levels of users from beginner to advanced.
- Natalia Antonova (March 27, 2020), “Investigating coronavirus fakes and disinfo? Here are some tools for you,” *Bellingcat*, <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/2020/03/27/investigating-coronavirus-fakes-and-disinfo-here-are-some-tools-for-you/>. Relatable case studies and links to useful tutorials on verifying information.
- Coronavirus: Responsible reporting and ethics (2020), *First Draft News*, <https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/coronavirus-responsible-reporting-and-ethics/>. The tips for reporting responsibly are a great guide for checking reporting on Covid-19. The site is updated regularly with new resources, including one related to “Plandemic” and others with international case studies.

Readings

- Julia Carrie Wong, April 28, 2020), “‘There is no absolute truth’: an infectious disease expert on Covid-19, misinformation and ‘bullshit,’” *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/there-is-no-absolute-truth-an-infectious-disease-expert-on-covid-19-misinformation-and-bullshit>. A slightly longer interview with Carl Bergstrom that illustrates challenges in communicating science.
- Will Oremus (March 3, 2020), “The simplest way to spot coronavirus misinformation on social media,” *OneZero*, <https://onezero.medium.com/the-simplest-way-to-spot-coronavirus-misinformation-on-social-media-4b7995448071>. An interview with Mike Caulfield, where he walks through the SIFT method of verification using a Covid-19 example.
- Melanie Smith, Erin McAweeney, and Léa Ronzaud (April 2020), The Covid-19 “infodemic”: A preliminary analysis of the online conversation surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, https://public-assets.graphika.com/reports/Graphika_Report_Covid19_Infodemic.pdf. Accessible investigation into the spread of various kinds of misinformation with excellent visualizations of Twitter activity.
- Khushbu Shah, (June 16, 2020), “When your family spreads misinformation: In times of crisis, family group chats can become dangerous platforms for the spread of false claims,” *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/06/when-family-members-spread-coronavirus-misinformation/613129/>. This is a really useful discussion starter to talk about misinformation flows in real life and includes links to other good content from *The Atlantic*.

- Tanya Basu (July 15, 2020), “How to talk to conspiracy theorists and still be kind,” *MIT Review*, <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/15/1004950/how-to-talk-to-conspiracy-theorists-and-still-be-kind/>. Discussion with Rob Brotherton, Joan Donovan and reddit moderators offers useful tips for discussing misinformation.
- Tim Miller (April 10, 2020), “The Ballad of Clay Travis: #DBAP(F): Don’t be a pandemic fraudster.”” *The Bulwark*, <https://thebulwark.com/the-ballad-of-clay-travis/>. Profile of a huckster with insights into some of the motivations and processes for disseminating Covid-19 misinformation.
- Kate Starbird (July 28, 2020), “Disinformation campaigns are murky blends of truth, lies and sincere beliefs – lessons from the pandemic,” *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/disinformation-campaigns-are-murky-blends-of-truth-lies-and-sincere-beliefs-lessons-from-the-pandemic-140677>. Discussion of the deliberate uses of misinformation to affect public opinion.
- Erin Brodwin (July 28, 2020), “‘It’s like you injected adrenaline into them’: Facebook’s vaccine misinformation problem faces a new test with Covid-19,” *Stat*, <https://www.statnews.com/2020/07/28/facebook-vaccine-misinformation-antivaxx-coronavirus-covid/>

Podcasts

- Leila Fadel (February 15, 2020), “Troll watch: Misinformation around the coronavirus,” *NPR All Things Considered*, <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/15/806365997/troll-watch-misinformation-around-the-coronavirus>. In this 4-minute interview, Carl Bergstrom discusses why the coronavirus was so susceptible to misinformation.
- Noel King and Jahmil Lacey (April 10, 2020), “Misinformation, distrust may contribute to Black Americans’ COVID-19 deaths,” *NPR*, https://www.npr.org/2020/04/10/831480462/misinformation-distrust-may-contribute-to-black-americans-covid-19-deaths?utm_medium=RSS&station=KXJZ_FM. 4-minute interview with a researcher on health disparities.
- Brandi Collins-Dexter, Quinta Jurecic, and Evelyn Douek (July 14, 2020), Podcast: Brandi Collins-Dexter on Covid-19 misinformation and Black communities,” *Brookings Institute Tech Stream*, <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/podcast-brandi-collins-dexter-on-covid-19-misinformation-and-black-communities/>. A 55 minute interview about her work “Canaries in the Coal Mine: COVID-19 Misinformation and Black Communities,” which follows the emergence and dissemination of coronavirus-related mis- and disinformation among Black social media users in the United States.
- Jane Lytvynenko, Quinta Jurecic, and Evelyn Douek (July 17, 2020), “Podcast: Jane Lytvynenko on debunking the disinformation garbage fire,” *Brookings Institute Tech Stream*, <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/podcast-jane-lytvynenko-on-debunking-the-disinformation-garbage-fire/>. A 49-minute interview “about analyzing and reporting on mis- and disinformation in real time — especially in the context of COVID-19, where “fake experts” espousing misleading stories about the virus, and conspiracy theories such as the “Plandemic” video, have proliferated.”
- Raney Aronson and Michael Kirk (July 2, 2020), “Covering coronavirus: United States of conspiracy,” *Frontline Dispatch*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znZD6oqDg98>. Interview with a documentary filmmaker on the “fringe conspiracy theories have become central to understanding the nation’s response to the coronavirus outbreak.” (30 Minutes)

Videos

- PBS News Hour: Misinformation, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/tag/misinformation>. A collection of clips, many related to coronavirus.
- Bellingcat Investigation Team (March 25, 2020), “The coronavirus disinformation system: How it works,” A 5-minute video to “help you categorize the kinds of lies that are being pushed about the pandemic right now.” <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2020/03/25/the-coronavirus-disinformation-system-how-it-works/>

Resources related to photos, charts and graphs

- Joss Fong (April 28, 2020), “How coronavirus charts can mislead us,” *Vox*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-3Mlj3MQ_Q. Excellent introduction to reading charts around the coronavirus including differences between linear and log charts. (5 Minutes)
- Al-Jazeera (April 16, 2020), Covid 19: Making sense of all the numbers, *Al Jazeera*, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/coronavirus-making-sense-of-the-numbers/index.html>. 5-part graphic explainer of some of the common charts and numbers reporting Covid-19, including clear information on the questions particular graphs can and cannot answer.
- Caroline Chen (July 21, 2020), “How to understand COVID-19 numbers,” *ProPublica*, <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-to-understand-covid-19-numbers>
- D. L. Cade (May 04, 2020), These photos show how easy it is to create ‘fake news’ with photography,” *PetaPixel*, <https://petapixel.com/2020/05/04/these-photos-show-how-easy-it-is-to-create-fake-news-with-photography/>. Illustrates how changes in framing, depth of field, etc. can be used to convey particular messages around social distancing.
- Rose Eveleth (July 28, 2020), “How can I fight fake news?” Advice for/from the future, <https://www.futureadvice.club/2020/07/28/how-can-i-tell-if-something-is-real/>. A conversation with Jane Lytvenenko goes step-by-step through image verification. Dr. Amy Lee gives a scientist’s perspective on misinformation. (40 Minutes)
- Hannah Guy, Farida Vis, Simon Faulkner, 2020, "Verifying and questioning images," In Craig Silverman (ed.) *Verification handbook For disinformation and media manipulation* <https://datajournalism.com/read/handbook/verification-3/investigating-actors-content/5-verifying-and-questioning-images>. An advanced toolkit, including case studies on interrogating the images we see in the news and on social media.

Background resources

- Philip Bell and Amy Maxmen (May 27, 2020), “The epic battle against coronavirus misinformation and conspiracy theories,” *Nature*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01452-z>. Provides an overview of the drivers behind coronavirus misinformation.

- J. Scott Brennan, Felix Simon, Philip N. Howard, & Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (April 7, 2020), "Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation," <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation>. Includes findings on social media, and top-down spread of misinformation from celebrities and political leaders.
- Leonardo Bursztyn, Aakaash Rao, Christopher Roth, and David Yanagizawa-Drott. "Misinformation during a pandemic." University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics Working Paper 2020-44 (2020). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3580487. Compares the impact of watching two different Fox News shows on viewers' health outcomes.
- Tim Caulfield, (2020), "Does debunking work? Correcting COVID-19 misinformation on social media*," [Chapter B-4] in *Vulnerable: the law, policy & ethics of COVID-19* / edited by Colleen M. Flood, Vanessa MacDonnell, Sophie Thériault, Sridhar Venkatapuram, and Jane Philpott, University of Ottawa Press, <https://www.ualberta.ca/law/media-library/faculty-research/hli/media/images/caulfield-debunking-works-vulnerable-caulfield.pdf>. Thorough review of strategies for countering misinformation.
- Renée DiResta (May 6, 2020), "Virus experts aren't getting the message out: If the authorities can't satisfy the public's desire to know more, others will fill the void with misinformation," *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/05/health-experts-dont-understand-how-information-moves/611218/>.
- Elizabeth Dubois, Sara Minaeian, Ariane Paquet-Labelle, and Simon Beaudry, April 20, 2020, "Who to Trust on Social Media: How Opinion Leaders and Seekers Avoid Disinformation and Echo Chambers," *Social Media + Society*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120913993>. Study looks at the roles of trust in the media, fact-checking and avoidance of echo chambers in consuming and disseminating information through social media.
- Matt Motta, Dominik Stecula, and Christina Farhart, (May 1, 2020), "How right-leaning media coverage of COVID-19 facilitated the spread of misinformation in the early stages of the pandemic in the US," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/article/how-rightleaning-media-coverage-of-covid19-facilitated-the-spread-of-misinformation-in-the-early-stages-of-the-pandemic-in-the-us/6B0EB93F6BA17608D82B4D23EDA75E50>. This studied combined information from Media Cloud on right- vs left-leaning news outlets and Pew on news consumption and endorsement of coronavirus misinformation to show the impact of media consumption on beliefs.
- Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Richard Fletcher, Nic Newman, J. Scott Brennan, and Philip N. Howard (April 15, 2020, Navigating the 'infodemic': how people in six countries access and rate news and information about coronavirus, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/infodemic-how-people-six-countries-access-and-rate-news-and-information-about-coronavirus>. Report on sources people trust for information around Covid-19, how much misleading information they think they see, checked against their knowledge of factual information about the coronavirus.
- Melanie Smith, Erin McAweeney, and Léa Ronzaud (April 2020), "The Covid-19 'infodemic': A preliminary analysis of the online conversation surrounding the coronavirus pandemic," *Graphika*, https://public-assets.graphika.com/reports/Graphika_Report_Covid19_Infodemic.pdf. Accessible investigation into the spread of various kinds of misinformation, with excellent visualizations of Twitter activity.

- Kate Starbird, Emma S. Spiro, and Kolina Koltai (June 25, 2020), "Misinformation, crisis, and public health — Reviewing the literature," *Mediawell*, <https://mediawell.ssrc.org/literature-reviews/misinformation-crisis-and-public-health/versions/v1-0/>. Provides wider context of the issues of misinformation during the pandemic, part of a larger, frequently updated site gathering reliable resources on Covid-19 misinformation (<https://mediawell.ssrc.org/research-topics/covid-19/>).
- House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Joint Hearing on "A Country in crisis: How disinformation online is dividing the nation," (June 24, 2020), <https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/joint-hearing-on-a-country-in-crisis-how-disinformation-online-is>. Includes expert testimony on the role of social media platforms in disseminating disinformation relating to the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and racial injustice.
- Misinformation and the Covid-19 infodemic (July 21, 2020), UK Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmcomeds/234/23402.htm>. Massive report outlining the issues and possible responses including changes in policy.