



## Programme

### Thursday, 23 January

- 08.30– 09.00 Registration
- 09.00– 09.15 Welcome address by Søren Rud Keiding, Director of AIAS.
- 09.15– 10.00 Michael Bang Petersen – Introducing ROPH: Framework and Findings
- 10.00– 10.30 Coffee Break
- 10.30– 11.30 Diana Mutz – Assessing Incivility in Political Discourse: Problems and Prospects
- 11.30– 12.30 Patricia Rossini – From Tone to Substance: Towards a nuanced approach to toxic discourse online
- 12.30– 13.30 Lunch (Provided on site)
- 13.30– 14.30 Stephan Lewandowsky – “Post-truth” and “Fake news”: What, why, and how do we respond?
- 14.30– 15.30 How to counter online disinformation? – Roundtable with Lisbeth Knudsen (Mandag Morgen), Martin Ruby (Facebook), Anja Bechmann (Aarhus University)
- 15.30– 16.00 Coffee Break
- 16.00– 17.00 Sander van der Linden – A Psychological Vaccine against Fake News
- 17.00– 18.30 Poster session with rosé and beer
- 19.00– .... Dinner at No16 (Europaplads 16, 8000 Aarhus)

## Friday, 24 January

- 09.00– 09.30 Arrival & coffee
- 09.30 – 10.30 Michael Hogg – Who are we? Identity-Uncertainty Fuels Populism and Intergroup Hostility
- 10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break
- 11.00 – 12.00 Alexandra Siegel – From White Nationalist Trolls to Saudi Clerics: Hate Speech in the US and Arab Twitterspheres
- 12.00 – 13.00 Lunch (Provided on site)
- 13.00 – 14.00 Lilliana Mason – Radical Mass Partisanship: Prevalence and Correlates of Political Violence in American Politics
- 14.00 – 15.00 How to counter online hate and harassment? – Roundtable with Maria Ventegodt (Institute for Human Rights), Claus Noer Hjorth (Media Council), Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen (Centre for Prevention of Extremism), Lasse Lindekilde (Aarhus University)
- 15.00 – 15.30 Coffee break
- 15.30 – 16.30 Jason Reifler – The Distorting Prism of Social Media: How Self-Selection and Exposure to Incivility Fuel Online Comment Toxicity
- 16:30 – 16:45 Michael Bang Petersen: Closing remarks

## Keynote Speeches

*Alphabetical order by last name*

### Michael Hogg

Professor of Social Psychology and Chair of Social Psychology Programs, Claremont Graduate University

#### **Who are we? Identity-Uncertainty Fuels Populism and Intergroup Hostility**

People need a clear sense of who they are. This allows them to understand the world and their place within it, and to plan their behavior and predict the behavior of others. People strive to resolve feelings of self-uncertainty. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to identify with a distinctive social group that has a consensual, unambiguous and clearly defined collective identity. This social psychological analysis, which is presented by uncertainty-identity theory, has far reaching implications for our understanding of populism and intergroup hostility. Rapid and significant social change (associated with, for example, governance, technology, migration, or globalization) can pose a threat that undermines people's sense of who they are and makes them feel alienated from and marginalized in society. This is a dangerous mix that can strengthen preference for and identification with ethnocentric and xenophobic groups that are intolerant of dissent and have autocratic leaders. Such groups are often associated with populist ideologies that promote conspiracy theories and victimhood beliefs oriented around how the "will of the people" is subverted by the malevolent actions of outgroup "experts" and "elites". Because such groups and identities very effectively reduce uncertainty, and also promote intergroup

hostility and distrust, people seek only identity-confirming information – a process of confirmation bias that is very readily satisfied by the internet. Based on this analysis I suggest some general social psychological considerations that might protect against populism and intergroup hostility.

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## Stephan Lewandowsky

Professor of Cognitive Science, University of Bristol

### “Post-truth” and “Fake news”: What, why, and how do we respond?

Imagine a world that considers knowledge to be “elitist”. Imagine a world in which it is not medical knowledge but a free-for-all opinion market on Twitter that determines whether a newly emergent strain of avian flu is really contagious to humans. This dystopian future is still just that---a possible future. However, there are signs that public discourse is evolving in this direction: Terms such as “post-truth” and “fake news”, largely unknown until 2016, have exploded into media and public discourse. I explore the implications of the growing abundance of misinformation in the public sphere, how it influences people and how to counter it. I argue that for counter-measures to be effective, they must be informed by the larger political, technological, and societal context. Misinformation in the post-truth era can no longer be considered solely an isolated failure of individual cognition that can be corrected with appropriate communication tools. I suggest that responses to the post-truth era must therefore be multi-pronged. I focus on technological solutions that incorporate psychological principles, an interdisciplinary approach known as “technocognition”, and on psychological techniques such as inoculation or boosting that enhance people’s resilience to being misinformed.

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## Lilliana Mason

Associate professor of Government and Politics, University of Maryland

### Radical Mass Partisanship: Prevalence and Correlates of Political Violence in American Politics

U.S. historical accounts of partisanship recognize its competitive nature and its inherent, latent threat of violence, but social scientific conceptions of partisan identity developed in quiescent times have largely missed that dangerous dimension. We rebalance scholarly accounts by investigating the national prevalence and correlates of 1) partisan moral disengagement that rationalizes harm against opponents, 2) partisan schadenfreude in response to deaths and injuries of political opponents, and 3) explicit support for partisan violence. In two nationally representative surveys, we find large portions of partisans embrace partisan moral disengagement (10-60%) but only small minorities report feeling partisan schadenfreude or endorse partisan violence (5-15%). Party identity strength, social sorting, and trait aggression are related to each type of extreme party view. We conclude with reflections on the risks of radical partisanship in democratic politics, even as parties continue to serve as essential bedrocks of democracy.

The talk covers joint work with Nathan Kalmoe, Assistant Professor of Political Communication at Louisiana State University.

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## Diana Mutz

Samuel A. Stouffer Professor of Political Science and Communication, Director, Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics, University of Pennsylvania

### Assessing Incivility in Political Discourse: Problems and Prospects

Automated measurement of incivility is frequently motivated by a desire to monitor the quality of political discourse. Thus far, such efforts have been directed primarily toward detection in online contexts, in part because text from online tweets and comments is easily available as training data, and in part because of growing concern about online incivility. In this study we question whether this approach is the best way forward for several reasons. For one, the distinction between online and offline content is somewhat artificial. In addition, we find that systems developed for assessing discourse in one context often do not work well in others. Further, developing systems that are specific to one context prevents cross-media comparisons. We also report the findings of

our investigation of the Stanford Politeness API and the Google Perspective API, two of the most widely used systems for purposes of accomplishing this goal. Importantly, these systems were developed for purposes other than assessing political discourse in particular, and their problems reflect this genesis.

The talk covers joint work with Ani Nenkova, Professor of Computer Science at University of Pennsylvania

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## Michael Bang Petersen

Professor of Political Science, Director of The ROPH Project, Aarhus University

### Introducing ROPH: Framework and Findings

Extreme hostility is entering political debates, especially on social media. Professional politicians have become frequent targets of online threats and citizens find online discussion dominated by extremist viewpoints. Democratic societies are thus facing a new challenge: Frequent and intense online political hostility. The Research on Online Political Hostility (ROPH) Project will meet this challenge by identifying the (1) causes, (2) consequences and (3) counter-strategies related to online political hostility. In this talk, I will outline the framework and objectives of The ROPH Project. In addition, I present initial project findings that underscores how online political hostility cannot be understood without considering the offline environment. Much online hostility emerges from deep-seated frustrations rooted in the offline world.

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## Jason Reifler

Professor of Political Science, University of Exeter

### The Distorting Prism of Social Media: How Self-Selection and Exposure to Incivility Fuel Online Comment Toxicity

Though prior studies have analyzed the textual characteristics of online comments about politics, less is known about how selection into commenting behavior and exposure to other people's comments changes the tone and content of political discourse. This article makes three contributions. First, we show that frequent commenters on Facebook are more likely to be interested in politics, to have more polarized opinions, and to use toxic language in comments in an elicitation task. Second, people who comment on articles in the real world use more toxic language on average than the public as a whole; levels of toxicity in comments scraped from media outlet Facebook pages greatly exceeds what is observed in comments we elicit on the same articles from a nationally representative sample. Finally, we show experimentally that exposure to toxic language in comments increases the toxicity of subsequent comments. In this way, the process of selection into online commenting behavior and exposure to the resulting toxicity greatly amplifies the incivility of political debate.

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## Patrícia Rossini

Derby Fellow (TT) in the Department of Communication and Media, University of Liverpool

### From Tone to Substance: Towards a nuanced approach to toxic discourse online

Incivility is broadly seen as an innate component of social interaction online. For the past two decades, researchers interested in studying online discussions have examined the nature and causes of uncivil discourse, as well as the potential effects of these behaviors. Due to the complex nature of identifying uncivil discourse, automated approaches have often reduced it to dimensions such as profanity, vulgarity, name-calling, and cursing. These approaches have limitations, mainly because they reduce "toxicity" to the tone, and not to the function, of online discourse. Based on my research, I will provide a multidimensional solution aimed at developing a better understanding of the role of incivility online in the context of the Twitter Conversational Health project, as well as of my research with the Illuminating project on digital campaigns.

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## Alexandra Siegel

Postdoctoral Fellow Immigration Policy Lab, Stanford University Research Associate at New York University's Social Media and Political Participation Lab (SMaPP)

### From White Nationalist Trolls to Saudi Clerics: Hate Speech in the US and Arab Twitterspheres

Once relegated to the dark corners of the Internet, online hate speech has become increasingly visible on mainstream social media platforms. This talk will explore when and how online hate speech spreads, drawing on examples from the US and the Arab World. In particular, I will show the effect of Donald Trump's divisive 2016 election on the spread of online hate speech in the US Twittersphere, as well as research from the Arab Twittersphere demonstrating that although religious and political elites play an outsized role in amplifying the spread of sectarian hate speech, they are also particularly well positioned to combat it.

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### Sander van der Linden

University Lecturer (Assistant Professor), Director of the Cambridge Social Decision-Making Laboratory, University of Cambridge

### A Psychological Vaccine Against Fake News

Much like a viral contagion, false information can spread rapidly from one mind to another. Moreover, once lodged in memory, misinformation is difficult to correct. The theory of inoculation therefore offers a natural basis for developing a psychological 'vaccine' against fake news. Originally developed in the 1960's, our research group has provided evidence that the theory can be extended and effectively leveraged within the context of fake news and misinformation. For example, in a series of randomized empirical studies we show that it is possible to pre-emptively "immunize" people against disinformation by pre-exposing them to severely weakened doses of the techniques that underlie its production. This psychological process helps people cultivate cognitive antibodies in a controlled environment. During the talk, I'll showcase an award-nominated social impact game ("Bad News") we developed and empirically evaluated (N= 15,000) in 15 languages—with governments and social media companies—to help citizens around the world recognize and resist unwanted attempts to influence and mislead.

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## Poster presentations

*Numbered as they will appear at the conference*

1. Altay, Sacha - Institut Jean Nicod, Département d'études cognitives, ENS, EHESS, PSL University, CNRS, Paris France.  
Sharing Fake News is Bad for Your Epistemic Reputation
2. Bartusevicius, Henrikas - Aarhus University  
Formidability and political violence
3. Berriche, Manon - Sciences Po  
Positive Attitude! Audience Engages More With Phatic Posts Than Health Misinformation on Facebook
4. Bolden, Sarah - Syracuse University  
Networked enclaving: A Reddit case study
5. Bor, Alexander - Aarhus University  
The Psychology of Online Political Hostility: A Comprehensive, Cross-National Test of the Mismatch Hypothesis
6. Cole, Michael - University of Tartu and Jagiellonian University, Krakow  
Soft Power: Cats, Branding and the Ukrainian Far Right
7. Henrique Santos, Rui - FCSH-UNL  
Keep Threats Great and Fear Successful: Does the U.S. maintains the same narrative facing different threats?

8. Karg, Simon - Aarhus University  
Followers Forever: Prior Commitment Predicts Post-Scandal Support of a Social Media Celebrity
9. Lehaff, Josephine - Roskilde University  
The practice and politics of hate-reading
10. Maertens, Rakoem - University of Cambridge  
Long-Term Effectiveness of the Fake News Vaccine: Two Longitudinal Experiments
11. Mayorga, Alexandra - Princeton University  
Hostility and Political Participation: Unpacking the Relationship with an Original Survey Experiment in the United Kingdom
12. Mazepus, Honorata - Leiden University  
Framing conflict in the news videos: can frames influence the viewers?
13. Neitsch, Jana - SDU (Mads Clausen Institute)  
The prosodic characteristics of different types of hate speech in German
14. Osmundsen, Mathias - Aarhus University  
Ignorant, disruptive or polarized? Psychological motivations behind “fake news” sharing
15. Skytte, Rasmus - Aarhus University  
Degrees of Disrespect: How Only Extreme(-ly Rare) Incivility Alienates the Base
16. Stednitz, Christine - University of Essex/Exeter  
A post-truth public? Investigating the mechanisms of resistance to factual correction
17. Szebeni, Zea - University of Helsinki  
(Fake) News Perception in Highly Polarized Societies
18. Szewach, Paula - University of Essex  
Does Misinformation Trigger Readers? The Indirect Consequences of Uncivil Language on Social Transmission.
19. Vasilichi, Alexandrina - University College London  
Political Polarization and Depolarization across the UK Brexit Divide
20. Vik, Andrea - University of Amsterdam  
Negative news - one audience? Investigating the cognitive-emotional roots of the gender differences in the negativity bias.
21. Wiesman, Penina - Rutgers University  
In Pursuit of Cross-Cutting Conversation on Facebook