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Truth and Consequences: Fake News, Filter Bubbles and Democracy

February 16, 2017

Fake news is nothing new, but the anonymity of the social web has allowed it to spread faster and farther than ever before.

At the same time, people are seeking and sharing information that reinforces their political views, aided by algorithms that target stories directly to them. The end result is a public that is finding it harder to discern fabrication from fiction, and a nation further divided.

To explore these topics, [The David C. Hardesty Jr. Festival of Ideas](#) and the [West Virginia University Reed College of Media](#) will co-host, “Truth and Consequences: Fake News, Filter Bubbles and Democracy.” The panel discussion will be led by journalists and thought leaders who will address the impact of fake news and filter bubbles on our society and offer strategies on how to fight fake news and be better informed.

The event will begin at 7 p.m. Feb. 22 in the WVU Mountainlair Ballrooms located on the University’s Downtown Campus. It is free and open to the public.

Panelists

David Mikkelson, Founder, Snopes.com

Mickkelson founded Snopes.com in 1995, based on his interest in researching urban legends. Today, the site is widely regarded by folklorists, journalists and laypersons alike as one of the web's essential resources. Snopes.com is routinely included in annual "Best of the Web" lists and has been the recipient of two Webby awards. Mikkelson has appeared on 20/20, ABC World News, CNN Sunday Morning and NPR's All Things Considered.

Paige Lavender, Senior politics editor, The Huffington Post

Lavender is a West Virginia native and a 2011 graduate of the WVU Reed College of Media. As senior politics editor, she covers congress, the president and political news around the nation. Lavender earned her master's degree in interactive journalism at American University in May 2016.

Errin Haines Whack, Urban affairs reporter, The Associated Press

Whack is an award-winning reporter based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her work focuses on the intersection of race, politics and culture, including civil and voting rights, the African-American electorate, and issues of inequality and injustice. She has previously worked at The Washington Post, The Orlando Sentinel and The Los Angeles Times.

Zach Graves, Technology policy program director, R Street Institute

Graves manages development efforts, and coordinates campaigns on intellectual property, cybersecurity, surveillance, cryptocurrency, privacy, the sharing economy, transparency and open data. He previously worked at the Cato Institute and the America's Future Foundation. He holds a master's degree from the California Institute of the Arts and a bachelor's from the University of California at Davis.

Elizabeth Cohen, Assistant Professor of Communications, WVU Cohen conducts research on the psychological motivations and effects of social media use, specializing in the cognitive and emotional reasons why people share things on social network sites. Her research has appeared in Mass Communication and Society, Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking, and Psychology of Popular Media Culture. She has also been featured as a guest blogger for Scientific American. Cohen earned her PhD from Georgia State University.

About the Moderator

Assistant Teaching Professor Emily Corio teaches courses in video and multimedia reporting. Before joining the College of Media in August 2011, Corio spent a decade working in journalism. She was assistant news director for the statewide public television and radio network in West Virginia. There she reported and produced stories for radio, television and the web, including award-winning pieces on environmental issues and breaking news.