

CALL FOR PAPERS

A World of Conspiracies: Understanding Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories in Comparative Perspective

Interdisciplinary Workshop on Conspiracy Theories and Their Believers

Thu, 5 Oct 2023 – Fri, 6 Oct 2023
School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa

The abundance of conspiracy theories in recent social and political discourse is alarming. Beliefs in conspiratorial explanations are increasingly popular throughout the world. Indeed, recent survey data from the United States indicates that more than 21 per cent of Americans believe that a secret organization rules the world, 23 per cent are confident the September 11th terror attacks were an inside job, and 27 per cent agree that the government is hiding aliens in Area 51. These false beliefs are problematic, especially when they influence behaviour like adherence to public health guidelines during a global pandemic or undermine trust in key democratic institutions such as elections (Romer and Jamieson, 2020; Mari et al., 2022).

Understanding conspiracy beliefs is crucial to finding ways to mitigate their consequences and limit their influence. However, the literature has thus far focused extensively on the US and its paranoid style of politics (Hofstadter, 1964). In order to build theories with international reach, we should examine conspiracy beliefs through a comparative lens.

In this workshop, we will investigate the factors that influence beliefs in conspiracy theories around the world. Is the typical conspiracy believer the same across different national settings? Does political culture influence the salience of conspiracy theory beliefs? How and why are conspiracy believers different (or similar) across different countries? Are there universal explanations for conspiracy beliefs? Is there a difference between the typical conspiracy believer in the US and in other settings?

We seek answers to these questions and are interested in theoretical and empirical papers (either in-depth case analyses, comparative, or large-N studies) that try to establish why and how individuals from different parts of the world believe in conspiracy theories. We invite original contributions from scholars with a background in political science, social psychology, sociology, and related fields. We ask for submissions by researchers at all career levels and we plan to build a special issue in a reputable journal around the papers presented at the workshop.



Konrad Adenauer Research Chair
in Empirical Democracy Studies
Chaire de recherche Konrad-Adenauer
en études empiriques de la démocratie



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Workshop Details and Information

Submissions

- Deadline: April 30th, 2023.
- Submissions to be sent via email to: jean-nicolas.bordeleau@uottawa.ca
- Required: extended abstract (max. 400 words).
- Notifications to be sent by May 15th, 2023.
- Full paper submission by September 25th, 2023 (6,000-8,000 words).

Format

- Conference with in-person attendance (online participation will be possible)
- Conference language: English.

Conference Place and Dates

- Ottawa, Canada, October 5 and 6, 2023.
- School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa

Costs covered: lunches and accommodation (up to 3 nights).

Organizers: Konrad Adenauer Research Chair in Empirical Democracy Studies, Chairholder Daniel Stockemer, Ph.D. candidate Nick Bordeleau.

For more information, or to submit an abstract, email us at jean-nicolas.bordeleau@uottawa.ca



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