**Harvard Yenching Workshop**

**Post-truth politics and public health:**

**Dis- and misinformation crises and media challenges**

**Date: March 24 (Fri)**

**Location: Common room, Harvard Yenching Institute**

<Address: 2 Divinity Ave. Cambridge, MA 02138>

At the post-truth age, there are increasing global concerns about political disinformation and computational propaganda campaigns that manipulate online public opinions and compromise elections in many countries. This line of research involves power and interests from multi-stakeholders, decreasing media trust and dark sides of technological use (e.g., algorithmic bias and disguised socialbots), which results in socio-political polarization, uncertainty and chaos. Starting from the Western academia, a growing number of interdisciplinary scholars and experts have devoted themselves in studying political disinformation and developing preventative measures (e.g., bot detection and fact-check mechanisms). Asian intellectuals also shared alarming concerns about negative impacts of misleading political disinformation on their elections, democracy and social harmony. In recent years, fact-check mechanisms, bot-detection tech and digital literacy campaigns have been developed to help people differentiate truth and facts from falsehoods, in order to rebuilt trust in political actors (parties and politicians) and media/platform organizations (e.g., journalistic professionalism and social media information authenticity).

After COVID-19 outbreaks, pandemics have tremendously changed public health systems and health literacy. With malicious agendas, lots of unverified and sensational health misinformation virally disseminated on popular social media platforms, which unfortunately resulted in unprecedented public health threats. People who believed in health misinformation could seriously harm their physical and mental health and even shared the misleading and harmful contents to their social networks. Latest studies supported that health misinformation amplified vaccine controversies, increased vaccine hesitancy, and caused societal polarization in various countries. Health misinformation campaigns controlled by algorithms and automated bots increased human users’ exposure to provocative and distorted messages as well as amplify societal negative sentiments and accelerate socio-political conflicts. To curb the severity of infodemics, World Health Organization urged the governments, platforms and media organizations worldwide to cooperate to develop effective strategies in order to debunk falsehoods and improve digital literacy.

Dis- or misinformation in politics and public health are two critical and urgent issues that cause tremendous anxiety, risks and harm domestically and internationally. To mitigate infodemics (in politics and public health), it is essential to have interdisciplinary efforts devoted to investigate the crises, tackle the challenges and find feasible solutions collectively. This proposed workshop aims to invite scholars and experts to share research insights regarding political disinformation and health misinformation in various contexts (e.g., US, China, Japan Taiwan, and Egypt), as well as explore effective measures to mitigate political and health falsehoods. The tentative list of panelists is provided below to sketch up the workshop program:

**---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**Program**

**Registration 9:00-9:15**

**Opening 9:15-9:30**

**Morning Session: 9:30-12:00**

**Session 1: (Socio-)political disinformation, computational propaganda & democracy risks**

*Memes as the weaponized tool of disinformation in socio-political movements*

**Joan Donovan,** Director of the Technology and Social Change Research Project, Harvard Kennedy School- Shorenstein Center, Harvard University

*A fake image is worth 1000 lies: the propagation and mitigation of visual misinformation in the US and China*

**Cuihua (Cindy) Shen**, Professor in Communication, University of California at Davis

*Socialbots, computational propaganda and disinformation threats in Taiwan’s politics and elections*

**Trisha Tsui-Chuan Lin**, Visiting Scholar, Harvard Yenching Institute & Fulbright Scholar; Professor, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

*Building societal resilience to digital disinformation*

**Shuhua Zhou**, Leonard H. Goldenson Professor, University of Missouri & **Erik P. Bucy,** Marshall and Sharleen Formby Regents Professor, Texas Tech University

***Moderator:*** **Shuhua Zhou**, Leonard H. Goldenson Professor, University of Missouri

**Lunch 12-1**

**Afternoon Session 1-3:30**

**Session 2: Health misinformation, media trust & public health threats**

*Health misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic: A global perspective (US, China & Egypt)*

**Lu Tang**, Professor, Texas A&M University; Director, Data Justice Lab

*The bright and dark sides of social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic: Cases of Japan and China*

**Asei Ito**, Visiting Scholar, Harvard Yenching Institute; Associate Professor, University of Tokyo

*Media trust and corporate social responsibility in the age of infodemics*

**Carolyn A. Lin**, Professor, Department of Communication, University of Connecticut

*Algorithms ate my public health system: Fighting health misinformation and disinformation*

**Shirley Sun,** Visiting Scholar, UCLA; Associate Professor, Sociology, Nanyang Technological University

**Jenifer Sunrise Winter,** Professor, University of Hawaii at Manoa

*False Precision: Genetics, precision medicine and race/ethnicity”*

***Moderator:*** **Carolyn A. Lin**, Professor, Department of Communication, University of Connecticut

**3:30-4:00 Tea break**

**4:00-5:00Close-door roundtable discussions**

***Moderator:* Trisha Tsui-Chuan Lin**, Visiting Scholar, Harvard Yenching Institute & Fulbright Scholar; Professor, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

**6:00-8:00 Dinner (Harvard Faculty Club)** <Address: Harvard University, Faculty Club, 20 Quincy St, Cambridge, MA 02138>

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Organizer: Trisha T. C. Lin,** HYI visiting scholar & Fulbright scholar (2022-2023)

Professor, College of Communication, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Email: [trishlin@nccu.edu.tw](mailto:trishlin@nccu.edu.tw); tsuichuan\_lin.fas.harvard.edu (Program lineup)

**HYI Contact: Francesca Coppola,** scholars coordinator

Email: [fcoppola@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:fcoppola@fas.harvard.edu) TEL: 617-495-4050