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**The Routledge Handbook of Discourse and Disinformation,  
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Routledge, 2024, 454 str.****

Stefania M. Maci, Massimiliano Demata, Mark McGlashan, Philip Seargeant (eds.)

Stefania M. Maci, a Full Professor of English Language at the University of Bergamo, along with Massimiliano Demata, Associate Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Turin, Mark McGlashan, Senior Lecturer in English Language at Birmingham City University, and Philip Seargeant, Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the Open University, have together edited *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse and Disinformation*. This volume, published by Routledge in 2024, offers an elaborate exploration into the evolving discourse around disinformation, misinformation, and related phenomena such as conspiracy theories, post-truth, and hate speech. The editors have combined their extensive academic backgrounds to create a comprehensive handbook that examines the methodological challenges and case studies across politics, society, and medicine.

The book is structured into two main parts. The first part, titled "Genres and Methodologies", includes a series of chapters that focus on the various genres and methodological approaches used to analyze disinformation. These include critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, multimodal approaches, and studies of genres such as headlines, memes, and tweets. The second part, titled "Case Studies", is divided into three sections: "(A) Politics", "(B) Society", and "(C) Medical discourses". It explores the application of disinformation discourse in specific contexts, such as immigration, the Brexit phenomenon, gendered and sexualized disinformation, and health-related misinformation, including the COVID-19 infodemic. In total, the book has 26 chapters regarding disinformation research.

The introductory chapter, authored by Stefania M. Maci, Massimiliano Demata, Philip Seargeant, and Mark McGlashan, titled "The various dimensions of disinformation: an introduction", establishes the book's primary objective: to examine the discursive construction of disinformation and the strategies used to disseminate it. It highlights the significance of understanding of the so called "fake news", misinformation, and disinformation as pervasive phenomena shaping contemporary media and political landscapes. The editors aim to provide readers with a critical framework to study the methodologies and implications of disinformation across different contexts and fields of study.

Following the introductory chapter, the book begins with Part 1, which provides a detailed exploration of the genres and methods used to study disinformation, offering a theoretical foundation for understanding its construction and dissemination.

One particularly key chapter is chapter two called "The expression of bias in (online) newspaper headlines" by Michele Sala. This chapter examines how newspaper headlines, particularly in U.S. media, can subtly encode bias. Sala reveals how the brevity and simplification required in headline writing often distort or frame narratives in misleading ways, influencing readers' perceptions even before they access the full article. This analysis sheds light on the critical role of headlines in amplifying partial truths and shaping public opinion.

Another key contribution is the fourth chapter: "Introducing digital source criticism: a method for tackling fake news and disinformation" by Bente Kalsnes. This chapter introduces the concept of digital source criticism, highlighting the importance of assessing the authenticity, credibility, and context of online content. Through a case study on misrepresented tweets, Kalsnes underscores the need for robust verification tools to effectively address the complexities of digital misinformation. The example of Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt demonstrates how repurposed images can mislead audiences, emphasizing the critical role of context verification.

Equally significant is chapter six: "Misinformation detection in news text: automatic methods and data limitations" by Fatemeh Torabi Asr, Mehrdad Mokhtari, and Maite Taboada. This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the role and limitations of computational approaches, such as machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP), in tackling misinformation. A significant focus of the chapter is on the issue of data quality and availability. The authors highlight how the lack of balanced, high-quality datasets hinders the effectiveness of ML models. Additionally, the chapter discusses the inability of automated systems to capture contextual subtleties that often distinguish false information from legitimate discourse. For instance, sarcasm, parody, or culturally specific references can be misinterpreted by algorithms, resulting in false positives or negatives. This limitation underscores the importance of integrating computational methods with human oversight, where human expertise can guide and refine machine outputs to ensure accuracy and relevance. The chapter also provides practical insights into how linguistic features, such as sentiment analysis and word patterns, are used in NLP tools to identify potential misinformation. However, the authors also caution against over-reliance on these features without addressing broader issues like data bias and interpretability.

The book then proceeds to Part 2, which offers case studies on various topics. The first section explores issues related to Politics. A crucial chapter in this section is chapter eleven: "Disinformation and immigration discourses" by Charlotte Taylor. Taylor provides a detailed analysis of how disinformation is employed to manipulate public perceptions of immigration, focusing on UK parliamentary debates and media coverage. By dissecting terms like "bogus asylum seekers" and the omission of terms such as "refugees", Taylor exposes how language is weaponized to delegitimize migrants.

In a similarly impactful chapter, chapter twelve titled "Brexit and disinformation" by Tamsin Parnell, the focus shifts to the disinformation campaigns

during the Brexit referendum. Parnell examines how high-profile falsehoods, like the claim that the UK sends £350 million to the EU weekly, shaped voter attitudes. The analysis extends to visual propaganda, such as the infamous “breaking point” poster, and the spread of “Euromyths” by pro-Brexit media outlets. By examining the deliberate use of misinformation to manipulate public sentiment, Parnell provides a compelling case study of disinformation’s power in influencing democratic outcomes with significant consequences.

Another noteworthy chapter is chapter thirteen: “New Dogs, old Tricks: A corpus-assisted study of the ‘art’ of delegitimization in modern political discourse” by Alison Duguid and Alan Partington. This chapter explores how political actors deploy delegitimization strategies to discredit opponents, often by accusing them of spreading disinformation. Using corpus-assisted methodologies, Duguid and Partington uncover recurring rhetorical patterns in political speech, illustrating how accusations of “fake news” are used to erode trust and deflect scrutiny. Their work highlights the evolving dynamics of disinformation as both a political tactic and a subject of discourse.

In the Society section, the book presents several noteworthy chapters that address issues such as women and gendered disinformation, as well as the pressing topic of climate change.

One particularly significant chapter is chapter named “Online gendered and sexualized disinformation against women in politics” by Eleonora Esposito. Esposito investigates how disinformation campaigns specifically target women in political roles, employing tactics such as image manipulation and narrative fabrication to erode their credibility. By dissecting the multimodal nature of these campaigns, the chapter explore how such disinformation draws upon societal misogyny to create a hostile environment that discourages female political participation. Esposito also underscores the role of digital platforms in perpetuating these toxic narratives and calls for stronger regulatory measures to combat gendered online disinformation.

Another important chapter in this section is chapter twenty, called “The discourses of climate change denialism across conspiracy and pseudoscience Websites” by Isobelle Clarke. Clarke examines how climate change denialism is fueled by disinformation across 186 pseudoscience and conspiracy blogs. She identifies a shift from outright denial to a more subtle strategy of downplaying the severity of climate change. By analyzing linguistic patterns and argumentation strategies, the chapter uncovers how these websites leverage conservative think-tank rhetoric to create doubt and delay climate action.

The final section of Part 2, titled Medical Discourses, explores how health misinformation spreads across social media platforms. Notably, the chapters focusing on disinformation on Twitter and WhatsApp provide a detailed analysis of how these platforms enable the spread of misleading health (mis)information.

Chapter twenty-three titled: “The COVID-19 infodemic on Twitter: dialogic contraction within the echo chambers” by Marina Bondi and Leonardo Sanna examines the COVID-19 “infodemic” on Twitter, highlighting how echo chambers on the platform amplify misinformation and reinforce existing beliefs. The authors analyze linguistic patterns to understand how certain narratives dominate within polarized communities. Using word embeddings and semantic analysis, the study

reveals how fear and mistrust are linguistically encoded, perpetuating disinformation and preventing open dialogue.

Chapter twenty-four, "COVID-19 Parody Fake Voice Messages on WhatsApp" by Dennis Chau and Carmen Lee, on the other hand, explores the spread of fake voice messages during the pandemic, with a specific focus on parody as a vehicle for disinformation. The authors examine how humor and satire are used to create and circulate misleading content, often blurring the line between entertainment and deception. This use of parody complicates efforts to detect and correct false information, as such messages are frequently perceived as harmless or humorous rather than deceptive. Through a detailed analysis of the content and reception of these voice messages, Chau and Lee highlight the unique challenges posed by private communication platforms like WhatsApp. Unlike public forums, private messaging apps lack regulatory oversight and content monitoring, allowing disinformation to spread unchecked within closed networks.

The book ends with an Index.

To conclude, *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse and Disinformation*, edited by Stefania M. Maci, Massimiliano Demata, Mark McGlashan, and Philip Seargeant, offers an extensive and multidisciplinary examination of the discourse surrounding disinformation, misinformation, and related phenomena. Structured into two main parts "Genres and Methodologies", and "Case Studies" it effectively showcases theoretical foundations with applied analyses across politics, society, and medical discourse. This handbook thoroughly demonstrates how disinformation operates within diverse socio-political contexts, addressing its discursive construction and methodological challenges. With case studies ranging from Brexit to gendered disinformation, it underscores the far-reaching implications of disinformation on democracy, social cohesion, and public trust. It can be said that the editors and contributors succeed in creating a comprehensive and methodologically robust resource. The book's interdisciplinary approach, blending linguistic, computational, and cultural analyses, makes it a must read for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to tackle the growing challenges posed by disinformation in the modern media landscape. It not only advances academic understanding but also provides practical insights into mitigating the effects of disinformation on society.

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