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## **Truth and Communication in the Age of Misinformation**

### **From Kierkegaard to Social Media**

**Conference Organized by**

**The Institute for International Communication, College of Professional Studies, St. John's University, NY, USA**

**and**

**Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano, Italy**

**Location: St. John's University, NY, USA**

**Date: November 16-17, 2018 (Friday-Saturday)**

In a tribute on the occasion of Soren Kierkegaard's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jeffery Frank writing for The New York Times, called him "rogue philosopher, great communicator." By all accounts SK's contribution to the field of the philosophy of communication is yet to be unfolded. His widely publicized quote stirs relevancy for our times:

"The daily press is the evil principle of the modern world, and time will only serve to disclose this fact with greater and greater clearness. The capacity of the newspaper for degeneration is sophistically without limit, since it can always sink lower and lower in its choice of readers. At last it will stir up all those dregs of humanity which no state or government can control." (The Last Years: Journals 1853-5 quoted in Hunter S. Thompson, Hell's Angels)



Although acknowledged primarily as philosopher of religion and ethics, Kierkegaard was also, equally significantly, a prescient scholar in communication theory - a field decades from emergence in his lifetime. Many of his principal contributions to human knowledge were very directly about the relationship between communication and truth



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The evolution misinformation, although popularized in the press as a unitary political phenomenon under the label of “fake news”, comes with a significant number of changes in the mechanics of truth and epistemology. Computational truth, derived from non-empirical evidence, digital manipulation of multimedia, algorithm-based approaches to selection of evidence and the rise of social knowledge are challenging some of our basic assumptions about evidence and truth that have persisted for over 200 years.



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Transformations in the relationship between truth, news, and communication technologies have an unarguable impact on the ways that modern democracies and economies function. As this debate alternates from promises to critical tones, it is time to explore Kierkegaard and the misinformation phenomenon through the broader lens of post-empirical age of knowledge.



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The phenomenon of misinformation has been extremely simplified and is often reduced to technical issues in a perspective based on technological determinism. We argue that instead the relationship between truth and media is more nuanced, problematic, and multidimensional.

Starting from the inspirational work by Kierkegaard, we invite experts from several disciplines to discuss this multidimensional relationship and present their thoughts and research findings.



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Following areas of interest will be explored:

- 1- Philosophical explorations of “fake news”
- 2- Information Technology, new media and the fabric of misinformation
- 3- Journalism and “fake news” consumption
- 4- The Economics of “fake news”
- 5- Linguistics and the rhetoric framing of “fake news”
- 6- Sociology of misinformation

We will select 12 best presentations for publication in an edited book.

There will be designated open discussions about the search for communication policy and tools that will drive a post-empirical media future.

Conference fee - \$100.00. Please make checks payable to St. John's University. Deadline for submission of a 500 words proposal is September 15, 2018.

**Please submit your proposals to:** [fausto.colombo@unicatt.it](mailto:fausto.colombo@unicatt.it) or [monteirb@stjohns.edu](mailto:monteirb@stjohns.edu)

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