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Taylor & Francis

Disinformation: The nature of facts and lies in the post-truth era. By Donald A. Barclay. Rowman and Littlefield, 2022, xvii+283, \$30.00, 978-1-5381-4408-4

Librarians and instructors of information literacy or media literacy will find it obvious that disinformation and “post-truth culture” are topics relevant to just about everyone in today’s world, which is why there are many books on these topics. Donald Barclay’s *Disinformation: The Nature of Facts and Lies in the Post-Truth Era*, however, stands out from other sources due to its wide scope of interdisciplinary coverage, tying together concepts from fields such as philosophy, psychology, media studies, economics, and history into a coherent message. Other books focus more narrowly on these individual topics, but this book’s key success is in how the author draws these topics together to paint a complex picture of understanding post-truth culture.

Barclay is the Deputy University Librarian at University of California, Merced, with over 30 years of experience as an academic librarian. He has written several books, most notably *Fake News, Propaganda, and Plain Old Lies: How to Find Trustworthy Information in the Digital Age*, which partners well with this current book. In *Fake News*, Barclay provided a practical guide for instructors’ classroom use. For *Disinformation*, Barclay describes his aim as taking “a higher level, maybe even philosophical, approach by considering how human and technological forces have combined to create the post-truth culture” (xv). Both books seem aimed at the same audience: teachers, professors, or instruction librarians seeking a broader understanding of post-truth culture to enrich their course content or strengthen their knowledge of related concepts. This book delivers extremely well for that purpose. It would allow an instructor to quickly get a handle on topics that are tangential yet useful to draw upon for instructional content. A few outstanding features of this book that would be useful to an instructor or librarian are the substantial bibliographies accompanying each chapter and the detailed and highly accurate index to reference the many subjects and examples covered in the text.

Each of the book’s eight chapters has a distinct focus, and many emphasize a particular discipline. Chapter 1 focuses on philosophy and the concept of truth itself. Chapter 2 shifts to the field of psychology and human cognition, emphasizing cognitive biases and heuristics. Chapters 3 and 4 have a technological and communications focus on the way digital technology has reshaped our culture and our minds. Chapter 5 combines a historical and rhetorical approach to understanding propaganda. Chapter six is an excellent primer on intellectual property and its relationship to economic forces. Chapter 7, on conspiracy theories, is a mix of informational and practical, with some checklist-like material that would translate well to a classroom. Chapter 8 uses the topic of popular culture to weave together topics discussed earlier in the book. While the range of subjects discussed in this book is large, it is always clear how each topic ties into the post-truth culture. Oddly, the subject of “disinformation” is much less central to the book’s focus than one would think, given the title.

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