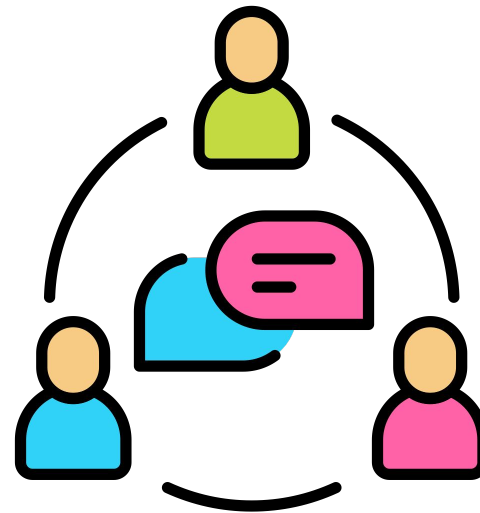# 2.1

Post-truth Culture, Truthiness, and Alternative Facts

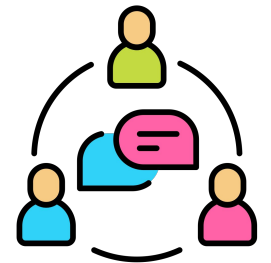# Note

- Interactive symbol: tasks for groups

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Post-truth and the Post-truth era

- Wu, H. D. (2023). Post-truth public diplomacy: a detrimental trend of cross-national communication and how open societies address it. Journal of International Communication, 29(1) ([doi](#))

- Build groups: What does the term Post-truth stand for and in what sense do we live in a Post-truth era?

- What does Wu (2023) in his text mean with the term "Post-truth Public Diplomacy"? Steps: What is diplomacy, and what is public diplomacy?

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Post-truth and the Post-truth era

- **Post-truth**
  - Encompasses "misinformation, disinformation, junk news, fake news, alternative facts, falsehood, and affect-based expressions in mass as well as social media" (Wu, 2023)
- **Post-truth era**
  - The term describes "circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Languages, 2016)
  - Public and political atmosphere in which facts have less influence on political discourse than emotions and perceived truths ("truthiness").
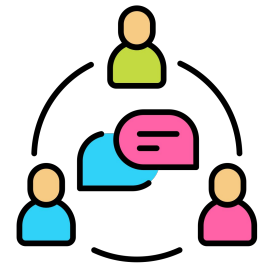
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Post-truth Public Diplomacy

- **Post-truth Public Diplomacy** (PTPD)
  - Combination of the terms *Post truth* and *public diplomacy*. A concept that describes diplomatic activities in the broadest sense (including also covered operations) undertaken by adversary states, disseminating twisted, biased, or even false narratives across national borders to manipulate public opinion in foreign target publics to promote the causes and interest of the sponsoring state (Wu, 2023)
  - "With post-truth and public diplomacy merged together, we can envision a new practice that strategically disseminates fabricated or non-fact-based content across national borders to sway and shift public opinion of target publics, bolster sponsors' interests, and fulfil their multifaceted goals" (Wu, 2023, p. 29)

12/05/2025

Post-truth Public Diplomacy

- In your group: After reading the above definitions of Post-truth Public Diplomacy: Do you have examples of actions would fall under this definition?

Post-truth Public Diplomacy

- **Example**
  - Denial of human rights abuses against Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang region by the Chinese government
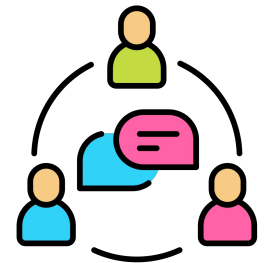

"Identical posts […] posted at within 10 minutes of each other, deny forced labor and genocide in Xinjiang and characterize it as 'the lie of the century', an unattributed quotation of Chinese MFA Spokesperson Zhao Lijian"

Source: Substack – Microsoft Threat Analysis Center (link)

12/05/2025

Alternative facts

- What does the term "alternative facts" allude to and where does the term come from?
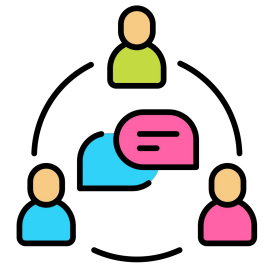
Alternative facts

- What does the term "alternative facts" allude to and where does the term come from?
  - Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway defended the statements about the size of the crowd at Trump's inauguration ceremony in 2016 by referring to it as alternative facts (Calfas, 2017)
  - Many on social media compared alternative facts to *doublethink*, a type of rhetoric in 1984 by which the government presents two contradictory facts as both true.

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Truthiness

- **Definition**
  - An ontological position according to "which facts and reality are things some people feel—rather than know—to be true" (McCright & Dunlap, 2017)
  - In your group: After reading the definition above, what makes "truthiness" so dangerous?

Literature

Calfas, J. (2017, January 24). Sales of '1984' surge after Conway talks 'Alternative Facts.' The Hill. https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/315808-sales-of-george-orwells-1984-jump-after-conways-alternative/ (Retrieved 2025, Feb. 18)

McCright, A. M., & Dunlap, R. E. (2017). Combatting misinformation requires recognizing its types and the factors that facilitate its spread and resonance. Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, 6(4), 389–396. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2017.09.005

Oxford Languages (2016). Word of the Year 2016. https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/ (Retrieved 2025, Feb. 18)

Wu, H. D. (2023b). Post-truth public diplomacy: a detrimental trend of cross-national communication and how open societies address it. Journal of International Communication, 29(1), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2022.2162099

12/05/2025

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