

Spotting Bullshit

Week 2: Calling Bullshit

Thoughts on Last Week's Assigned Reading and Podcast?

- George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language"
- "Avoiding the Many Varieties of Bullshit" podcast
- Harry Frankfurt's "On Bullshit"

The Roots of Human Irrationality

“Selective exposure, selective perception, the cult of fake experts, and the end of objectivity in the news: these are merely pistons in what has become, today, a powerful engine of propaganda, one that drives nearly all the recent examples of our society’s unfettered departure from ‘the reality-based world.’”

—Farhad Manjoo, “True Enough,” p. 226-227

- Confirmation bias
- Motivated reasoning
- Reiteration effect
- Source amnesia
- Backfire effect

Fermi Estimations

The estimation technique is named after physicist Enrico Fermi as he was known for his ability to make good approximate calculations with little or no actual data. Fermi problems typically involve making justified guesses about quantities and their variance or lower and upper bounds.

Try a few Fermi estimations on your own or in groups!

Assigned Readings

- [We Need To Talk About TED](#) (video)
- Carl Sagan, [The Fine Art of Baloney Detection](#), Chapter 12 in *The Demon-Haunted World*, 1996.
- Case studies: [Food stamp fraud](#), [99% caffeine-free](#)
- Optional: Friggeri, Adrien, et al, [Rumor Cascades](#), Proceedings of the Eighth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media, 2014.

Next Week: Logical Fallacies

Thou Shalt Not Commit Logical Fallacies