

Guess What? We're "Fake News"

I just ran across this Harvard University Library based [site](#), the latest broadside against so-called "fake news," i.e., independent and alternative news and commentary sites online. While there are links to several related articles, I found only one name, that of a Melissa Zimdars who, it turns out, is not at Harvard but at a place called Merrimack College, where she is an assistant professor of communications and media (Ph.D., 2015).

So what's this doing on a Harvard site? Apparently she relied on the idea that if you've launched such a project and can affiliate it with Harvard, you have instant credibility. I do not know if she authored the main page or not. No other names are listed.

Zimdars's page contains a lengthy list of "alternative" news and commentary sites of all sorts on the Internet, along with a classification guide of categories, or tags, apparently borrowed from [elsewhere](#). The list itself, one learns from the main page, was "compiled by students for a class taught by Melissa Zimdars at Merrimack College." Great. A list compiled by members of Generation Snowflake.

As for the tags: by the "fake" tag is meant, for example, "Sources that entirely fabricate information, disseminate deceptive content, or grossly distort actual news reports."

Then there is "bias": "Sources that come from a particular point of view and may rely on propaganda, decontextualized information, and opinions distorted as facts." Seriously now: how many people out there aren't reporting from a "particular point of view"?

There is that old standby: "conspiracy": "Sources that are well-known promoters of kooky conspiracy theories." Take that.

NewsWithViews.com is on that list, cited as “fake” and “conspiracy.”

I wonder who, on NewsWithViews.com, stands accused of “fabricating information” or “grossly distorting actual news reports.” To my mind this is potentially libelous. But as long as we have no specifics (which would require naming names) or any real analysis, who knows?

That is exactly the problem with broadsides like this, the best known of which occurred in [The Washington Post](#) last year, in which a completely anonymous outfit calling itself PropOrNot.com launched a general attack on independent and alternative media that was given instant credibility because of where it appeared, associating independent and alternative media with the then-still-growing Russians-influenced-the-election meme, put forth to insinuate that Donald Trump owed his shock victory in the presidential election to “Russian propaganda.”

I learned of this latest list because I subscribe to Tom Woods’s daily e-letter. His site TomWoods.com is listed. He was noting, with bemusement, that its tag is “unknown.” What’s up with that? I checked and found: “All websites tagged as “unknown” still need to be analyzed ...” And: “many of these were suggested by readers/users or are found on other lists and resources ...”

In other words, Professor Zimdars has yet to look at many of these sites to see what it says or how it qualifies for such a list. There are dozens of sites with the “unknown” tag. A lot of them I’ve never heard of.

As for those I *am* familiar with, we’re in good company: Drudge Report is listed. Also LewRockwell.com, AntiWar.com, Breitbart.com, WND.com, PaulCraigRoberts.org, Alt-Market.com, zero hedge.com, GlobalResearch.ca, ShadowStats.com, NaturalNews.com; even WikiLeaks is there (and given – are you

sitting down? – an “unknown” tag)!

In fairness, there are left-leaning sites listed as well: CommonDreams.com, Counterpunch.org, Dailykos.com, – all somewhat “populist” to one degree or another, and have posted articles outside standard academic-left identity political box. (Professor Zimdars missed Salon.com, the most hysterical hard left site to be found anywhere.)

In an era that has led to the rise of President Donald Trump, this sort of thing was probably inevitable. Mainstream media and academia have suffered “huge” losses of credibility. They want it back.

I haven't been secretive about my view that empowering Trump's rise – and quite independent of any evaluation of the man or whatever he does in office – was the long-term collapse of mainstream credibility. *Mainstream* here includes mainstream media, mainstream business, mainstream science, mainstream academia more broadly.

Mainstream media relied all last year on pollsters who told us in unison Hillary Clinton would win. Some said she would win in a landslide. Trump hammered the idea that these polls were faked, or at least unreliable. Only his supporters believed him.

Mainstream media also repeated, back during 2001-03, the Bush II administration's allegations that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was a threat to the U.S. No weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, and the idea that Hussein had ever been a threat to legitimate U.S. interests turned out to be preposterous.

Was this or was this not “fake news”?

Mainstream corporations had sold out the country and its workers to globalist interests in the name of the Almighty Dollar. There can be little doubt global corporate leviathans

have placed profitability ahead of everything else via “free trade” deals, and this has pushed some independent researchers “leftward,” towards a reexamination of people like Karl Marx whose analysis of capitalism, they now believe, had more going for it than anyone suspected (cf. [this](#)). The white working class might have moved to the left had it not run headlong into identity politics which ludicrously brands it “racist” and “privileged.”

Politically homeless until 2015-16, they voted for Donald Trump.

Mainstream science (i.e., scientific institutions) embraced materialism, a metaphysical worldview, eons ago. Ideas like, e.g., Intelligent Design, are branded “pseudoscience.” More urgently, is the climate really changing due to industrial activity (decades of burning fossil fuels for energy)? Determining this should be fairly straightforward, even for one such as myself who is not a scientist, but one thing becomes clear to anyone who spends much time wading through the wide range of material on this topic: many people out there do not trust academic science (and is there really any other kind of science these days?). They see science departments in universities as embedded in the pursuit of government grant money when they don’t see it as furthering a worldview. In fairness, it is easy to see those who proclaim man-made climate change to be a hoax as on the take from global corporations who stand to lose billions of Almighty Dollars if the economy moves away from extractive enterprises.

Lack of capacity to trust science is not a good thing! If the climate is indeed changing because of human industrial activity, *we absolutely need to know about it, and we need to know that the evidence backing up this claim has not been sullied by partisan or other interests!!!*

Mainstream academia outside the sciences and broad fields like engineering was hijacked by political correctness and above-

mentioned identity politics tribalism. The purveyors of this stuff apply it to everyone except straight white Christian men, then wonder why an “alt-right” develops out here in the conceptual hinterlands.

I would add that mainstream “movement conservatism” and the mainstream “liberalism” of both the Republican and the Democratic Parties have also collapsed.

“Movement conservatism,” originally designed to flourish during the cold war years, became “neoconservatism” after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its advocates assumed an End of History stance (cf. Francis Fukuyama’s celebrated book published in 1992) with the global triumph of “liberal democracy” and “market capitalism.”

Besides these abstractions, they had no idea what they wanted to conserve.

The ensuing years thus unleashed a globalism that had been there all along, waiting: a globalism that outsourced America’s manufacturing base, drove down American wages, replaced jobs with technology, fostered economic inequality including the growth of the “Davosie” as some writers have begun calling them, fought wars of choice that precipitated mass migrations, worsened cultural divisions aggravated by obnoxious Social Justice Warriors, and systematically lied about it all with “jobs reports” produced through questionable methodology or allegations of “white privilege” against men and women who were just barely surviving.

The political mainstream proved unable or unwilling to face and address these issues.

Hence the loss of credibility that gave rise to Donald Trump among the hapless corporate-donor controlled GOP, and would have given rise to Bernie Sanders across the aisle had the DNC not cheated – so openly you had to be blind to miss it – and which has put independent and alternative media sources on the

map.

We are rising in influence, and the mainstream is having a collective myocardial infarction over it! Hence the “fake news” meme. To the Melissa Zimdars of the academic world, we are “fake news” if we point all this out, and follow up by suggesting that a new direction is needed for our civilization if we hope to sustain it.

Do we independents make mistakes? Of course we do! Few of us have the resources available to ABC or CBS or the Clinton News Network (CNN), or Fox News, or to print publications like *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*. As an unaffiliated writer speaking only for myself, I’ve gone down blind alleys a few times, and reinvented the wheel once or thrice. I’ve been called out a couple of times on having used a quotation I thought was real but turned out to be bogus. When it happened, I issued a disclaimer in the next article. This almost never happens now.

The method I recommend is the one I adopted when writing my book *Four Cardinal Errors*. I either tracked a quotation to the original source – the author’s book or article, or a statement in the Congressional Record or other government document – or I didn’t use it. There were a couple of bogus quotes I put in there anyway to discuss what made them interesting even if they weren’t valid. The point is, there are no bogus quotes in *Four Cardinal Errors* that are not clearly identified as such!

Do mainstream media outlets never misspeak or get facts mixed up or confused? I cited an example above, one that got over 4,000 Americans killed, thousands more maimed for life, and killed tens of thousands of Iraqis while rendering hundreds of thousands homeless! I thought it common knowledge that six leviathan corporations now own and control roughly 95% of Western mainstream media, which include big city newspapers (all of which look alike and run essentially the same mainstream pundits on their editorial pages), television

networks, cable networks, major book publishers, magazines, websites getting far more traffic than this one ever will, and much more besides. Their systems are hierarchical, authoritarian, and exclusive: if you don't comply, or if you question directives, you're out the door and in search of a new career.

Independent and alternative media are *free* media – the only places left where there are free flows of information. Very few of us earn any Almighty Dollars for this! It's done from a sense of obligation – to the truth and to the future – when it's not a sheer labor of love!

Arguing my case, however, the phrase that keeps recurring in my mind these days is that of bringing a knife to a gunfight. Fundamental beliefs of worldview and in political economy are based on habit, parentage, familiarity, interestedness, partisanship, who is signing your paycheck, and some personal experience in light of one's own sense of "rightness" ... not abstract reason. They can also be based on the fear that one is losing one's protected dominance. This last appears to be the case with mainstream media moguls and their footsoldiers, including those in academia who may believe they've stumbled onto a major career-builder.

I've no hope, therefore, of convincing people who put up websites denouncing alternative media sites they've clearly barely glanced at.

Perhaps the best thing to do about the Melissa Zimdars's of the world is to ignore them. With them, we are guilty until proven innocent. The "unknown" tag appended to dozens of independent news and commentary websites on Professor Zimdars's list demonstrates this. This is how authoritarianism works, including its more subtle epistemic varieties, which [poison the wells](#) by labeling us "fake news," in advance of allowing readers to decide for themselves if we've made a credible case for our claims or not.

The irony is that it is Donald Trump who is frequently accused of authoritarianism. If he's authoritarian, he has no monopoly on that trait.

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