<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Thursday, March 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Thursday, March 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Saturday, March 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30 PM</td>
<td>Dinner (Planning)</td>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Coffee and Pastries</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Coffee and Pastries</td>
<td>10:45 AM-12:15 PM</td>
<td>Panels</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Coffee and Pastries</td>
<td>12:15-1:15 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-10:30 AM</td>
<td>Panels</td>
<td>12:15-1:15 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>10:45 AM-12:15 PM</td>
<td>Panels</td>
<td>12:15-1:15 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15-1:15 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>3:00-3:30 PM</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30-3:00 PM</td>
<td>Panels</td>
<td>3:30-4:45 PM</td>
<td>Panels</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00-3:30 PM</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
<td>5:00-6:00 PM</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30-4:45 PM</td>
<td>Panels</td>
<td>6:00-7:00 PM</td>
<td>Reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00-6:00 PM</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker</td>
<td>12:00-1:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch (Planning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00-7:00 PM</td>
<td>Reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Dinner (Planning)</td>
<td>12:00-1:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch (Planning)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Travel Information

Flying to Miami:

Miami International Airport is 4 miles from campus, while Fort Lauderdale International Airport is 30 miles from campus. MIA has a metro train station that can transport to campus.

Lodging:

We will have reserved rooms available for discounted rates at four local hotels. We cannot provide funding for travel or lodging, but will waive conference registration fees for participants.

Holiday Inn Coral Gables:
1350 South Dixie Highway (US1)
Coral Gables, FL 33146
Reservations: (305) 667-5611
Directly across street from campus

The Mutiny Coconut Grove:
2951 South Bayshore Drive
Coconut Grove, FL 33133
Phone: (305) 441-2100 ext. 2500
Three miles from campus

Sonesta Bayfront Hotel Coconut Grove:
2889 McFarlane Road
Coconut Grove, FL 33133
Telephone: (305) 529-2828
Two miles from campus.

Courtyard by Marriott Coconut Grove:
2649 South Bayshore Drive
Miami, FL 33133
Phone: (305) 858-2500
Three miles from campus
Conference on Conspiracy Theories
University of Miami
March 12-15, 2015

Background memo

Summary

This workshop is intended to bring together scholars studying conspiracy theories and conspiratorial beliefs. Some participants will be asked to write short memoranda responding to a set of questions we have identified; others will present research in progress. Discussants will be provided to respond to the memos and papers.

The intended goals of the conference are 1. to gain a comparative perspective in the study of conspiracy and conspiracy theory by bringing together researchers from across continents, and 2. to traverse disciplinary boundaries. The conference memos and ensuing discussions are intended to contribute to our thinking as we develop an edited volume that features American, British, and other international authors. We expect the conference and ensuing volume to draw on insights from and make contributions to literatures in History, Anthropology, Political Science, International Relations, Communication Studies, Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology, among others.

Background

Conspiracy theories are not confined to parlor games about who really shot Kennedy or who probed whom near Roswell, New Mexico. Conspiracy theorizing (or what Richard Hofstadter famously called the paranoid style) is an enduring part of politics. While often caricatured as a fringe demographic composed of middle-aged white male Internet enthusiasts, polls tell us a different story. Conspiracy theories permeate all parts of society and cut across gender, age, race, income, political affiliation, educational level and occupational status.

Conspiracy theories are ubiquitous, absorbing, and substantial; they reveal the darkest recesses of a nation’s psyche. In short, there are persuasive reasons to study conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories have ushered in revolutions, undercut the
ability of governments to lead, and provoked witch-hunts. Current evidence suggests that conspiratorial beliefs decrease participation and voter turnout, and increase political polarization. Just imagine how different history might look without Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, Red Scares, or conspiracy-fueled violence.

There is a debate to be had regarding the benefits or harms of conspiracy theories. On one hand, they can make political cooperation more difficult. On the other hand, conspiracies actually do happen, and some level of public skepticism is a necessary part of a healthy democracy.

For such a common feature of the political landscape, there is little consensus on why conspiratorial beliefs blossom. This is not for want of attention; authors from many disciplines – particularly in the last five years – have addressed the phenomenon. But despite the broad interest, scholars have yet to adequately integrate findings from disparate disciplines into coherent theoretical frameworks. The problem lies in a lack of comparative cross-cultural research and a dearth of interdisciplinary work.

This conference intends to bridge the gap between the great works currently being done in history, anthropology, political science, international studies, communication studies, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and other disciplines. It also seeks to bring together researchers studying conspiracy theorizing across the globe. We intend to build broad interdisciplinary networks, share disparate findings, and move the study forward.

Structure of the Meeting

Some authors will prepare a three-five page memo/position paper addressing a specific question. Each author will also be assigned a discussant, who will read and comment on the paper. Some participants will be asked to present working or recent research papers. There will also be keynote speakers.
Questions for Participants

1. What drives belief in conspiracy theories?

2. What role does the internet and social media play in spreading conspiratorial beliefs?

3. How do the news media and entertainment media contribute to conspiratorial thinking?

4. Is there a genetic component to conspiracy theorizing?

5. Do intelligence and education play a role in driving or dissuading conspiracy beliefs?

6. What is the relation between conspiracy theories and violence?

7. Do conspiracy theories drive criminality and non-compliance?

8. Are conspiracy theories good or bad?

9. How can we better understand the cut-point between conspiracy and conspiracy theory?

10. How can we best understand conspiratorial epistemology?

11. How do conspiracy theories vary across states and broader regions?

12. How does conspiracy theorizing vary between democratic systems?

13. Does democracy inhibit or engender conspiracy theorizing?

14. How can historical accounts of conspiracy and conspiracy theorizing inform contemporaneous studies?

15. How do conspiracy theories affect democracy (i.e. campaigns, voting, elections)?

16. What is the relation between conspiracy theorizing and trust in government institutions?
17. What is the relationship between conspiracy theories, policy outcomes, and policy adherence?

18. What is the relationship between conspiracy theories and social movements?

19. What is the relationship between conspiracy beliefs and extremism?

20. How do conspiratorial beliefs affect policy making?

21. What could or should be done about conspiratorial beliefs?

22. How can we best measure belief in conspiracy theories?

23. How can we use new media to measure the spread of conspiracy theories?