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**Intro:** Welcome to the Let’s Talk Government Podcast that is provided for you by the Department of Government at Minnesota State University, Mankato located in Minnesota in the United States. I am your host Dr. Pat Nelson the chairperson of the Government Department. I want to thank you for joining us as we explore different topics about government. Some may be surprising to you and some may not, so please enjoy.

**Dr. Nelson:** All right, welcome to episode 11 of the let's talk government podcast. Today, we are going to talk about media tweeting and fake news. I am joined by our three faculty members from the Minnesota State University, Mankato political science program. I would like to welcome back Dr. Josh Berkenpas, Dr. Kevin Parsneau, and Dr. Amelia Pridemore. Thank you for joining to me. So I think we're going to start by defining fake news. I'm going to ask each one of you, what you think fake news is, so that it'll help our talk here. So we'll start with Dr. Pridmore. What is fake news to you?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Fake news? I think one of the first key points about it is that it is unverifiable that when you do the old fashioned, as we call it in my line of work, the good old fact check, um, that there's just no way that this checks out. They tell us in my old line of work, if your mother says she loves you, check it out. Well, this is something that absolutely does not check out

**Dr. Nelson:** Dr. Josh Berkenpas, how about you?

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** Yeah, it's uh, I got about a, I don't know, five or six, um, slightly different variations on, uh, definitions that are floating about, um, beginning with, um, I suppose it reminds me of Reagan as well. Right. Trust, but verify. Um, but I I'll start with the Pope. Right. Um, and the Pope came out in 2016, um, talking about fake news, uh, and likening it to the, uh, the story of the garden of Eden right. In the serpent coming in and whispering lies, uh, to Eve. Right. Um, so, uh, falsehoods that are meant to mislead. Um, and I'll also add to that. Um, I suppose the, uh, the way the president uses it, most of the time, uh, is slightly different and simply things he doesn't agree with Ryan, if you don't agree with it, it's fake news. Um, and that's probably one of the more common ways that we see it used, uh, social media and things like this turned into memes, et cetera, if you don't agree with it, uh, it's fake news, not a whole lot of substance there, but I don't think, uh, that's the point.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Thanks. And I should say we have a fourth guest. We have young Berkenpas. Who's also providing his political commentary in the background there. So Dr. Kevin Parsneau now, what do you think about fake news?

**Dr. Kevin Parsneau:**

Well, I mean, it's, it's certainly the idea of fake news certainly means false or unverifiable things we can't know, or things left in such a weed of, Or such a morass of weeds that you can never quite pick at it. Right. You never get to the bottom of it. Um, but at the same time building off of what Josh just said, um, fake news, the term popularized more as an accusation about legitimate news sources, right? I mean, the term fake news has been around a while, but it popularized by president Trump using it to accuse traditional legitimate news sources. I'm just going to use his favorite target of CNN, um, and calling them fake news. Right. Even though CNN, however you feel about it usually uses verifiable sources and traditional legitimate media standards that we would normally be comfortable with. Um, so that accusation is meant to say, I don't agree with it, but by using the term fake for something that is generally taken to be legitimate news, um, you sort of tell the listener, it's up to you to decide what you believe, right? It's the, it's a sort of a destruction of a shared concept of reality, just because Wolf Blitzer is saying it, even if he has somebody standing there verifying it on camera, doesn't make it true. If the listener doesn't want it to be true. So I think that's part of the phenomenon of fake news.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Well, I think this is a great start for some definitions, so that really opens up our whole topic here. So I'm going to start with the biggest question. Talk to me about your perceptions of running a presidency via Twitter. Obviously, president Trump has been very active on Twitter. How has that impacting our nation? How does that impact our relationship with the media and social media? Whoever wants to jump in first?

**Dr. Kevin Parsneau:**

Well, I'm going to, I'm going to start with, with, uh, with this sort of, uh, a strange defense of it in a sense that, um, it it's an effort. I mean, Twitter is a way to directly communicate with people. That's not filtered. If you're, if your central claim is the media is misrepresenting, what I'm doing, then being able to tweet out to people is a way to say, I'm talking directly to you. And while a lot of times people will get very upset and say, that's not the way presidents do things, right. Presidents, don't some, I think somebody mentioned I'm going to steal the, they mentioned firing the secretary of defense over Twitter. Um, people say let's not the way presidents do things. Well, you know, everyone sits back Rosalie, remembering and talking about FDRs. Fireside chats comes up in intro to U S government all the time. Presidents didn't just sit there and get on radio and chat to people. Right. Presidents had formal speeches. They had written them out. That was unusual. And then people said, Oh, it's nice that a president personally communicates with you. Um, now, um, you know, when I see Twitter and I see a communication from a celebrity, famous person, politician, whatever, um, you feel like, Oh, I know that's not to me personally, but I can respond to that personally. And who knows. Right. Um, that person might see my response. And that's something that doesn't happen when we're watching the state of the union address. It doesn't happen in a fireside chat. Um, it doesn't do anything in terms of that. So I think there's a side of it that builds a connection with the audience. Um, it also builds an environment where, well, I really am angry about, let's say Nancy Pelosi's comment, bang. I zinged her right back where everyone can see if they read the 4,000 responses to her content, right? So it, it creates this weird engagement that you just didn't have otherwise, but it might be a fake back to fake news, a fake sense of engagement.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Josh, you had a comment you were going to share about this.

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:**

Um, and the we're in political science calling the social media presidency. And this also points towards the sort of newness of, uh, communication technologies, uh, the internet, uh, in particular, uh, the use of social media by, um, political figures, right. We can go back to the, uh, Obama campaigns, one of the first ones to use social media in a big way in particular to, uh, raise small donations, uh, to reach out to potential voters and things like this. Um, but even president Obama, um, you know, he had a, I would say a professional, uh, Twitter account, right. It's run by his staff. Um, they'd put out sort of information, right. Um, and things like this, um, just really sort of, I suppose, in the traditional vein, trying to inform, um, their, their followers, right, as another means of, uh, direct communication from the campaign or in the future of the president, uh, to his constituents, uh, president really, uh, really up to the game, so to speak, uh, on Twitter, he's got over 70 million, uh, Twitter followers, Ryan. So he has direct, uh, means to communicate. Um, you can, uh, go around traditional media. Try also mention in this context, um, the strong populous movements, uh, in the country, right. Which is, anti-blackness certainly anti-big media. So, uh, media becomes a convenience, convenient scapegoat, if you will. Um, and then at the same time you can bash something that everyone's sort of, you know, weary of or upset with right now, anyway. Um, and say, I'm speaking directly to you. Um, you can trust what I'm saying, everybody else, right? Fake news, if you want the real news, right. Come directly to my Twitter feed. Um, even people that, you know, don't support the president, uh, follow, uh, his feed, um, people have even created feeds that are, um, you know, anti-Trump, um, not necessarily anti-Trump, but it's not the real account. Um, so that people who are opposed to Trump can still follow the tweets while not directly following the president, Ryan sort of where we're at right now. Um, and I'll stop there for now.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Well, Amelia, let's tap into your background as a journalist. Is any of this actually new, I mean, this fake news, the social media, the bizarre news stories is this new,

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**

This is absolutely not new. Um, so, so basically an, um, specialty where I work nights, um, most of my time as a reporter and where I worked police beat, um, I can tell you myself that, okay. Some of the things that we hear for, for example, like pizza gate Q Anon, um, somebody would call in every night sometimes with something that would make a queue. And on theory look sane, uh, UFO believers, um, the government's trying to control the weather, et cetera, et cetera, all the time, every, every current or former journalist has a story of that, that one bizarre midnight caller, if not multiple. Um, we had also unconventional candidates running, particularly at the state and local level all the time. Um, it was usually my job to do profiles on them. And sometimes you just had to struggle to, you know, like, I cannot believe I'm fact-checking this, Oh my God. Um, we had unconventional candidates all the time. The thing is, is right now, particularly with not just with social media, but for example, with the evolution of technology came the number of platforms because we had, for example, cable TV, really spread things out. And then we have the advent of the internet period, and then we have social media and so on and so on and so forth. And the thing is, is when we, as, when we, in my old line of work in the news media were able to just hang up the phone, whatever, you know, and just ignore, um, ignore the crazy midnight caller. Well, guess what the crazy midnight caller went on to create a blog. Um, a lot of times the crazy midnight color, all of a sudden started getting followers. Maybe they have a YouTube channel now. Um, so the thing is, is it's not really this kind of crazy, isn't anything new. It's just that now they have platforms. And with that, they're getting an audience. And a lot of that is because, and most of that is because of technology.

**Dr. Nelson:**

So obviously it's not new, but we have more platforms is, um, is the ability to have more platforms unless fact-checking really kind of making the legitimacy of the media and the press, um, increase or decrease in the view of the public and on political science. Is it helpful or not helpful for politics? Cause we talk about the media being the, you know, like the fourth estate, the one that's supposed to bring forth information, help inform the public. Is it helping their legitimacy or declining their legitimacy?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**

I would say it's a mix of both. Um, particularly, um, I would, uh, before, before, I guess you could say the era of Trump, I would say that it was definitely a negative on a decline of media because when people say the media, nobody really defines us what they're talking about. Are they talking about the, just the Washington post and CNN, for example, um, are they talking about the local hometown newspaper, uh, versus something like CNN or are they talking about, you know, Joe's blog where he talks about how his cat has put a chip in his brain. Right. You know, um, what, what are we talking about? And what happens is, is a lot of times your, you know, some of these, uh, some of these outlets that have emerged in recent years, that just totally go off the rails. They get lumped into the public's mind, um, with the Washington post, for example. So, so what happens is, is when you have, you know, behavior like you see on info Wars, a lot of times that gets the, uh, you know, the Washington post or New York times ends up getting the negative baggage that those, uh, that those carry. But I think what's happened now is, especially, as people are starting to realize the problems that fake news and conspiracy theories at all have, um, have caused, there's a greater respect now for reputable outlets. So, uh, and, and, and for fact checking, um, like Snopes, for example, that's their job, they fact check, right? Um, so in this kind of post, as things became more post-truth, well, people who actually provided the truth, all of a sudden started getting more respect. So it's been, it was largely negative, but now it's kinda, you know, it, it's, it's a mixed bag and from one extreme to the other, I would, I would argue

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:**

I'll pick up, uh, with that I'm mentioning, uh post-truth um, I think it's something to consider here. Um, and I agree with you that perhaps, you know, the, the pendulum is swinging the other way, right? Uh, Trump, uh, and his followers brought us to one extreme and perhaps we'll swing back. The other way is one potential. Or we could just keep on swinging, right. We might not be at, uh, uh, the sort of full arc of the pendulum, if you will. Um, and I think there's reason to think that a lot of folks out there are not interested in the quote unquote facts, right? They're not interested in your version of reality, right. As they might say, um, of course we can talk about, uh, the deepening divide in, uh, polarization as well, right. Americans increasingly seeing the world in very different ways, um, being catered to, to their values and their ideologies through different media outlets, creating, uh, what we call echo chambers and other terms used to describe this phenomenon. Um, but really, I think a big part of what's going on here is, um, the undermining, uh, of, of proof, right? In reality, uh, the creation of what Stephen Colbert once called truthiness. Right. And it's really not about the facts or the truth. It's about your sort of emotions, right? How you feel about a candidate, how you feel about an issue, and that's somewhat dangerous in terms of American politics, uh, the rule of law, uh, constitutionalism and things like this, right? Because there is no shared basis. There's, it's, you know, pretty much anything goes. Um, if enough people, um, are sort of emotionally mobilized, uh, due to what you were saying again, it can be completely ridiculous, right. Um, if it makes a connection and emotional connection, uh, with voters or with your supporters, uh, it can be an effective tool, um, or mobilizing constituencies.

**Dr. Kevin Parsneau:**

Another issue here is that, um, it's created a different incentive environment for media sources in a sense that it used to be, if you wanted the news, you turned on the television, you either watch your nightly low, your local nightly news, or your evening news, or then 24 hour news stations came along. And that was the way people got their news and read the paper and so forth. Um, but now media major media outlets have had a tougher time getting people to buy newspapers, subscribe, that's gone down, it's fewer and fewer journalists out there doing the hardcore, digging to the bottom of the story. Right. Um, you might ask yourself whether Woodward and Bernstein would even have a job these days, or whether they would have to be unemployed and working at quick trip while they did all this investigation. Right. Um, so, and then in response, media outlets have become more like social media and internet, right? They're also trying to offer clickbait. They're also trying to cater to an audience. And to some extent they've sort of bought in, on undermining our own legitimacy in a sense that now you, if you watch a channel, you're, you're like, I think this, person's going to say it, these stories going to say the kinds of things that the viewers want to say. So they don't change the over to CNN if they're on Fox or Fox, if they're on CNN and I don't want to necessarily equate the two, but that's the way I think people start to feel. And, you know, it's not just, it's not just Dave's conspiracy blog or whatever. That's trying to get clickbait someplace. CNN is putting stuff on, on, on media. And they want you to click here to see our story or follow this video, or, or watch this really great insightful comment. And that I think to some degree makes them seem less like serious journalism. And that undermines people's view of them. I don't know if there's, if not doing that would keep their legitimacy, but I know that doing that does not help their legitimacy. Um, so I think in that sense, the, the, the social media undermines the incentive structure that, that causes regular media to behave differently.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**

I think to also, um, uh, piggybacking on what Kevin had to say about, um, you know, constant tweeting and clickbait, um, we have, it's what happens is we've become numb because, um, as one of my students put it in one of my classes, uh, and we had a very lively discussion about this. It seems like everything is breaking news, breaking news, a squirrel is loose and central park breaking news. Um, you know, somebody, uh, somebody in, uh, somebody in Louisiana saw a strange light in the sky, breaking news, breaking news over and over again. Well, the thing is, is eventually after you get walloped and walloped and walloped, you become numb. So when something actually is really momentous well, will it doesn't hate you anymore? You don't feel it. Um, one person, uh, when I talked about some of the, you know, showy things that a lot of particularly cable news outlets do, um, you know, to also echo Joshua's, um, uh, con uh, comments about, uh, Cole bear and truthiness you're. I remember one of my students was saying, uh, when, whenever breaking news happens for the time of the day on a cable news channel, um, I asked, um, I asked, uh, what does it say? I asked the guys, what do you think, what do you think? Um, it feels like when you see breaking news, um, happen on cable TV, and they said, it feels like Cole bear. In other words, it's called bear is supposed to be a parody of the news, but actually the news seems like to, to my students now, um, a parody of Cole bear. And, uh, so what happens is, is when we, it just becomes even comical. Now, when we're talking about, for example, the firing of the defense secretary, and it shouldn't be actually

**Dr. Nelson:**

Amelia, could you just expand on that? What do you mean by the firing of the defense secretary? Not in case everybody that's listened, hasn't figured that out.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**

Oh yeah. The firing of the defense secretary, uh, just recently on Twitter.

**Dr. Nelson:**

So, everybody brings up some really good points here. Um, I've got two different ways. I want to go towards the end of the podcast, but I'm going to go with this one first. So do you think now there's going to be an expectation for the next president and the president's after to personally engage with the public on social media, like president Trump is currently doing, what do you, what's your opinion on that?

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:**

Oh, going back, uh, now, right. Um, the, the focus has shifted, whereas I was mentioning before, um, you know, presidents, um, their, their staff, and that, that may be the case too, but it's going to be much more sort of personal. Um, you know, one of the things Trump did, um, um, and continues to do is share or write his followers, tweets, um, even ones that are, you know, sort of, uh, well, often controversial and in some ways that's even better, right. Because, um, that sort of grabs your attention, right. It's sort of outrageous, um, it may hit you at the sort of emotional level. You like it, you don't really think about it too much. You don't want to overthink these things. Right. Just share it right. Retweet it. Um, and then of course, those things go viral. Uh, the more ridiculous something president Trump for example, says the more free quote unquote media attention he gets, right. Which is very useful, uh, for the campaign, uh, a big reason, uh, he was able to be successful, uh, in 2016, right. It was all of the sort of, uh, quote unquote free media coverage. He got because of the sort of outlandish things he was doing, the ways that he was apparently undermining the rule of law and flouting, um, you know, conventional norms and Folkways and things like this. So I don't think it's going anywhere. I think, um, future, uh, candidates and presidents are going to become much more sophisticated at using social media to directly communicate, to raise money and things like this.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Kevin, what was your thought on that?

**Dr. Kevin Parsneau:**

I mean, I agree in a sense that you, you can't really go back. Um, the interesting thing for me about social media is that whatever today's social media is going to be, it's not going to be that in 10 years. Right. Um, so I mean, it, it struck me when, when one of my students complained that only old people are on Facebook. And I thought to myself, yeah, that's how I keep in touch with, Oh God, he's talking about me. Right. Um, and Facebook is all old people. Now, Twitter is not right. Gen Z. It's right. I don't know how politicians are gonna figure out how to use Tik TOK. I certainly, um, I mean, I guess Kamala Harris was dancing and walking in her shoes that might work on Tik TOK. Um, but I don't know that anybody wants to see, um, Joe Biden do too much on Tik TOK that's. Um, but the, the, the point being that, that will, this, this stuff will change presidents and politicians will keep having to adapt to it. And there will always be people who are sort of out front on it. Um, and then there will be people who kind of struggle and look awkward. And I think that's the, that's the part that looks artificial. Right. So when, when you try to do something and you're trying to be on Facebook or, you know, or Twitter, and it doesn't come across as sincere, which to president Trump's credit, right. He it's, it seems like him on, on Twitter, that, that seems like the real guy. And so that, that doesn't play the same way that a good old state of the union address guys. Right. Um, so presidents, politicians are going to have to adapt. Some of them will do better and some of them will do worse. I don't know how that necessarily will be reflected in votes. Right. That's the, that's the interesting thing to me is like, did, did, did Donald Trump's tweets really get him the votes or did coverage of Donald Trump's tweets in traditional media sources, get him the votes or get him the attention right. In the Republican primary, and then later in, um, the general election. Um, so maybe, maybe old media still has a role in how it reports on new media.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**

I would, I would add to, uh, echoing both my earlier point in some things never change, but also, um, my colleagues points on how we, this just continues to evolve. And, and like Dr. Parson has said about, um, you know, we don't know what social media is going to look like in 10 years. Right? Well, the thing is, is as technology has evolved and with that to political messaging, um, you know, campaigns, candidates, entrust groups, um, protest organizations, et cetera, have had to evolve in terms of their messaging even before social media. So just for example, when cable TV became a thing, instead of, okay, we're going to run a television ad that is going to appeal to everyone, and we're going to have it on all three networks. Well, when you had a hundred cable channels, you had to say, okay, what's going to appeal to the viewer of MTV versus the viewer of, of a lifetime, right. Or speed vision. Uh, so even before we had all of these different YouTube channels, social media, et cetera, you had to start getting more and more, not only clever because there were all these other people, um, you know, having airspace now, but you also had to become more tailored in terms of how you can cater to a given audience. Um, and that's not that hasn't been anything new, but the thing that is new is the numbers you've got to be even more competitive. Now you gotta be even craftier now. And with the numbers also comes these tailored audiences. You've got to hyper tailor your audio, your messaging now. Uh, so just for example, um, about Kevin's point about Tik TOK and Kamala Harris on Tik TOK. Um, well, okay. So during this campaign, we had regular television ads with the American flag and whatnot that we see every election season. We also had the Biden campaign, for example, uh, create an Island on animal crossing. Um, we had, um, we also had, uh, some, uh, ads on social media, for example, that had, uh, from also from the Biden campaign that had, um, that had cats in it, you know, capitalizing on internet cat videos. Right. And then one that, you know, also kind of goes along, uh, with, um, with, um, with, um, with the, Oh gosh, what was I thinking? Oh, the, the, the thing that goes along the lines of, um, of new media a lot and tailoring the message was, um, and viral video. Um, we all remember the fly on Mike Pence's head. Okay. Well, the Biden campaign, boom, as soon as the debate was over, they were selling flyswatters for, that had their campaign branding on it. So they, uh, so they took this viral video moment that everybody was going nuts over, see SNL made it part of their sketch, et cetera. And they not only decided to capitalize on it because that's what the, you know, that's what people like these days, right? Viral moments, they did it quickly. That's another thing speed now. I mean, boom. They had that flyswatter ready to go. As soon as that debate was over. So it's becoming hyper tailored now. So tailoring is nothing new, the, uh, but how, how much and how clever somebody has to be is, is definitely going to evolve.

**Dr. Nelson:**

So as we are kind of bringing this to a close, um, I'd like you to talk about your, your closing comments and also, is there anything good coming out of this media, social media, Twitter, fake news, are there positive aspects? Cause we've talked about a lot of negative ones, right? So we'll kind of go around again with some closing thoughts. And if you can talk about if there's anything good with that, and we're going to start with Kevin put him first. Yep.

**Dr. Kevin Parsneau:**

Well, I mean, there there are a positive aspects and one of them is the ability to use the internet, social media, to gather supporters and raise small funds for candidates, right? Small fundraisers, um, where you, where you asked for people for $5, right. And you can contact millions and people can go, Oh, I'll click here. I'll send $5. Instead of the old traditional way where they had to get large numbers of people in rooms and, and ask for money or, or have a mailing list, you had to be on a list someplace. It couldn't be somebody who just forwarded to you. And they, they, you know, it didn't make sense to ask for $5. It made sense to ask for $50 in that case. So candidates who otherwise may not have had traction can get traction now. And that was one of the things that both Barack Obama did and, uh, Bernie Sanders did. Um, I'm sure there's some other examples they don't come immediately to mind. So I think that's, uh, that's a positive aspect. I also think that there is an aspect where social media, uh, engages people. And there's been some research by Pew that, um, something like twenty-five percent of Americans have seen something on social media that has changed their view. And I think the implication of the Pew research was that they saw it. They heard it. They hadn't thought about that before. And this, this particularly talked about the effectiveness of the, the black lives matter movement, changing people's view on systemic racism in the United States. And that might've been something that otherwise it would have been tough for a movement like black lives matter to get out, but they were able to consistently talk about systemic racism and make some people say, Oh, Hey, you know, I hadn't thought about that much, but now that I've thought about it, my mind has changed. It's not just them, but that was the one that you pointed out as particularly effective at it. Um, so to the extent that groups can, can, can get a message out there, be consistent and use social media. Um, they can, they can change minds, which is not an easy thing to do in politics.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Josh,how about we go to you for your thoughts and Amelia, we'll have you wrap it up.

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:**

I got a little, little mixture of positive and negative. It's one of the things I definitely struggle with in my classes, teaching American politics at this moment is trying not to leave students with a, you know, a bad taste in their mouth, so to speak right, while it is doom and gloom, um, I haven't found the way to do it yet. So if anybody knows how to turn these, these negatives into positives, I'm all ears. I would any rate, uh, when it comes to social media, right? It started off the, the promise was unlimited, right. It was going to bring people together. It was going to create new communities and create new forms of political associates association, right. Social capital, uh, and all of these sorts of things that was the sort of initial dream way back. Right. And, um, certainly with, um, Facebook and things like this with the new social media platforms, uh, very quickly, right. Um, we've seen a different outcome, right? We're more divided than ever, particularly when it comes to, uh, partisanship. Um, it's no longer simply elites who are divided it's Americans as well. We're a Washington, uh, fake news and, uh, misinformation, um, you know, stories that are, um, you know, not necessarily, you know, out there. Um, and it was a form of ignorance or something like this, but deliberately trying to mislead people. Uh, we're also, uh, increasingly, uh, technologies enabling us to, uh, people, uh, to use video, right. So soon we're not gonna able to be able to trust what we see before our eyes. Um, so having said that, um, I would end by saying, right, I have a great deal of faith in humanity, right. I have a great deal of faith in the American public. Um, and this is new right now, this, you know, sort of fake news and, um, you know, talk about uh McCrackin and things like this, uh, you know, back a hundred years ago or so, um, we've seen stuff like this before and we've adopted, right. We've, um, changed our ways we've become used to the new technologies. Um, you know, talked about, uh, clickbait a little while ago, right. When those sort of practices were first starting, I was very easy to fall for, but now since, you know, maybe you've fallen forward a couple of times, right. You take a second and look at that link, right. And check out the URL, um, you know, things like this, right. We learn and we adapt. Um, and I think Americans are doing that right now. Um, even as, uh, force technology outpaces, our ability to adapt, I think, well, let me mention one last thing. Um, you know, thinking about social movements and protests, right. Very important, um, uh, tool for bringing people together, um, and potentially very powerful look at the Arab spring, uh, in particular, uh, Egypt, Ryan, social media, a big part of bringing people together, toppling that regime. Uh, of course, um, it didn't last. Um, but it's, uh, it's a good example for, um, how people can use social media to bring about big changes.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**

So I would say that in terms of technology and social media and, um, and media and communication in general, um, we are living in the best of times and the worst of times, um, I'll take the approach. My dad says all the time, tell me the bad news first, get it over with. Okay. So, uh, to echo a lot of my colleagues points, um, we have this insane amount of divisiveness in our social and political dialogue, just even amongst ourselves as citizens. Um, I often say that social media is like the house party that you have, where you invite, say your work, friends, your friends from high school, your friends from college, et cetera. Right. And then it never fails that say your, your work friends, aren't, uh, aren't a fan of your sister and your mom really doesn't like your friend from college, et cetera. Well, that's, that's how social media works. That's your Facebook feed, right? Um, you, you sometimes have to referee these, you know, groups in your own personal and professional life sometimes at the same time, um, to, uh, just be A human in society anymore. And It is exhausting. So imagine if, so, if you're thinking about this on the personal level, how am I, God, I had a break up this fight on Facebook. Well, okay. Well, that's happening to us as a society as a whole. Um, and then of course we've got all our, of our previous points made about fake news and the like, but I also think in terms of best of times, especially where we haven't been able to, um, get out there literally as much because of the pandemic, especially social media has been a godsend for us in some respects, because so much that we would literally never be able to access that we should really know is getting out there because of social media take, for example, the crises, uh, that healthcare workers are facing with like lack of PPE. Um, we literally cannot go into a hospital right now, even if we have a dying relative in there. Well, that's a lot of times the reason why we knew about these PPE issues is because healthcare workers were posting pictures to Facebook of themselves with their kids' homework folders over their faces, um, to go to work or pick videos of themselves breaking down because they've seen 15 people die on their ward that day. Um, so, or maybe the protest and, uh, maybe the protest, for example, in Portland, um, where the federal government's actions against the protesters were, uh, were considered unprecedented and agregious alike. Well, those of us who are not in Portland, um, knew about this largely because of greater access to media and with the democratization of who's being able to get a platform now on Twitter, YouTube, et cetera, a lot of groups that would have been ignored, not only by politicians and mainstream media, um, aren't getting ignored anymore. Now, a lot of them are, are able to demand. Listen to me, a lot of who would have been totally shoved aside like the kids, uh, in March for our lives, who were a voting age, this election, um, they were able to force an audience through that platform and social media. So, you know, there's a lot of negatives. Yes. But there can be a lot of positives in the end. Um, what the final verdict will be. I hate to, I hate to, I guess you could say, I hate to, you know, I hate to sound like some of the people in the post-truth era, but it, whether it's a negative or positive in the end, we will never know until, uh, sometimes, uh, some considerable amount of time has passed.

**Dr. Nelson:**

Well, thank you everybody. We have so much more to talk about on this. So you'll definitely be coming back in the spring and it'll be an interesting winter break in inauguration that I'm sure we'll have more to talk about, but thank you for joining me. I really appreciate it.

**[music]**

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