

David H. Kahl Jr. and Ahmet Atay (Eds.), **Pedagogies of Post-Truth**, Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2021, 228 pp., \$39.99 (paperback), \$38.00 (Kindle).

Reviewed by

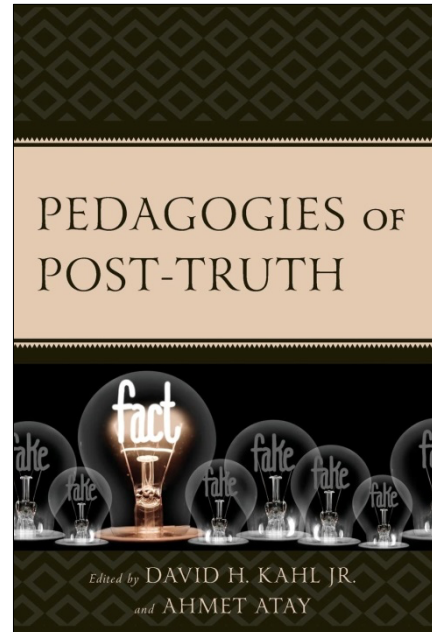
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When the term “post-truth” became an integral part of everyday conversation following the election of Donald Trump in 2016, the concept infused academic disciplines, giving rise to important research in, among others, history (Gudonis & Jones, 2020), psychology (Demasi, 2020), and international relations (Crilley, 2018). Perhaps the post-truth episteme is most prominent in critical pedagogy. This is understandable, as there is concern about how the current generation of college graduates will fare in an American dystopia that is discursively characterized by gaslighting and factuality being trumped by emotion. Thus, a growing number of book-length studies (Ford, 2020; Goering & Thomas, 2018) are rethinking educational philosophy in the post-truth era.

One of the latest contributions to this evolving literature is the volume **Pedagogies of Post-Truth**, edited by David H. Kahl Jr. and Ahmet Atay. Unlike those other studies, this collection’s authors use the approach of critical communication pedagogy, as each of the chapters reflects on how “post-truth messages” affect the communicational nexus between students, instructors, universities, and society. The editors give a clear example of this in the introduction, discussing the reactionary Charles Koch Foundation, which while purporting to espouse academic freedom, actually donates large sums of money to universities to create special professorships with the agreement that these jobs will be given to academics who share the organization’s right-wing views (pp. ix–x). The book’s case studies are theoretically grounded testimonials by university professors reflecting on what it means to epistemologically teach in Trumpist-era America when there is no unanimity about what is factual.

These accessible chapters, which combine theory and empiricism, will be worthwhile for educators in any discipline, as these cases offer visions of post-truth pedagogy as praxis to build universally applicable critical thinking skills. The essays effectively deal with examples of how to address the pernicious discursive effects of Trumpist right-wing populism in higher education in various contexts. An oversight of the authors and editors, however, is analysis of the ways that the anti-imperialist left has also shaped much political rhetoric and presumably classroom discourse. For example, regarding the ongoing Russia- and Iran-backed war on Syria, many Western leftists, basing their logic on a dogmatized Cold War worldview in which the American empire constitutes the only kind of imperialism imaginable, argue that the world’s powers should stay out of the conflict in the name of anti-imperialism. Morris and



Nahlawi (2017) draw a clear link between such ideologized anti-imperialist dogma to post-truth politics (p. 17).

The book, comprised of 10 chapters, is divided into the following three sections: "Media, Post-Truth, and Pedagogy"; "Post-Truth and Critical Communication Pedagogy"; and "Student Engagement, Post-Truth, and Pedagogy." Ann M. Savage's controversial course from 2016 on Trump is the subject of chapter 1, "Academic Freedom Under Threat: Teaching Against Trumpism in the Neoliberal University." Following Savage's discourse analysis of the public commotion and sensationalized media coverage of her class, she stresses the importance of academic freedom and critical thinking in the post-truth age.

In chapter 2, "Training Journalism Students in a Post-Truth Era," John Huxford and K. Megan Hopper offer a qualitative approach to study the impact of fake news on current journalism students. One of the effects of the post-truth society is the creation of an ecosphere in which there is considerable distrust of traditional media institutions, and the biggest struggle for journalism professors is teaching in a climate when even basic facts are under assault.

Ahmet Atay presents a media studies perspective of teaching in post-2016 America in the third chapter, "Challenging the Discourse of Post-Truth in Media Classes: Digital Media and Cultural Pedagogies." He argues for a many-sided, Freirean classroom approach that draws on methods from journalism and media and cultural studies to tackle the realities of post-truth that likewise have many facets.

Section 2 opens with the 4th chapter, "Property, Postsocialism, and Critical Communication Pedagogy in the Post-Truth Era," by Leda Cooks and Jennifer A. Zenovich. The authors consider critical communication pedagogy in a global context, when "post-socialist" transnational capitalism has hegemonized discourse. Here, the term post-socialism is deployed from a feminist lens "to theorize and challenge our global condition of capitalism" (p. 60).

In "The Hegemony of Post-Truth: Responding Through Critical Communication Pedagogy," chapter 5, David H. Kahl Jr. argues that hegemony increasingly use post-truth messages to consolidate power and critical communication pedagogy is a propitious antidote to this insidious discursive power. With his recourse to history, such as the example of tobacco companies dabbling in proto-post-truth messages during the 1950s, this is one of the strongest chapters.

Simon Rousset, in chapter 6, "Be(ing) in 'Post-Truth': Notes on Performing Contested Selves in/as Critical Communication Pedagogy," reflects on his experiences as a foreigner teaching in Trump-era America. Rousset draws on a praxis based in performance theory and communication pedagogy to respond to post-truth messages rooted in xenophobia, racism, and Islamophobia.

Chad Woolard and Joseph Zompetti consider the effects of post-truth from a political communication theory perspective, which is the subject of chapter 7, "Finding Truth in a 'Post-Truth' World: Critical Communication Pedagogy as Transformative Learning." The authors suggest some ways in

which educators can foster civil and political engagement and cultivate media literacy among college students.

The book's 3rd section begins with the 8th chapter, "Civic Engagement and Dialogic Approaches to Post-Truth in the Classroom," by J.J. Sylvia IV. He draws on his own teaching framework that combines ethics and communications law to address teaching media literacy in the post-truth era, which involves a civic engagement model. The idea is that students interact with the community to glean multiple perspectives.

Chapter 9, by Robert J. Razzante and Benny LeMaster, is titled "Roundtable Discussions: Contesting Ideologies Undergirding Post-Truth Discourse with Student Agency." In their autoethnography, the two professors recount various dialogues with students, situating them in the book's theoretical lens of critical communication pedagogy. The authors propose that the best way to confront post-truth messages is through a dialectical conceptualization of power.

The book closes with chapter 10, "'TEACH US THE TRUTH': Teaching Historical Understanding in the Era of Post-Truth Politics" by Anjuli Joshi Brekke. The author responds to some reactions by left and right voices, both incensed but for different reasons, to the College Board's changes to the Advanced Placement United States History framework (2014–2015). What is interesting about her case is that across the ideological spectrum, "post-truth" is epistemologically deployed to cement one's worldview.

In conclusion, in an increasingly depressing post-truth epoch, this volume will give readers some hope. The book is practical in that its authors, all of them communication scholars, give us tools through which learners can detect and fight back against post-truth messages. Some of these techniques include innovative forms of civic engagement and media literacy. In short, this is a timely and necessary volume. Bottomline: Academia is rooted in critical thinking, empiricism, and Aristotelian dialogue, the very things against which the post-truth episteme has waged war.

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