

Post-Truth in the Public Realm

Since the 1960s, critical and constructivist approaches in public administration have questioned truth claims of experts and authorities; revealed the socially constructed and politically contested nature of facts; and exposed the situated, partial, and historical dimensions of “objective” scientific knowledge claims in both administrative and academic realms. Using alternative epistemologies and methodologies, these efforts sought to make space for excluded or marginalized voices and points of view, to expand the range of what counts as knowledge, and to enhance administrative action. The current “post-truth” political landscape demands that these efforts be reassessed and re-engaged.

While neither “post-truth” nor the condition it names are new, the problems and rhetoric of post-truth politics have increasingly come to the fore. Populist regimes worldwide have elevated post-truth to the new normal such that statements about “alternative facts” and that “truth isn’t truth” are made by public figures with no hint of irony.

In this era of “academic capitalism,” a war over truth rages in academic public administration as well. As Alasdair Roberts recently argued, “[The field of public administration has been marketized, rationalized, and corporatized.](#)” He decries knowledge production by PA scholars as captive to a system that is irrational, exploitative, secretive, inflexible, geographically biased, and owned by multinational corporations.

We welcome proposals for panels and papers that investigate themes related this and other questions, such as:

- Can we craft a genealogy of “post-truth,” situating and specifying today’s truth and politics historically?
- What are the implications of post-truth for “critique”? When truth is what one makes of it and is deployed by those firmly in power, what possibilities for emancipation, speaking-to-power, and resistance remain?
- Dissecting truth arguments can reveal a war over “truth claims.” The very framing of “alternative facts” indicates a struggle for authorship of truth. What are the key power struggles in play within the political, administrative, and academic realms?
- How can we theorize the role of expertise and its limits today?
- To what extent has professional public administration itself been changed by or adopted post-truth practices? Or is public administration the last line of defense against it?
- How can scholars of mythmaking, narrative, memes, hyperreality, anti-realist meaning, meaning making, rhetoric, and symbolism theorize and deepen our understanding of post-truth and its consequences for public administration and governance?

Although we especially welcome proposals related to the theme, proposals on other topics involving critical and constructivist approaches in Public Administration will be considered.

We welcome individual paper submissions (150-word abstract, paper title, author name(s) and affiliation(s)) as well as full panel submissions.

For panel submissions, please include a description of the panel, abstracts for all papers, and information about authors and presenters. A full panel consists of 3-4 papers. The committee reserves the discretion for altering panel submissions.

Submissions are due November 15, 2018 and should be submitted in MS Word or PDF via email to patnet2019@gmail.com