

## **Adam Berinsky**

**Title:** "The Root of False Beliefs: Political Rumors in America from 2010 to the Present"

**Abstract:** I use survey data from 2010 to the present to trace the nature of belief in misperceptions among the public arising from particular political rumors. I first detail the degree to which members of the mass public fall into the different categories along the continuum of belief—believers, disbelievers, and the uncertain—for various rumors across the political spectrum. These rumors span a broad range, from beliefs about President Obama’s citizenship to conspiracies surrounding illegal immigrants voting in presidential elections. I then examine the personality and political correlates of rumor belief in the mass public. While there are certain factors that lead individuals to lend plausibility to particular rumors regardless of their content, in today’s polarized world, rumor rejection is also in large part a function of political attachments. Thus, the mechanism at work is the interaction of conspiratorial dispositions and partisan motivation: it is those political partisans prone to conspiratorial thinking who are also the least likely to question the veracity of rumors impugning their political adversaries. Rumor belief is the toxic marriage of political beliefs and conspiratorial orientation.

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