



Call for Papers - The Political and Social Impact of Rumours

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Nanyang Technological University (NTU, Singapore)

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Singapore

This workshop aims to explore the social functions and possible impact of rumour, an aspect of what can be broadly termed informal communication (rumours, urban legends, gossip, jokes, conspiracy theories, etc). Rumours can be understood as unverified or 'unsecured' propositions and are often typified as collective transactions that communities engage in to bring definition to ambiguous situations. As expressions of belief or plausibility they can often run counter to official (or formal) communications. Some researchers have explored the possible negative social impact of rumours or gossip. Conversely, an understanding of the potential effects of informal communication may help those working in strategic communication to better understand the beliefs, perceptions, and concerns of particular communities.

We are interested in a multidisciplinary examination of the phenomena of rumours *et al*, including (but not limited to) the fields of: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, communication sciences, psychology, security studies, and political science. These may be either theoretical works or those based on empirical study. Additionally, as this workshop is meant to expand on the established and existing scholarship in the field we encourage both academics from outside the US and UK as well as professionals not attached to academic institutions to submit papers.

Some of the questions and areas we hope to explore in this workshop are:

- **Rumours, Gossip, Urban Legends, Jokes, Conspiracy Theories**
What are the distinctions between these various types of informal communication?
What are the political implications of rumour?
- **Belief and Plausibility**
What role does rumour play in the formation of beliefs?
In what ways does plausibility differ between communities? How does it change over time? Why?
What is the sensemaking nature of rumour?
- **Trust**
Does rumour *et al* affect levels of trust within or between communities?



- **Collective Behaviour**
What is the role of rumour in collective behaviour?
Is the impact of rumour necessarily negative?
- **Strategic Communication**
Can rumour create resistance to strategic communication efforts?
How best to integrate and understanding of rumours *et al* into strategic communication efforts?

Workshop Format

The intention is to keep the group small to foster collegiality and discussion, which in turn depends on the active participation of all delegates throughout the entirety of the conference. Using a round-table format of active paper presenters and discussants, the setting will involve paper presentations followed by a round of discussion led by an appointed discussant.

Selected participants will be invited to contribute to a book project by CENS to follow after this workshop.

Abstracts and Papers

We invite submissions (in English only) from all disciplines relevant to the theme of the workshop. Please send abstracts of approximately 300-350 words in electronic form to Greg Dalziel (isgdalziel@ntu.edu.sg). All proposals should include name, contact information, institutional affiliation and a short narrative biography (not more than 400 words).

Papers between 6000-8000 words using Chicago Style format with footnotes and references.

Deadlines

- All abstracts should reach us by October 28th, 2009
- Selected participants will be notified by November 9th, 2009
- Final submission of papers is expected by January 8th, 2010

For more information please contact: Greg Dalziel

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CENS Homepage: <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/cens>

Conference Webpage: <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/cens/events/rumours/>