

# Combating Misinformation in the Digital Age

Max Walpole, assistant editor

For the Fall 2021 semester, PVCC's One Book Program has taken aim at misinformation and fake news. And the selected book, *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*, by Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall, is available for every student and staff member on campus to read digitally, a first for the One Book Program.

The One Book Program is a college-wide program where both students and staff read a selected book and participate in various activities connected to the text. For its 8th year, the One Book Program is working in conjunction with the PVCC Civic Engagement Quality Enhancement Plan to help engage students with civic life issues such as local politics, misinformation, and local charity organizations. In the upcoming years, each selected book will connect with relevant civic topics.

According to Director of Library Services Crystal Newell, the One Book Program has implemented changes to adapt to the threat posed by COVID-19.

"COVID certainly affected the One Book program, but primarily it affected access. Last year's One Book, *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, was only available in print or individual ebook access," said Newell. "Mailing print books to individuals in classes proved to be extremely cumbersome and time consuming, so we were very happy to be able to provide universal, immediate access to this year's One Book."

The events list for this year's One Book program includes "Antisocial Media: How

Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy," a lecture presented by University of Virginia professor Dr. Siva Vaidhyanathan on Oct. 4 and "Making Sense of the News during an Infodemic," a lecture by Stony Brook University professor Jonathan Anzalone on Oct. 18. In addition, a showing of the movie *The Social Dilemma* is scheduled for Sept. 27.

*The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread* was specifically voted for by both staff and faculty for this year's One Book Program because of its exploration of topical issues concerning misinformation on social media sites.

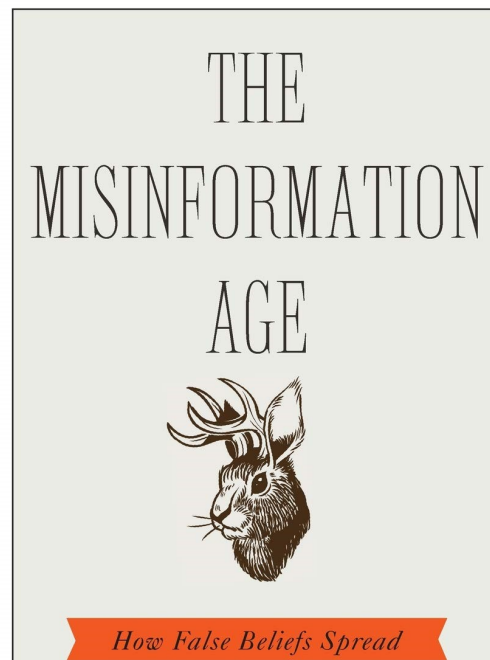
"I think interest in this book is apparent after the tumultuous year(s) we have experienced," said Newell. "Thinking critically and dealing with misinformation is a perennial concern for all educators; this book definitely had appeal."

*The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread* carefully examines the social and political factors that have contributed to the mainstream proliferation and staying power of false facts, and offers strategies on how people can use their understanding of this system to combat misinformation.

"I hope students will take away (from the book) a greater understanding of how information is shared, distributed, and understood, and what role they play in this environment. We all have personal agency in this misinformation age; we need to accept responsibility for not perpetuating it, but to do so, we must educate ourselves first" said Newell.

To download *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*, visit the PVCC library website and click "PVCC Fall 2021 One Book Program."

For more information on the One Book Program, contact the planning committee at [onebok@pvcc.edu](mailto:onebok@pvcc.edu) or contact Crystal Newell at [cnewell@pvcc.edu](mailto:cnewell@pvcc.edu).



The cover of *The Misinformation Age*