Why is it so hard to agree on the facts?

Objectivity, institutional facts, and the contested epistemology of fact-checking.

What a journalism review called the “fact-checking explosion” in American journalism revolves around a very specific mission: to hold public figures accountable for false or misleading claims. The reporters who practice this kind of journalism form an increasingly self-aware movement within the profession, one grounded in a shared critique of conventional, “he said, she said” objective reporting. What are the origins of this controversial style of news, and how does it challenge conventional notions of objectivity? This talk reviews the roots of political fact-checking within the “interpretive community” of US journalism, and then offers a provisional epistemology of fact-checking grounded in the notion of “institutional facts.” Such facts are much less stable than we sometimes suppose, and help to account for both fact-checking practices and the controversy they invite.