**Conspiracy Myths. The world of universal explanations**

**MODULE DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES FOR THE INSTRUCTOR**

The module starts with an interactive introduction to the topic of conspiracy myths, followed by 5 chapters on the following content:

1. Definition

2. History

3. Ideology

4. Forms of Practice and Expression

5. Strategies: Identifying and dealing with Conspiracy Myths

There will be the possibility to reflect and summarise the outcome and time for concluding remarks.

Each chapter is explained briefly here:

***Introduction***

The topic can be introduced through a general brainstorming session about “conspiracy myths”. This collection of ideas paves the way for a complex topic. If necessary, the brainstorming can be accompanied by asking the following questions:

* What comes to your mind when you hear ‘conspiracy myths’?
* What is a conspiracy myth? What topics of conspiracy myths, legends, narratives do you know?
* Where did you hear about them?
* Who was spreading the myths, who was the target?

If time allows, students can be grouped in pairs and sent into breakouts to discuss the questions outlined above, before exchanging in plenum.

To support the association of the topic to personal experiences and evaluate the personal and societal impact conspiracy myths have, the interactive exercise “case reports” can be implemented, in which students tell each other in pairs about a personal experience with a conspiratorial belief, questioning the challenges they faced during those situations. After presenting their experiences to each other the notes of this exercise will be saved for the last chapter of the module – to conclude with facing the named challenges by learning how to deal with conspiratorial beliefs.

**H5P Activity (optional):**

As a last part of the introduction to the topic, a short quiz can be conducted to emphasise the significance of conspiratorial beliefs today in Europe. For this purpose, the H5P activity needs to be incorporated into the respective eLearning platform. The quiz, led by the question: “conspiracy myths – a marginal or major phenomenon?”, demonstrates empirical data from recent surveys about agreement with conspiracy myths in different European countries. The questions can be adapted easily by using data and survey results of the country or region the module will be used in. E.g., many European countries have been analysed in the YouGov-Cambridge research (2018), or see Harambam (2020), pp. 1-2. Adding survey results that especially address younger respondents might also be a fruitful way to lead to discussions about how to address the topic in high school classes.

***1. Definition***

The first chapter starts with discussing the different terminologies of the topic: conspiracy myths, legends, narratives, etc., followed by questioning the difference between an actual “theory” (which is still the most used term describing conspiratorial beliefs) and “ideology”. An inverted triangle serves to illustrate the classification of the various terms, meanings, and forms, from real conspiracies to specific conspiracy myths and to comprehensive (and dangerous) conspiracy ideology (S1, slide 6). The inverted triangle is inspired by Abbie Richard’s more detailed illustration, that also names lots of specific myths to be categorised on the triangle: [https://cdn.substack.com/image/fetch/f\_auto,q\_auto:good,fl\_progressive:steep/https%3A%2F%2Fbucketeer-e05bbc84-baa3-437e-9518-adb32be77984.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fpublic%2Fimages%2F5253d771-3417-44ab-bd00-c12bce07870f\_1080x1920.jpeg](https://cdn.substack.com/image/fetch/f_auto%2Cq_auto%3Agood%2Cfl_progressive%3Asteep/https%3A//bucketeer-e05bbc84-baa3-437e-9518-adb32be77984.s3.amazonaws.com/public/images/5253d771-3417-44ab-bd00-c12bce07870f_1080x1920.jpeg), accessed 20 June 2021.

This leads to the question of common definitions of the term and the question what the key signs of myths are. The different definitions should give students an idea of the general concepts the module is addressing (S1, slide 7-8).

Subsequently, students should have the possibility to explore and develop a deeper understanding of the typical features and functions of different conspiracy myths. The following questions are central to this part (For preparation of this lesson the COMPACT “Guide to Conspiracy Theories” (2020) might be helpful, as it addresses the questions What, Who, Why and How):

* What are conspiracy myths? Which conspiracy myths, legends, narratives are there? Which myths do you know? What distinguishes these from actual conspiracy claim / theories? Which actual conspiracies are there?
* Where do you come across conspiracy myths? Where do you hear/read about them?
* Against whom are the conspiratorial accusations directed? Who is blamed? But also: Who is spreading the myths, which type of audience might be targeted/believes in them?

Adding up the information and answers provided by the students with scientific data and explanations. – Try to implant critical thinking, e.g., considering who: Just because MOST myths are believed by people in a difficult life situation doesn’t mean that everyone going through mayor challenges will hang onto conspiracy ideology; or that every person spreading conspiracy myths must have personal struggles.

The questions can either be answered in plenum, and the answers collected on a white board, or as a group activity. Students form a group for each question and then rotate between the groups/questions (“World café” method).

The next step is to go deeper thematically with the following questions – they will be addressed by the lecturer with the knowledge, explanations and sources provided in the slides.

* Why are there myths? what do these narratives cover up? what feeling does it give to the narrators and adherents?
* How do conspiracy myths and their ideology work? What are the main components?
* When did these narratives come up?

(Leading us to next chapter… history of conspiracy myths)

**Activity (optional)**

Self-made conspiracy myths – role play (60 min) (S1, slide 24)

To get a deeper understanding of how processes in conspiracy myths work and to experience and “use” the ideology and comprehend how ‘forms of practise and expression’ feel from both sides.

Experience and “use” the ideology and how ‘forms of practise and expression’ feel from **both sides**

**I.** Self-made conspiracy myth: Create your own conspiracy myth (25 minutes)

Keeping in mind the following points:

1. Detect a secret and mysterious plot and the force that stands behind everything!
2. Discover and reveal secrets!
3. Find someone to blame!
4. Collect “scientific” evidence!
5. You know you’re right!
6. But: Do not reproduce problematic structures or world views like racism, antisemitism, misogyny, etc.!

**II.** Acting out and discussion in plenary (25 minutes)

Ask critical questions. Question the inner logic.

**III.** Reflection: How did you feel during the discussion? (10)

Point III. Reflection has the purpose to conclude the idea of the activity as a group. Especially the roles the students tried to fit in, and the group effects it had on them should be part of this. It is also about putting oneself in the other situation so that the other perspective can be understood better. The experience gained from the exercise should help to deal better with confrontations in later situations – especially in the students’ later roles as teachers.

Some suggestions the lecturer could address in the conclusion of the reflection:

* Group processes: How were students mutually strengthening each other's own narrative in a group of “believers”?
* Imbalance in power: How did powerful position as a conspiracy believer make students feel like? Maybe a feeling of "the others are actually nothing to us/they know nothing"?
* Limits of tolerance: Asking questions (as debunker) requires taking the narrative seriously and accepting their premises in the first place – how can one deal with that? There is a difference in being respectful and tolerating the spread of conspiratorial (and sometimes dangerous) belief. (See chapter 3 about the danger of conspiracy myths.)

**H5P Activity (optional):**

To consolidate the new knowledge, students can be asked to conduct the H5P drag’n’drop activity “Characteristics of Conspiracy Myths” either in class or as an activity for repetition at home. For this purpose, the H5P activity needs to be incorporated into the respective eLearning platform.

***2. History of conspiracy myths and historical examples***

As a follow-up to the questions “When did conspiracy myths become popular?” and “When was their origin?” the following chapter will approach the roots of conspiracy myths and address historical examples. The central aims are to obtain a deeper knowledge and critical understanding of the impact of historical events, legends, and narratives and to sharpen the ability of students to reflect critically on diverse historically arisen narratives. At first it should be addressed, that there is no certain “starting point” of conspiratorial beliefs or a single origin of conspiracy myths. The historical development of the phenomenon is as complex as the phenomenon itself. Social scientists and historians follow different opinions and argumentations. While the concept of “conspiracy myths” or “theories” is not very old (1870-1970), conspiracy myths and ideology have older forms of appearance that can be included in conspiratorial narratives of today’s perspective. These historical forms of conspiratorial belief are important because they can be helpful to recognise and identify conspiratorial narratives today. So, in fact the question should be shifted from: “When did the first conspiracy myth occur?” To: “What are the origins for today’s conspiracy myths and ideology?”

Many contemporary myths follow the themes of old legends and narratives. This will be explored with an example later, but first historical conspiracy myths as the ancestors of contemporary forms and expressions will be addressed, including legends and beliefs from 1. ancient and medieval times; 2. modern times and then 3. contemporary forms.

The following slides (S2, slides 7-15) and images are supposed to give a glance at some specific old conspiratorial believes that still have an impact or a similarity to contemporary conspiracy ideology. One of the oldest myths with impacts for today – especially in the west – has occurred in ancient times with the emergence of Christianity and is connected to the historical rise of antisemitism and conspiracy myths. (See explanations and topics collected on slides)

In summary the following knowledge shall be conveyed:

* knowledge of historical targets, such as: devil, Jews, women and witches, Illuminati, and Freemasons, etc. …
* knowledge about historical topics, such as: well-poisoning myth, accusations of child abuse and infanticides, etc.
* knowledge about the different episodes of time and which conspiratorial myths were present
* knowledge of newer and contemporary manifestations of old stereotypes and beliefs, e.g., considering newer technology (implantation of chips and general surveillance) or medicine and health (epidemics like the plague, sickness (well poisoning legend), newer: myths about diseases from vaccines, infertility, cancer, or autism – non-understood illnesses/diseases and pandemics

In the end of this chapter students will not only have knowledge and different perspectives about the historical forces and factors but will have also gained insight on how these have shaped the contemporary world. The activity “historical myth revived” emphasises this aim.

Historical myth revived (30 min) (S2, slide 16)

This activity might need a little more beforehand planning by preparing a topic or certain theme of a conspiracy myth that is spread in contemporary time and possibly fits the subject matter of the class/field of study. The lecturer should provide some information about the chosen conspiracy myth, e.g., images or online articles. (The use of the Wikipedia list of conspiracy myths might be helpful <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_conspiracy_theories>; also the booklet “Antisemitic imagery” by the Antisemitism Policy Trust (2020) can be very helpful to get an idea how iconography and their meaning have been transplanted throughout time.)

Example topic: “plandemic”

A contemporary example (e.g., conspiracy myths about the Covid-19 pandemic: “plandemic”) should be the starting point for a research task in small groups. In this case students could research about historical pandemics or illnesses and conspiratorial beliefs in the past, e.g., about witchcraft and accusations against women and Jews in times of the plague. (Image idea for this example could be a picture from the current “Covid protests” in Vienna, e.g.: [https://presse-service.net/2020/05/14/wien-kundgebung-gegen-die-corona-massnahmen-der-regierung-14-05-2020/#jp-carousel-4897](https://presse-service.net/2020/05/14/wien-kundgebung-gegen-die-corona-massnahmen-der-regierung-14-05-2020/); more information about the “plandemic” can be found in the text “it must be a plot” by K. Nocun (2020).)

The idea is to follow the question of: How does the “contemporary conspiracy narrative” relate to old historical roots?

**Meta level for future teachers – students reflecting their future role as teachers in class:**

Students should learn to connect the knowledge about historical manifestations with the information about what conspiracy myths are, so that they can apply this connection to other situations and can also identify newer forms of expression of myths that have been emerging and spreading (e.g., if they will be confronted with conspiracy myths later). This adds an active punch to passive knowledge, which allows the students to remain capable of acting in their later teaching life. The historical examination of new myths thus always offers a form of analytically coping with conspiracy narratives. However, this historical analytical knowledge does not only serve the own ability to identify and classify myths but would of course also be important as a strategy in dealing with pupils who adhere to dubious concepts for explaining the world.

**H5P Activity:**

To consolidate the new knowledge, students can be asked to conduct the H5P drag the words activity “History of Conspiracy Myths” either in class or as an activity for repetition at home. For this purpose, the H5P activity needs to be incorporated into the respective eLearning platform.

***3. Ideology of conspiracy myths – the link to antisemitism***

This chapter has the aim to build a deeper understanding of what ideology means and implies in connection to conspiracy myths. In favour of this aim, the characteristics and structure that lie underneath certain narrations will be central. Additionally, the connections of conspiratorial narratives to other ideologies, like the link between conspiracy ideology and antisemitism, will be part of this chapter. This chapter is also supposed to provide insights and knowledge about the main characteristics of conspiracy ideology and a deeper understanding as far as the potential dangers behind conspiracy beliefs are concerned.

The first part is an input divided into two sections: a) characteristics and b) functions of conspiracy myths. After an c) interactive group discussion there will be another input divided in two parts: d) the correlation of conspiracy myths to other ideologies (and especially the link to antisemitism) and e) the danger of conspiracy belief. As a conclusion there will be a final activity to this chapter: f) group discussion the ideological meta narrative of conspiracy myths

What is meant by “conspiracy ideology”?

Unlike fake facts, certain rumours, or tales, which can be part of conspiracy myths, the term ideology is trying to capture the meta level. Ideology describes a certain complex model of how a world, its occurrences and relations to certain phenomena can be explained. Conspiracy myths therefor have an ‘ideological character’ with certain characteristics:

Conspiracy myths follow a certain structure. Not every myth adherent or spreader might be well aware of this, but the narratives often have an ideological implication, a structure and essence, that provides a certain logic and inherent way of thinking – following an extensive (closed) world view. Focussing on the ideology means focussing on the structural, repetitive elements and logic behind every conspiracy narrative.

In order to understand the characteristics of ideology, two quotes that are central to contemporary research are discussed:

“nothing happens by accident; nothing is as it seems; and everything is connected.” by Barkun, Michael (2003) (S3, slide 5) and conspiracy myths as a way of making sense of current and historical events, characterised by “intentionalism, dualism and occultism”, Cubitt, Geoffrey (1989) (S3, slide 6). Central characteristics are disputed in the following slides. (In order to prepare for this lesson as a lecturer, read the ‘General Introduction’ by Butter and Knight 2020, pp. 1-8; also, the overview “Identifying conspiracy theories” by the European Commission for the following part, especially “What are conspiracy theories? Why do they flourish?”)

Then (S3, slides 8-9) the functions of ideology will be examined. Following the question asked in the introduction about why people believe in conspiracy myths (the lecturer should recap the findings (and notes, if taken) of the first lessons group work), this should now be explained in full account. Reasons and motives for following the conspiracy ideology will be discussed in more detail, naming socio-cultural, economical as well as psychological factors.

In a brief interactive discussion about advantages and benefits for people and individuals to belief or assume conspiracy myths and their needs and desires this knowledge can be deepened (S3, slide 10). (For an overview on the function on conspiracy myths see the COMPACT guide (2020), especially pp. 7-8, for further information see also the specific different chapters on functions in the Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories (2020)).

To deepen the understanding of the ideological impact of conspiracy myths to a certain view of the world, the following slides are intended to introduce ideologically related concepts, especially to comprehend the structure and functioning of antisemitism. This also includes worldviews like right-wing extremism, which offers a close ideological relationship through simplistic representations and the division of the world into good and bad, as well as "Us" and "Them". A quote of the newest publication of the ‘Radicalisation Awareness Network’ explains this context (S3, slide 11). (To prepare as a lecturer for this and the following section about dangers read the guide “Conspiracy theories and right-wing extremism” by Farinelli/RAN/European Commission 2021 and again the overview “Identifying conspiracy theories” by the European Commission.)

The structural link between conspiracy myths and antisemitism is evident not least in the historical examples discussed above. At this point, the ideological implications of the antisemitic worldview should be emphasised, and the students' view of ideological overlaps should be sharpened. The aim is to enable students to recognise antisemitic thought patterns, historical stereotypes, and newer forms of expression. And students should be able to recognise and condemn the structure of making Jews the universally applicable placeholder in the dualistic view of the world in conspiracy ideology (S3, slides 12-15).

If not yet clear enough, the next slide should explicitly address the dangers and risks of the conspiracy ideology (S3, slide 16). The aim is to develop problem awareness for the modes of action, intentions and risks of conspiracy myths. In the activity "Group discussion on ideological meta narrative", which concludes the unit, this aim is to be reinforced and both ideological implications and the dangers of conspiracy myths should be imparted to the students.

The group discussion (S3, slide 17) can be carried out with the same historical example (here “plandemic”) or replaced by a new example that matches the subject. For this, the students are to research the given myth independently in small groups. The idea is that they deal with a myth in a similar way in their future teaching situation. Thus, the subsequent discussion should take place under the aspects of how the contents about characteristics and dangers of such myths can be reflected in the classroom. Through the discussion of the different questions, inspiration can also be given for similar discussions and thus the learning of critical-reflective thinking for school children.

**Meta-level for future teachers – students reflecting their future role as teachers in class:**

The two concluding discussion questions are intended to address the meta-level. Here, too, students are put in the position of considering their future role as teachers and, for instance, of applying dangers of spreading conspiracy myths to the school.

* What negative impacts could a spread of this myth have at school?
* How might one deal with the spread of such myths in the school context?
* How could this topic be addressed in class?

This is followed by an assignment: The outcome of the group discussion can be a starting point of a preparation of an own lesson on critical research. The aim is to bring this knowledge into a school class.

***4. Forms of practice and expression – contemporary examples***

Reflecting on what was mentioned by students in the first chapter about where conspiracy myths are being spread, this chapter explores the question further.

The answers given in the first chapter can be discussed again. Otherwise, both, the role of the media should be reflected, and specific forms of communication should be examined. The aim is to look at social media in more detail, the internet as a phenomenon and place of distribution, as well as more generally known visual and verbal manifestations of conspiracy myths.

Slides 6 and 7 (S4) offer central visual examples from the conspiracy-mythical milieu. Star of David as a symbol of Judaism, the pyramid or triangle as a symbol of the Illuminati and square & compasses and Baphomet as symbols of the Freemasons are among the basic visual patterns. The knowledge of these symbols as well as other, more crypted and coded pictorial elements should be discussed in the unit and supplemented with the cooperation of the students. The “23” is for example a common newer conspiratorial sign.

As an option to have a more interactive session on this topic the images provided on the next slide (S3, slide 7) can be the starting point. Both images are also featured in the “antisemitic imagery” booklet by the Antisemitism Policy Trust (2020), which describes the context in the following words:

* about the “octopus” image:

“The Octopus is a common antisemitic image found in anti-Jewish images and cartoons, representing the antisemitic canard of Jewish control. In 1903, the antisemitic forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, alleged, among many other falsities, that Jewish leaders were conspiring to control the world, including global politics, the world economy, and the media. The image of an octopus, with its tentacles wrapped around the world, or penetrating the globe, is an antisemitic representation of this canard. The Octopus is comparable to the puppet master, pulling the strings of control, an image also used to portray this antisemitic canard.”

* about the “controller” image:

“As with the Enemy and the Corruptor, the Controller embodies the entire focus of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The Jews sow their seeds around the world, like the Octopus with its tentacles penetrating the globe. The Controller uses its power to control the world, whether it be the economy, the media or politics. When a reader sees this, they are able to blame their societal position on the Jews; they couldn’t succeed in one way or another because everything is being controlled. As the antisemitic German historian Heinrich von Treitschke put it, “the Jews are our misfortune”.

Students will not only learn to look closely and research and recognise certain imagery, but also to relate it to their historical-political knowledge, that had been highlighted earlier.

(For this chapter “forms of practice and expression” the lecturer could prepare by reading “Decoding mass media/ encoding conspiracy theory” by S. Aupers in the Routledge Handbook (2020).)

***5. Strategies: Identifying and dealing with conspiracy myths***

This chapter covers possible strategies of action against the spread of conspiracy myths. Central for this purpose are two steps: first to identify conspiracy myths, second to deal with them.

a) Identifying conspiracy myths

First of all, the students will be introduced to a checklist to get to know the possible differentiating points between criticism or a critical world view and a conspiracy myth (S5, slide 5). This checklist lays the foundation for the subsequent inputs. Enduring contradictions is an important transversal skill that is also essential to counter belief in conspiracy myths. This should become clear in the comparison of critical thinking with the characteristics of conspiratorial belief. A technique that makes such an assessment possible is source criticism, which is introduced on the next slide. Leading questions are: Which steps can be taken when confronted with a narrative about a conspiracy? And: how could you teach source criticism in class?

In this next step, source criticism should be brought closer to the students. Divided into two parts, peppered with sub-items, there is a series of questions that need to be answered in the source criticism process (see S5, slide 6):

• Analysing

* Description – What can you see? Explicitly and implicitly: what is the meaning of the source?
* Origin of the publication (date, place, …) – Who created the source, when and where?
* Perspective – From what point of view was the source created?
* Motive and aim – what might be the purpose of the source?
* Context – In what context was the source created and published?
* Audience – For whom was the source intended?

• Evaluating

* Reliability – Is the source trustworthy?
* Benefit – How useful is the source for your purposes?

And three main points, as summarised by the European Commission (n.y.) (S5, slide 7):

* Check the author – who is writing this and why?
* Has the author recognised qualifications and credentials in relation to the topic?
* Does the author use verifiable facts and evidence from scientific or academic research?
* Check the source – Is it reliable and reputable?
* Has the source been quoted by other reputable media outlets?
* Is the information backed by many scientists/academics?
* Do independent fact-checking websites support the source and related claims?
* Check the tone and style – Is it balanced and fair or sensationalist and one-dimensional?
* Does the author not shy away from exploring complexity, including different perspectives?
* Is the author prepared to acknowledge limits to their knowledge?
* Is the tone objective, factual?
* Is it a real conspiracy?

Real conspiracies are often centred on single, self-contained events, and individuals.

After this introductory lecture, the ball is passed back to the students for an interactive exercise of source criticism.

Source criticism exercise (starting S5, slide 8)

The exercise is carried out in small groups. The starting point is a picture - a "meme": a combination of a quote and a picture. The students should work in small groups in two steps: As previously learned in the input on source criticism, they should first describe and then research. After this analysis, the small groups come back to the plenary discussion and report on their source-critical findings – the evaluation. Important points are: To realise that the picture in combination with the quote states a rhetoric that is clearly linked to conspiracy myths; to realise that the quote is fake and that the picture is indeed manipulated!

Regarding the image used in this exercise:

The image reminds of “the controller” image from the previous activity in chapter 4. The image is also featured in the “antisemitic imagery” booklet by the Antisemitism Policy Trust (2020, p.14), stating:

“Image with a quote, misattributed to French philosopher Voltaire, which was first used in a piece by American white nationalist Kevin Strom. This image, with the Jewish star of David on its cuff, has been circulated widely on social media.”

Students should find out that on the one hand the quote is fake and does not come from Voltaire. And that on the other hand, the picture has also been manipulated: the drawing in the original, which was subsequently provided with the quote, contains a large Star of David on the sleeve of the arm – as a symbol of Judaism and in this situation a very openly antisemitic reference.

This knowledge can be presented by the teacher, should it not have emerged in the course of the exercise or the plenary discussion. The aim is to achieve a certain remarkable “aha effect” with the students as they solve this “mystery”. The solution and further manipulated pictures can be seen on slides 9-10 (S5).

The last slide (10) raises the question of how the picture can be categorised in terms of time and history. Here the arc can be drawn to the history chapter 2, as well as to the preoccupation with the forms in chapter 4, in which a similar picture in historical manifestations has already been discussed: “The controller”.

**Meta level for future teachers – students reflecting their future role as teachers in class:**

In addition to this exercise, another task can be set from it for students (A writing assignment e.g. as homework): Students are asked to consider a handling strategy in which they can integrate their newly acquired historical and ideology-critical knowledge about the formations and phases, the characteristics, functions and dangers of conspiracy narratives.

By reflecting on experiences and knowledge, they should consider how they would deal with this if such a situation arose in their classroom: e.g., a high school student believes in and shares a particular conspiracy myth. How might the exercise have helped to provide helpful information about the history of the myth? How might the historical connection provide a starting point to better understand and situate the myth – and address it in class? Historical knowledge might help to find out, how the conspiratorial belief developed and where its roots are, knowledge about the implications of ideological characteristics and functions of conspiracy myths might help understand, what needs and functions it might fulfil for the student.

It is the teacher’s task to provide other options than myths and legends to explain complex events. E.g., in class teachers could then go on search for explanations together with their students (and implement critical thinking and f. e. critical media handling) – while accepting coincidences as factors and questioning the dualistic world view.

As inspiration for possible strategies as a teacher facing conspiracy belief see the booklet of the Anne Frank Foundation (2020) about “Conspiracy Theories in the Classroom”.

And, additionally: How can the exercise be supplemented or modified so that high school students could also learn conspiracy myth criticism skills?

b) dealing with conspiracy myths

This final section is all about exploring strategies on how to deal with conspiracy myths and their adherents in face-to-face conversations. The leading question is: What options do we have?

The “triangle of coping” (S5, slide 11) shows us three ends of possibilities which come down to three levels of actions: factual, personal, and “other” possibilities. After explaining what factual and personal levels can mean (see in addition S5, slide 12) the “other” or “doing something else” level should be left up to the students themselves, but examples like humour or just exit should be named. The freedom to make decisions and one's own power of action is central when it comes to these strategies of dealing with conspiracy myths. Having a closer look at the factual and personal level can make things a bit clearer here and give lots of options.

**Meta level for future teachers – students reflecting their future role as teachers in class:**

At this point and in the following exercise “debunking magnifier” students should actively be made aware of their future role as teachers; they should consider finding themselves in the position of a teacher talking with their students during the discussion/activity. The lecturer might need to remind them of that role, e.g., when they chose a certain level of action in the “triangle of coping” or when they chose a certain strategy when acting in the “debunking magnifier”.

Debunking Magnifier (S5, slide 13)

Keeping the descriptions on personal and factual levels of strategies in mind (S5, slide 12) there is one last students’ activity: The Debunking Magnifier. This exercise will also be a good resume of the whole module as the “case reports” collected in the introduction will be used again now.

The teacher will therefor prepare and select examples from the personal case reports from the first lesson – one example for each 4-5 students. The student who reported in first place should be in the respective group. The groups of 4-5 students follow the instructions and try to find a solution on how to deal with the situation the way they think is best. (Showing them slide 11 can be helpful).

In the following presentation in plenum the teacher should take notes about the developed strategies on communication and taking action.

**H5P activity (optional):**

As an optional activity to reflect upon the fine lines between a conspiratorial and a critical world view, students can be asked to conduct drag’n’drop activity “Conspiracy Myth or Criticism?” either in class if time allows it or at home. For this purpose, the H5P activity needs to be incorporated into the respective eLearning platform.

***Summary***

Open time to reflect and summarise what has been learned. Some inspiration for possible questions for reflection:

* What are important steps in research and critical thinking in general?
* How to do research and fact proofing of news?
* Critical thinking: what can actually help prevent the spread of conspiracy myths?