

JOB SUMMARY

The Warfighter Effectiveness Research Center (WERC) at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) seeks a postdoctoral researcher to join a multi-university, interdisciplinary project focused on deepening our understanding of human susceptibility to misinformation and biases that can lead to persuasion and influence. This research seeks to bridge the gap between psychology, computer science, and social sciences to identify the key factors that affect human decision-making and create strategies to counteract these biases. Applicants must have a Ph.D. in sociology, psychology, or a relevant discipline and a strong research record.

The postdoc will work with Professor Richard E. Niemeyer, Lt. Col. Chad Tossell, and our collaborators to develop and evaluate a transdisciplinary theoretical framework for explicating the mechanisms by which misinformation, disinformation, and other information-based attacks disrupt various social psycho-behavioral processes (e.g., sense-making, reasoning, decision making, social action, etc.). The final theoretical framework will explain how multiple sociocultural, psycho-behavioral, and neurobiological processes are “constitutively organized” to affect vulnerability to social engineering attacks and other forms of malicious persuasion. The framework’s validity, accuracy, and precision will be evaluated with data gathered using a mix of neuroimaging technologies, interviews, focus groups, field experiments, and quantitative modeling.

This position, located in Colorado Springs, offers a truly unique postdoctoral training opportunity in an exciting place. In addition to receiving a competitive salary commensurate with experience, the postdoc will be encouraged to submit multiple first-authored peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations, gain interdisciplinary experience working with a diverse team, and develop leadership skills by mentoring undergraduate cadets.

To apply, please email Dr. Richard E. Niemeyer (Richard.niemeyer@afacademy.af.edu) the following materials:

1. Resume or CV
2. Cover letter addressed to the Search Committee briefly describing your qualifications, professional goals, and specific interest in this position.
3. Copies of first-author publications (max. 2),
4. Selected chapters from the doctoral dissertation, if relevant to the application.
5. Names and contact details of at least two (former or current) professional supervisors who have agreed to provide a reference.

Women and underrepresented minorities are particularly encouraged to apply.

EXPECTED TASKS

- Plan, gather, evaluate, synthesize, and conduct relevant theoretical and empirical research.
- Lead and assist with development and evaluation of theoretical models.
- Lead and assist with manuscript, grant, and IRB protocol preparation.

- Collaborate with other post-docs, faculty, and students on the team on data collection and analysis efforts.
- Communicate research results through peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations.
- Oversee undergraduate cadet research efforts and lead cadet mentorship.

REQUIREMENTS

- Ph.D. in Sociology, Psychology, or a related field.
- Strong writing and communication skills (as evidenced by first-author publications and dissertation chapters) and the ability to conduct research in person and in hybrid settings in interdisciplinary teams.
- A highly collaborative attitude that values teamwork, enhancing the work of others, and mentoring students.
- Excellent social and communication skills.

PREFERENCES

- Strong background in theory construction/integration/evaluation
- Strong interest in the sociological, psychological, and neurocognitive foundations of cognitive security, misinformation, disinformation, influence, radicalization, and political polarization.
- Experience working with concepts, theories, and methods from multiple disciplines.
- Experience with experimental design, data collection and management, and statistical analyses.

IMPORTANT DETAILS

- This is expected to be a 2–3-year position. The initial contract is for one year (providing renewal after a 6-month probationary period). For each consecutive year, the contract extension is based on performance.
- The start date is negotiable but anticipated for the Summer or Fall of 2023.
- Competitive salary (\$55-75k per year for full-time employment) commensurate with qualifications.
- Relocation to Colorado Springs—Denver area is required.
- The position does not constitute employment with the United States Government, Department of Defense, Air Force, or Air Force Academy.