

The Death of Expertise	
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Need for experts	<p>We cannot function without admitting the limits of our knowledge and trusting in the expertise of others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We sometimes resist this conclusion because it undermines our sense of independence and autonomy</li> </ul>
Trend in American culture	Replacement of expert views or established knowledge with the insistence that every opinion on any matter is as good as every other
Vaccinations	The parents more likely to resist vaccines are those educated just enough to believe they have the background to challenge established medical science
Expert mistakes	<p>Experts being wrong on occasion about certain issues is not the same thing as experts being wrong consistently on everything</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The point is that they are less likely to be wrong than nonexperts</li> </ul>
Thalidomide disaster	<p>A drug once thought safe that was given to pregnant women as a sedative that also caused horrendous birth defects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The same people who point back to thalidomide, routinely pop dozens of drugs from aspirin to antihistamines, which are among the thousands of medications shown to be safe by trials conducted by experts</li> </ul>
Identifying experts	Education, training, practice, experience, and acknowledgment by others in the same field provides us with at least a rough guide to dividing experts from the rest of society
What is expertise	A combination of education, talent, experience, and peer affirmation
Dunning-Kruger Effect	<p>People who don't know much about a given set of cognitive, technical, or social skills tend to grossly overestimate their prowess and performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is due to lacking "metacognition," which is the ability to know when you're not good at something</li> </ul>
Confirmation bias	<p>The tendency to look for information that only confirms what we believe, to accept facts that only strengthen our preferred explanations, and to dismiss data that challenge what we already accept as truth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If we've heard Boston drivers are rude, the next time we're visiting we'll remember the ones who honked at us or cut us off. We will promptly ignore or forget the ones who let us into traffic or waved a thank you</li> </ul>

<p>Conspiracy theories</p> <p>Occam's Razor</p>	<p>The most extreme case of confirmation bias</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conspiracy theorists manipulate all tangible evidence to fit their explanation</li> <li>- These overcomplicated explanations violate the concept of Occam's Razor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The most likely explanation is the one that requires the fewest number of logical leaps or shaky assumptions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Goal of college	To produce graduates with a reasonable background in a subject, a willingness to continue learning for the rest of their lives, and an ability to assume roles as capable citizens
Modern degrees	<p>Degrees are indicative less of education than of training, and in the worst cases, degrees affirm neither education nor training, but attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- College attendance is no longer a guarantee that people know what they're talking about</li> </ul> <p>Students are too often wasting their money and obtaining the illusion of an education by gravitating toward courses or majors that either shouldn't exist or whose enrollments should be restricted to students who intend to pursue them seriously and with rigor</p>
Studying at a top school	<p>A lousy student who attended a good school is still a lousy student; a diligent student from a small institution is no less intelligent for the lack of a famous pedigree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- However, taking a course at a regional college with an overworked adjunct is usually a lot different than studying at a top university with an accomplished scholar</li> </ul>
Electronic communication	The informality of communication between teachers and students is one more example of how college life in particular now contributes to the eroding respect for experts and their abilities
News	<p>One reason why few Americans trust what little news programming they watch is because they approach the news with an underlying assumption that they are already well versed in the issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They do not seek information so much as confirmation</li> <li>- This mindset creates in laypeople a combination of groundless confidence and deep cynicism, habits of thought that defeat the best attempts of experts to educate their fellow citizens</li> </ul>
Staying in one's lane	Education and credentials in one area do not guarantee expertise in all areas
Generalizing the specific knowledge	People with a very well-defined area of knowledge do not have many tools beyond their specialization, so their instinct is to take what they know and generalize it outward, no matter how poorly the fit is between their own area and the subject at hand

Voting	Voters are often more interested in candidates and their personalities than in their ideas or policies
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