

# sciencefiles.org

A website covering politics, health, and gender that has published false claims about climate change and the COVID-19 virus.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.**

## Ownership and Financing

The website is owned by Michael Klein and Heike Diefenbach, who are based in Wales. Klein and Diefenbach also own the consulting agency Textconsulting.net, which offers “expertise on scientific work,” according to its website.

Klein and Diefenbach are outspoken critics of efforts to curb climate change and of the academic field of gender studies.

The site runs advertisements, solicits donations, and links to an online-shop that sells clothing and other merchandise.

## Content

ScienceFiles.org’s tagline reads “critical social sciences” (“kritische Sozialwissenschaften”). “The two characteristics that make up the ‘spirit’ of this blog are: critical thinking and methodical work, which together make up or should make up ‘science,’” the site’s Manifesto (Grundsatzprogramm) page states. “In our view of science,” the mission statement continues, “there is only critical science or no science at all: If it is not critical, then it is something else, for example propaganda...”

The site primarily covers German politics, health, and gender. Articles often focus on alleged censorship by established German media organizations or are critical of mainstream science, including the consensus that global warming poses a threat to humanity.

The site also frequently criticizes gender equality and gender studies. For example, the Gender Ideology (Gender Ideologie) page describes a ScienceFiles project that aims to rate all German universities to determine their “degree of infiltration with genderism (Genderismus).” According to the site, “a university that tolerates two, three, four or even five professorships for Gender Studies in its halls cannot be assumed to still have rudimentary forms of academia and rational interest in knowledge.”

**Score: 7.5/100**

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

Typical articles have run under headlines including “List of scientists who think man-made climate change is a hoax” (“Liste der Wissenschaftler, die menschengemachten Klimawandel für Humbug halten”); “Censorship networks: the climate change mafia at work” (“Zensur-Netzwerke: Die Klimawandel-Mafia bei der Arbeit”); and “The responsibility of the German Greens for the locust plague in Kenya and East Africa” (“Die Verantwortung der deutschen Grünen für die Heuschreckenplage in Kenia und Ostafrika”).

Registered users have access to discussion forums.

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#### Credibility

Articles on the site do not typically include original reporting. Instead, the site often relies on information from other news outlets — including Frankfurter Rundschau, ARD, and CNN — with added commentary. Articles also regularly cite Wikipedia (a crowd-sourced site) as well as sites such as CGTN that NewsGuard has found to be unreliable.

ScienceFiles.org itself has published false and misleading information. For example, a February 2020 article, titled “Designer virus? Study suggests new coronavirus is biological warfare agent” (“Designer-Virus? Studie legt Schluss nahe, neuer Coronavirus sei biologischer Kampfstoff”), reported that an Indian study had found that, “HIV proteins and the Wuhan virus have one thing in common, which is expressed in the Wuhan virus as an 'insert', a mutation, which the authors say cannot have come about by chance.” The article added: “If something cannot come about by chance and does not represent a natural mutation, but has come about in an unconventional way, then there are not many possibilities left to explain that HIV-1 proteins of all things can be detected in the new coronavirus 2019-nCoV. The attempt to build a biological weapon, a designer virus, is one explanation, perhaps a probable explanation.”

The article’s claim was attributed to a study posted on the website BioRxiv.org, which publishes studies before they have undergone peer review.

According to a February 2020 article on the fact-checking website HealthFeedback.org, the study’s finding that there is a similarity between the COVID-19 virus and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) “was detected using extremely short protein sequences, a

practice that often gives rise to false positive results,” noting that those same sequences are found in many other organisms. The authors of the study withdrew it from bioRxiv.org just two days after it was published.

There is no evidence that the virus was designed as a bioweapon. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

Another February 2020 article titled “Chinese scientists: Origin of SARS-COV-2 in a laboratory - is conspiracy theory after all the truth?” (“Chinesische Wissenschaftler: Labor Ursprung von SARS-COV-2 – Verschwörungstheorie doch die Wahrheit?”) stated that the COVID-19 virus “is said to have originated in a Chinese laboratory.” Referring to a not yet peer-reviewed paper by two Chinese scientists, the article claimed, “There is a new scientific paper whose Chinese authors now believe that [the virus] originated in a Chinese laboratory near the Huanan fish market,” adding, “One must increasingly get the impression that neither the WHO nor the Chinese authorities are telling the truth.”

As evidence that the virus originated in a lab, the article further cited a previously mentioned study that ScienceFiles had covered in an earlier article — a study that had also not been peer-reviewed and which has also been withdrawn by its authors.

There is no reliable evidence supporting the claim that the new strain of coronavirus came from a lab. The only evidence cited by the two Chinese scientists that the coronavirus outbreak could have originated from the laboratory was the proximity of the facility to food markets in Wuhan, according to fact-checking organization FullFact.org. The article by the two Chinese scientists was removed from ResearchGate, the website where it first appeared, after only a few days.

A February 2020 article titled “10 years of Climategate: The climate fraud continues unabated” (“10 Jahre Climategate: Der Klima-Betrug geht unvermindert weiter”) stated that climate change is not caused by

human activity. Referencing a leak of emails from scientists at the Climate Research Unit of the U.K.'s University of East Anglia in 2009, the article claimed that "the emails painted the picture of a corrupt, conspiratorial group of scientists who, with falsified and manipulated data, with models created to produce a certain result, not to predict something, want to make the world believe that there is global warming attributable to human activity."

While the leak of emails by scientists at East Anglia did "show a few scientists in a bad light, being rude or dismissive," an investigation into the matter by FactCheck.org found, it did not prove that research on man-made climate change is false. "[T]here's still plenty of evidence that the earth is getting warmer and that humans are largely responsible," FactCheck.org stated.

Multiple scientific studies and government agencies have concluded for years that the world's temperatures are rising, attributing the increase to rising carbon dioxide levels that are caused at least in part by human activities. The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) states on its website: "The currently observed climate change is largely caused by human" activity, which "inevitably releases carbon dioxide."

A January 2020 article titled "When lies burn: public climate propaganda continues - Australia, Australia, Australia..." ("Wenn's beim Lügen brennt: öffentlich-rechtliche Klima-Propaganda geht weiter – Australien, Australien, Australien...") claimed that the bushfires that were raging in Australia were started by arsonists and that they had nothing to do with global warming. "The fixation of the public broadcasters on the heat records in Australia ... can only be explained by an agenda whose goal is to sell the man-made climate change hoax as truth to the consumers of public broadcasters and hammer it into their brains until they believe it."

Officials throughout Australia said that there was no evidence that many of the fires were started by arsonists and authorities said that they believe the larger fires were touched off by lightning. Moreover, many scientists have said that climate change played a key role in the fires' spread and intensity. "Climate change is increasing bushfire risk in Australia by

lengthening the fire season, decreasing precipitation and increasing temperature,” the Australian Bureau of Meteorology said.

Because ScienceFiles.org has frequently published inaccurate or misleading information, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false news and deceptive headlines, and that it does not gather and present information responsibly.

The site does not disclose a political or ideological agenda and frequently includes opinion in news articles.

For example, a March 2020 article titled “Pandemic profiteers: publicly manipulated into communism” (“Pandemie-Gewinnler: öffentlich-rechtlich in den Kommunismus manipuliert”) stated that “The impiety and callousness with which left-wing extremists are currently trying to exploit the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic for their own purposes leaves even us speechless.”

Another March 2020, titled “Exploitation of children and word-wars about alleged refugees” (“Kinder-Instrumentalisierung und Sprachschlachten um angeblich Geflüchtete”) said of the young climate activist Greta Thunberg: “Climate Greta is an outstanding example of the exploitation of not only children, but also sick children. Infants are almost as good as sick children.”

A February 2020 article titled “Basic pension: Cheers old age! Federal ministry in contempt of its citizens” (“Grundrente: Prost Alter! Bundesministerium übt sich in Bürgerverachtung”) stated, “[T]oo often what comes out of federal ministries turns out to be simply nonsense, grown on a bed of ignorance, fertilized with hubris and treated with flippancy.”

Because ScienceFiles.org does not disclose a conservative agenda and yet frequently includes opinionated statements in news articles advancing that perspective, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

ScienceFiles.org does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

Asked about the site's editorial practices and the articles cited above, co-owner Michael Klein declined to comment for publication.

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#### Transparency

The site does not include an Imprint page disclosing its ownership and does not identify any editorial leaders. The Contact page lists a general email address and includes a contact form.

Articles are typically credited to Klein. However, the site provides no contact or biographical information for Klein, or any of its other content creators.

Advertisements are distinguished from editorial content.

The site's co-owner, Michael Klein, declined to comment when asked about the site's transparency practices.

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#### History

According to a February 2016 article on the site, ScienceFiles.org was launched in April 2011.

*Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 12, 2020, to remove comments from the site at the request of its co-owner, Michael Klein. Previously this label was updated on May 1, 2020, to include comments from the site, and on April 27, 2020, to include a new example of the site's coronavirus coverage.*

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**Send feedback to NewsGuard:** [Click Here](#)

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## Sources

#### Ownership and Financing

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Credibility

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