

## INST 152 – Fake-checking: Critically Evaluating Information for the Real World

### Course Information

**Meeting days/times: Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**

**Contact and office hours: Courtney Douglass - [cdoug88@umd.edu](mailto:cdoug88@umd.edu); 443-745-2023;  
Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. HBK 4117M OR BY APPOINTMENT**

**Catalog Description:** Claims of “fake news” have recently become commonplace, but false, inaccurate, misleading, and poorly researched statements (unintentional or otherwise) are hardly new. This course allows students to assume the role of an information professional, who is literate in analyzing, evaluating, and creating information ethically, and accurately.

**Extended Description:** The concept of ‘literacy’ derives from the Latin, *litera* – letters or characters that represent sound when spoken. Information professionals understand that data or characters create information when appropriately arranged. This suggests that literacy, understanding characters (or data), depends heavily on one’s ability to find, retrieve, analyze, evaluate, create, and disseminate information. Practicing this new literacy provides a foundation for any career, and for success in life as savvy consumers and creators of information and information sources. Assignments will give students ‘real-world’ experience in the literacy that is information.

### Learning Outcomes

1. Examine the quality and veracity of information in a range of contexts – personal, scholastic, and professional, as well as platforms, both physical and virtual.
2. Act as analysts to critically evaluate bodies of text for alignment with literacy standards relevant to the information discipline.
3. Through analysis, evaluation, and creation of myriad information types, the student will create a personal information profile to establish where they have authority.
4. In planning the creation of an authentic information product, students will apply their information literacy to the necessary research related to a ‘clients’ need.
5. The student will apply information literacy to critique, revise and refine authentic information products that have value for a ‘client’.
6. Using proper information literacy, students will demonstrate ethical product dissemination that effectively communicates a ‘clients’ need.

**Key Objectives:**

In this course, students will also: Identify ways which misinformation is spread; understand the broader social and societal implications of misinformation; engage in scholarly discussion with classmates and faculty.

Assignment 1 – Personal Essay/ Information Profile	100 pts
Assignment 2 – Fact-Finding Mission	100 pts.
Assignment 3 - Fact-checked information product	100 pts
Assignment 4 – Class Participation and Discussion	150 pts and

**Assignment 1 Personal Essay - 100 pts**

This assignment is a formal essay and will follow appropriate academic writing conventions.

*Prompt: To establish the value and broad applications of information literacy, each student will create a personal 'information profile' that reflects their unique information needs and behaviors.*

*The essay will total 500-700 words and follow proper APA format.*

**Assignment 2: Fact-finding Mission - 100 pts**

This assignment requires students to critically analyze a source, and serve as scholarly 'fact-checker'. The student will work with a partner to identify appropriate source material that either supports or refutes claims within the source. In a short, written analysis, the student will identify each claim and support that claims accuracy with a relevant, accurate, reliable source. The catch is that you can only use each source type once. For example, if you find a primary source to back up one claim, you cannot use a primary source or related secondary source to back up the next claim.

Feel free to get creative in how you present this. Your submission will include a References page and should be visually interesting. You have the option to submit this assignment electronically or, if it is not an electronic object, you may hand it in.

**Assignment 3: Project Portfolio and Deliverables - 100 pts total**

Students will compile an official report and reflection that includes the project proposal and details the creation process.

Each deliverable supports one or more **Scholarship in Practice** outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an ability to select, critically evaluate, and apply relevant areas of scholarship.
2. Articulate the processes required to bring about a successful outcome from planning, modeling, and preparing, to critiquing, revising and perfecting.
3. Demonstrate an ability to critique existing applications of scholarship to learn from past success and failures.
4. Demonstrate an ability to collaborate to bring about a successful outcome.
5. Recognize how an application of scholarship affects or is affected by political, social, cultural, economic or ethical dimensions.
6. Produce an original analysis, project, creative work, performance or other scholarly work that reflects a body of knowledge relevant to the course.

### **3a. Project Proposal 15 pts**

-Working with a current event/ issue (something likely to remain in the news for the duration of our class or beyond) of your choosing, you will track information disseminated about the topic, identify problems with the presentation; identify a population that stands to lose something substantial from 'fake' information; and create an information product that presents the issue accurately, and in a form that best appeals to the population you've selected.

### **Assignment 3b: Annotated Bibliography 20 pts total**

*Prompt: Each group will select and critically evaluate information sources that support a population's information needs and behaviors, rights and access. The students will conduct research on the topic and compile no less than 15 sources into a strong, clear annotated bibliography that follows the scholarship conventions discussed in class.*

#### **First Draft - 10 pts**

*The first draft will include a relevant summary and brief rhetorical evaluation on the authority, benefits and weaknesses of each source. For each entry, the student will include the source title; author/ producer and/ or publication; the source title; the relevant summary; the rhetorical evaluation.*

#### **Final - 10 pts**

### **3c. Product design/ creation – 15 pts**

-Design or create an information product for the population or community you've researched that accurately conveys information around the issue. The product can be print, digital, visual or oral. Consider: define the issue in a term that they can connect with; use language that appeals to the demographic; make the product appropriately accessible to the population; presents accurate information in a way the community will not reject.

Deliverables:

Project Update 1 w/ mock-up or outline of the information product

**3d. Revised information product design with user evaluations and feedback – 30 pts total**

Solicit peer feedback from each of the other groups; make revisions and corrections as they apply. Adapt/ revise your information product so that it can reach and appeal to both authoritative and marginalized groups.

Deliverables:

Project Update 2 w/ applied revisions and rationale - **20**

This is the final product, and an essay incorporating source material that describes your product, and how and why it will be effective in the population you've identified.

Product evaluation and feedback from tentative users - **10**

Submit the forms from the other groups with your final product – their forms are part of their grade AND yours. They will be graded on the quality of their feedback, and you will be graded on your groups rationale for accepting or rejecting the suggestions. (5 pts for you, 5 pts for them)

**3e. Persuasive Conversation – 20 pts**

Your presentation of your final product should take on a town-hall style discussion where the class will assume the role of your community. You will share the product and communicate information about this issue as it effects the population.

**Assignment 4: Class Participation and Weekly Discussions - 150 pts**

Criteria: Each week, we will continue our class discussions on our ELMS page. I will post a question or topic, and students will reflect, question and challenge in small group discussions. For full credit, you should post an initial response, and offer comments and/or pose questions to others in your group. The groups may change throughout the semester.

All responses will be submitted on-time to the class Canvas page.

Each response should follow the rules of proper grammar, mechanics and sentence structure.

## Course Calendar

### **Week 1** January 29 - *Introductions and Expectations/ Language and Discourse; Your information lense(s) and some historical context*

- Conversation, questions, and respect
- Socratic method
- How do our identities influence our views of information?
- What is 'information'?
- What is 'literacy'
  - o Assessed in this class based on comprehension, creation, and use of information including effective discourse/ rhetoric; and cultural competence.
- Discuss any readings
- Discuss Essay 1

**Readings:** Summaries for Buckland's 'Information is Thing' and Bates' "Information and Knowledge: an evolutionary framework for information science"

This video about people who hate logical argument:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1f4i5a9y75M>

Possibilities and Positionalities

### **Week 2** February 5 – *Power, Privilege, and Perception*

- o Building on identity –
  - who controls the flow of information
  - how is information created and disseminated
- o What power do you have?
- o Discuss course project and begin group selection/ assignment

**Readings:** Citizenship in the Information Society; Social Change And Reasoned Argument

TH: Information Rights are Human Rights;

**Due: Personal Essay 2/10**

### **Week 3** February 12 – *Information vs. News*

- o What is the difference between 'information' and 'news'
  - Revisit discussion from week 1 'what is information'?
  - Mis/disinformation
  - Information exists – news happens

- Examples and readings
- Allow group time to work on project proposal
- Discuss Fact Finding Mission Assignment

**Readings:** Checking the Fact-Checkers in 2008: Predicting Political Ad Scrutiny and Assessing Consistency

TH: This awesome TedTalk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLvzOwE5IWqhSrnPm-9awXCCbzybGg0GHM&time\\_continue=754&v=sNV4ylyXXX0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLvzOwE5IWqhSrnPm-9awXCCbzybGg0GHM&time_continue=754&v=sNV4ylyXXX0)

#### **Week 4** February 19 – *Information Literacy Part 1: Digging Deeper*

- Examine ACRL Framework – tear it apart
  - What is your experience with the framework?
  - Is it something you would remember/ apply in your life?
  - How is this framework helpful?
  - Does this framework contribute to or counteract confirmation bias?
- Discuss project proposals and next steps

**Readings:** Confident Idiots; Overview <https://unl.libguides.com/acrlframework>

**Due: Project Proposal**

#### **Week 5** February 26 – *Policy and People*

- policies that promote or limit access to information
- digital divide as a real human rights infraction.
- Discuss expectations for annotated bibliography

**Readings:** Net neutrality

#### **Week 6** March 5 – *Information Literacy Part 2: Creation and Control*

- Publishing in academics, journalism, online
- Open-access vs. paid access
- Filters and algorithms
- Money and politics

Readings: TBD

**Due: Fact-Finding Mission 3/7**

**Week 7** March 12 – ***Research Literacy***

- Databases
- Google Scholar
- Open Web

**Readings:** Internet Research Made Easy

**Week 8** - March 19 **SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9** March 26 - ***The Information Marketplace***

- o What is the information marketplace?

**Readings:** Fair Use in the Information Marketplace; Opportunities/ Threats Self-Publishing

TH: This awesome clip from John Oliver:  
<https://www.facebook.com/LastWeekTonight/videos/1682941428501526/>

**Due: Annotated Bibliography 1 3/26**

**Week 10** April 2 – ***Information Literacy Part 3: Authority***

- Revisit positionality and identity to establish authority
  - o Why does authority matter?
  - o Can we categorize ‘authority’?
- Allow group time to work on product design

Readings: What’s so Important about Peer-Review?

**Week 11** April 9 – ***Crowdsourcing and Confirmation Bias***

**Readings:** TBD

**Due: Product Design 4/9**

**Week 12** April 16 – ***Group Conferences***

- Meet with each group for at least 30 minutes to discuss progress, ideas, next steps

- ONLINE DISCUSSION FOR PARTICIPATION GRADE

Readings:

**Week 13** April 23 – *Peer Feedback*

- Each group will offer a 7-10 minute preliminary presentation on their initial product design to solicit feedback
- Students will assume the role of the 'user group' to offer suggestions on how various groups might revise their designs/ what works really well.

Readings:

Due:

**Week 14** April 30 – Discussion

Readings:

**Week 15** May 7 – *Privacy and Protection*

Readings: Detecting, Preventing, and Responding to Fraudsters

**Due: Revised information product design 5/9**

**Week 16** May 14 – *Presentations*

Readings:

**Due: Final Annotated Bibliography 5/16; Persuasive Conversations 15 min each**