

# INST 152-102: Foundational Scholarship and Critical Inquiry in the Information Age

## Course Information

**Meeting location/days/times:** JMZ 2206, Tuesday/Thursday, 5:00-6:15PM

**Instructor:** David Durden, [durden@umd.edu](mailto:durden@umd.edu), 301-405-9253

**Office hours:** Mondays 10AM-12PM, B0230 McKeldin Library

**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 reviews the state of “fake news,” mis- and dis-information, and post-truth in contemporary society. This course will require students to think critically about issues of mis- and dis-information, and to practice information and source evaluation. Students will 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, *littera* – 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. In this course, students will also: Identify ways which mis-information is spread; understand the broader social and societal implications of mis-information; engage in scholarly discussion with classmates and faculty.

## Scholarship in Practice Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will select and critically evaluate areas of scholarship relevant to the practice of information studies, including information theory and information literacy.
2. Students will apply relevant methods and frameworks to the planning, modeling, and/or preparing necessary to produce a project authentic to the field of information studies.
3. Students will critique, revise, and refine an information product.
4. Students will effectively communicate the application of scholarship through ancillary material (written, oral, and/or visual).

## Course Policies

Campus-wide policies and guidelines are located, maintained, and updated at this link: <https://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>.

**Course Communication:** Class announcements will be delivered through ELMS. To contact me directly, please email me at [durden@umd.edu](mailto:durden@umd.edu).

## Course Specific Policies

- Use of phones: The use of phones in class represents a disconnection from the discussions and signals disrespect to your classmates. Some students may take issue with being recorded.
- Use of laptops: Laptops and tablets should be used for classwork only.
- Use of recording devices: Please discuss with me about permission to record class sessions.
- Accommodations: Please discuss with me early in the semester regarding any learning accommodations you require.

**Expectations:** Attendance and participation are integral to success in this course. You should plan to devote time and energy to reading, seeking clarifications when needed, and developing thoughts for in-class discussion.

Some of the topics we will cover are controversial. This class is a safe space for the exploration of ideas and scholarly development. Students should give each other the benefit of the doubt when and if controversial opinions arise. However, there will be zero tolerance for harassment, hate speech, or other forms of intentional bullying. The basic operating procedure is to cite your sources throughout discussions.

**Names, Pronouns, and Self Identifications:** The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering equitable classroom environments. Please feel free to me and the class how you wish to be referred to both in terms of name and pronouns. The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of the gender identity. Visit <https://trans.umd.edu> to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice to disclose (e.g. should it come up in class discussions about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

**Grading:** Your grade is based on the combination of successful completion of the assignments below as well as weekly reading and participation. A grading rubric will be provided with each assignment to make the requirements clear. All assignments will be distributed and submitted through ELMS. Grades will be available as assignments are graded. Written assignments will be assessed through Turnitin, a software program that checks for originality (plagiarism).

Grading Scale		
A+ 98-100	A 93-97	A- 90-92
B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
F 0-59		

Late work will not be accepted for course credit, so please plan to have it submitted before the scheduled deadline. If you wish to discuss your grade, please visit me during office hours. In the event that I have made a mistake in grading, I will immediately correct it. Formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

**Weekly readings:** Every week there are assigned readings and videos. You should read/watch and be prepared to discuss the material in class. Part of your participation credit involves class participation and weekly ELMS posts identifying questions about the readings to help drive class discussion.

### Assignments

1. Assignment 1: Personal Essay/Information Profile - 50 pts.
2. Assignment 2: Fact-finding and Critical Reflection - 100 pts.

3. Assignment 3: Final Project Portfolio - 100 pts.

4. Class Participation and Discussion - 150 pts.

**Basic requirements:** All written assignments will be submitted through ELMS using the following format guidelines:

- 12 point font (Times New Roman or Arial)
- Double spaced
- 1" margins (Google Docs and Microsoft Office defaults)
- APA format for citations and style (in-text and works cited)

**Assignment 1: Personal Information Profile - 50 pts.**

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

**Prompt:** What are your information seeking habits? What news sources do you regularly interact with? What is your preferred way of engaging with information? What is your information diet like? You should create an ‘information profile’ that reflects on your unique information needs and behaviors. In approximately 500-700 words (2-3 pages), paint a picture of who you are as an information consumer and your world view. This assignment will be graded on completeness rather than specific content, opinions, or perspectives. Sources are optional but, if included, please use APA format for citations.

**Assignment 2: Fact-finding and Critical Reflection - 100 pts.**

**Prompt:** This assignment requires you to critically analyze a source (news article, website, etc.) and serve as scholarly “fact checker.” You will work to identify appropriate source material that either supports or refutes claims within the source. In a short (5-7 pages), written analysis, you will identify each claim made and analyze these claims. Reliable and credible sources are required for each refuted or supported claim. You must use APA format for citations.

Additionally, analyze the source by discussing how the presentation affects the meaning. Examples include analysis of a book and aspects of its creation, authority, art work, etc. Other examples could include museum exhibits, websites, people, and more. Feel free to get creative and choose something that interests you. Please reflect on the readings from the course and think deeply, analytically, and critically about this assignment.

**Assignment 3: Project Portfolio and Deliverables - 150 pts. total**

This assignment is divided into five parts; it is cumulative and iterative.

**Assignment 3a: Project Proposal**

Working with a current event/issue (something likely to remain in the news for the duration of our class and 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 the ‘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.

Topics must be approved by the instructor.

**Assignment 3b: Product Design and Creation**

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 but **must reflect approximately 10 pages of written work**. Define the issue in a term that the population can connect with; use language that appeals to the demographic; make the product appropriately accessible to the population; present accurate information in a way that the community will not reject.

**Deliverable:** *Project Update*

Prepare a brief summary of sources. You should expect to acquire 10-15 sources for a 10-page paper. To be clear, the paper is the final product; you do not need to have completed the 10 pages, just made progress. Submit a short update of about 1-2 pages including your summary of sources, a product outline, and any mock-ups you may have.

**Assignment 3c: Revised Information Product Design with User Evaluations and Feedback**

Solicit peer feedback from others in the class during our in-class workshop; make revisions and corrections as they apply. Adapt and revise your information product so that it can reach and appeal to both authoritative and marginalized groups.

**Assignment 3d: Persuasive Conversation**

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 3e: Final Project Portfolio**

Following your presentation, you will have about a week to submit your final product. Work equivalent to approximately 10 pages of written work (double spaced), bibliography, and presentation materials.

**Assignment 4: Class participation and Weekly Discussions - 150 pts.**

**Criteria:** Class discussions and interactions will form a critical component of this course.

**Requirements:** All posts will be submitted in ELMS (The first post is due Tuesday, Feb. 5).

- Post 1-3 short questions related to the readings *before* class each week. Think about the author and the context (class, life, time period, etc.), and ask yourself what the readings will be about, how it ties in with the course topics, is the title/vocabulary confusing, etc. Questions are due Tuesdays before 5PM.

You are not required to reply to your classmates in ELMS, nor do you need to worry about originality. However, the work must be your own. The summaries indicate your engagement with the reading and are a crucial component of your grade.

**Course Calendar**

The course calendar is subject to change throughout the semester. Changes to readings, due dates, or class meetings will be announced in advance and reflected in ELMS.

**Week 1** - Jan. 29 & 31 - *Introduction & Expectations; Language & Discourse; What is Information?*

**Readings:**

- Bates, M., "Information and knowledge: An evolutionary framework for information science" (<http://www.informationr.net/ir/10-4/paper239.html>)
- "Misology and misanthropy" [video] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1f4i5a9y75M>)

**Week 2** - Feb. 5 & 7 - *Knowledge, Facts, & Truth*

**Readings:**

- “How to separate fact and fiction online” [video] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNV4yIyXXX0>)
- Levitin, D., "Counterknowledge" from *A Field Guide to Lies*

**Week 3** - Feb. 12 & 14 - *Information Seeking Behavior and Confirmation Bias***Readings:**

- “On being wrong” [video] ([https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn\\_schulz\\_on\\_being\\_wrong](https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_on_being_wrong))
- Noble, S., "A society, searching" from *Algorithms of Oppression*

**Due:** Assignment 1: Personal Information Profile

**Week 4** - Feb. 19 & 21 - *Information Literacy***Readings:**

- “ACRL Framework for information literacy in higher education” (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>)
- Dunning, D., “We are all confident idiots”
- Levitin, D., "Knowing what you don’t know" from *A Field Guide to Lies*

**Week 5** - Feb. 26 & 28 - *Information, Facts, and News***Readings:**

- Amazeen, M., “Checking the fact-checkers in 2008: Predicting political ad scrutiny and assessing consistency”
- Borel, B., "Why we fact check" from *The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking* (<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpr/reader.action?docID=4519388&ppg=99>)

**Week 6** - Mar. 5 & 7 - *The Information Marketplace***Readings:**

- Leaffer, M., “The uncertain future of fair use in a global information marketplace”
- Carolan, S. & Evain, C., “Self-publishing: Opportunities and threats in a new age of mass culture”
- “Astroturfing” [video] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fmh4RdIwswE>)

**Week 7** - Mar. 12 & 14 - *False Narratives***Readings:**

- Fetzer, J.H., “Disinformation: The use of false information”
- Kavanagh, J. & Rich, M.D., “Summary” from *Truth Decay* ([https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2314.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2314.html))
- Kavanagh, J. & Rich, M.D., “Roads to Solutions” from *Truth Decay*

**Due:** Assignment 3a: Project Proposal

**Week 8** - Mar. 18 & 22 - *SPRING BREAK*

**Week 9** - Mar. 26 & 28 - *Privacy and Ethics*

**Readings:**

- Bovens, M., "Information rights: Citizenship in the information society"
- Kelleher, J.D. & Tierney, B., "Privacy and ethics" from *Data Science*

**Week 10** - Apr. 2 & 4 - *Academic Structures and Peer Review*

**Readings:**

- Kaspar, W.A., "What's so important about peer review?"
- "What is peer review?" (<https://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/what-is-peer-review>)
- Kofman, A., "Bruno Latour, the Post-truth philosopher, mounts a defense of science" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher.html>)

**Due:** Assignment 2: Fact-finding and Critical Reflection

**Week 11** - Apr. 9 & 11 - *Data Literacy*

**Readings:**

- Kelleher, J.D. & Tierney, B., "What are data and what is a dataset?" from *Data Science*
- Levitin, D., "Hijinks with how numbers are reported" from *A Field Guide to Lies*
- Levitin, D., "How numbers are collected" from *A Field Guide to Lies*

**Week 12** - Apr. 16 & 18 - *Information Issues and the Internet*

- Bridle, J., "Something is wrong on the Internet" (<https://medium.com/@jamesbridle/something-is-wrong-on-the-internet-c39c471271d2>)
- Pariser, E., "The User is the Content" from *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*
- Read, M., "How much of the Internet is Fake?" (<http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/how-much-of-the-internet-is-fake.html>)

**Week 13** - Apr. 23 & 25 - *Information as Commodity*

**Readings:**

- Einstein, M., "Introduction: Why ads don't look like ads" from *Black ops advertising: Native ads, content marketing, and the covert world of the digital sell* (<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpl/detail.action?docID=4673446>)
- Larivière, V. et al., "Big publishers, bigger profits: How the scholarly community lost control of its journals"

**Due:** Assignment 3b: Project Update

**Week 14** - Apr. 30 & May 2 - *Current Issues in Scholarship & Peer Feedback*

**Readings:**

- Teitcher, J.E.F et al., "Detecting, Preventing, and Responding to 'Fraudsters' in Internet Research"
- Masten, Y. & Ashcraft, A., "Due diligence in the open-access explosion era: Choosing a reputable journal for publication"

**Week 15** - May 7 & 9 - *Peer Feedback & Presentations*

**Readings:** N/A

**Due:** Assignment 3c: In-class workshop and peer review session ('Revised' preliminary product due before class)

**Week 16** - May 14 - *Presentations*

**Readings:** N/A

**Due:** Assignment 3d: Persuasive conversations

**FINAL** - May 22

There is no in-person exam. Your final project materials are due by 12PM in ELMS.

**Due:** Assignment 3e: Final Project Portfolio

- Final product
- Bibliography
- Slides and/or presentation materials