

## **INST 152 – Fake-checking: Critically Evaluating Information for the Real World Spring 2019**

“The difference between false memories and true ones is the same as jewels: it is always the false ones that look the most real, the most brilliant.” -Salvador Dali

### **General Information:**

Meeting location: CHM 1224

Meeting Times: Mondays, 2pm-4:45pm

Instructor: Jordan Sly, [jsly@umd.edu](mailto:jsly@umd.edu)

Office hours: By appointment

Office location: 5101D McKeldin Library

### **Required Books:**

Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York: New York University Press.

All other readings will be provided through our ELMS space

Readings are likely to change as the course goes, so be sure to note changes when announced

**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:** Through the active participation in the course discussions, engagement with the assigned reading, and completion of the assignments, students will learn about the complexities of the information landscape in a robust and critical way. The goal is not to leave this course as a cynic, but as an engaged and discerning consumer, citizen, employee, service provider, or whatever role you choose. This course explores areas of information science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, journalism, political science, and more. Students will have hands on experience working with different forms of information and will work to develop a toolkit for the practice of information evaluation. In this course, students will identify ways in which misinformation is spread; understand the broader social and societal implications of misinformation; engage in scholarly discussion with classmates and faculty.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will demonstrate a critical and engaged analysis of information drawing on a complex set of criteria and considerations
2. Students will develop as active learners and active participants in the cycle of information

3. Students will engage with scholarly and popular resources in order to develop skills and utilize tools for further evaluation

**Course Communication:** For class announcements, I will use ELMS to ensure that you will all see the announcement in a timely manner. To contact me directly, please email me at [jsly@umd.edu](mailto:jsly@umd.edu).

**Policies:** Please visit [www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html) for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

**Expectations:** Attendance and participation is key to success in this course. Because of the nature of the topics we will be covering, active and engaged reading and discussion is of paramount importance. None of the readings assigned are particularly long, but please do devote time and energy to thinking about the readings, seeking clarifications if needed, and developing thoughts to bring to class for discussion.

Some of the topics we will be covering are controversial, so it is important for you to know that our class is a safe and respectful space to explore ideas and develop as scholars. It is incumbent on each of you to give each other the benefit of the doubt if controversial opinions come up and to allow the exploration of ideas. That said, we will have zero tolerance for harassment, hate speech, or other forms of intentional bullying, etc. A basic operating procedure we will work under is that we will cite our sources as we discuss.

**Grading:** Your grade is based on the combination of successful completion of the assignments outlined below and the weekly reading and participation grade. A grading rubric will be distributed with each assignment in order to make the requirements clear. Assignments will be distributed through ELMS and turned in through ELMS. This allows two helpful and specific things:

- You will be able to see your grades as soon as I have graded your assignment
- Your paper will be assessed through Turnitin, software that checks for originality (plagiarism). This is important for you to know as it adds some accountability for both you and me.

Late work will not be accepted for course credit so please plan to have it submitted well before the scheduled deadline. I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%		
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%		

## Assignments:

- Assignment 1 — Personal Essay/ Information Profile – 50 pts
- Assignment 2 — Fact-finding and Critical Reflection – 100 pts.
- Assignment 3 — Final Project Portfolio – 150 pts
- Class Participation and Discussion – 150 pts
- *See the assignment descriptions following the course calendar*

## Course specific policies:

- No phones: As mentioned above, we will be having a weekly discussion and phones take you out of the discussion and signal disrespect to your classmates. Additionally, as this class is a safe space, some students may worry about being recorded.
- Use of laptops: Laptops and tablets are permitted for classwork only.
- Use of recording devices: Please talk with me about permission to record class sessions.
- Accommodations: Please talk to me early in the semester regarding any learning accommodations you require and I am more than happy to work with you

## Resources:

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit [tutoring.umd.edu](http://tutoring.umd.edu) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you. In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting [ter.ps/writing](http://ter.ps/writing) and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit [counseling.umd.edu](http://counseling.umd.edu).

A very important resource for this course is the University Libraries. The website is [lib.umd.edu](http://lib.umd.edu). Research and resources for your assignments should come from the library. Please discuss with me if you are not able to find materials.

We will have a session with a librarian to help acquaint you with the library resources

Our librarian for INST is Rachel Gammons, [rgammons@umd.edu](mailto:rgammons@umd.edu). Please feel free to make an appointment with her for additional help with research and resources.

Everything is free because you have already paid for it, and **everyone needs help**. all you have to do is ask for it.

## 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. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit [trans.umd.edu](https://trans.umd.edu) to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation 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.

### **Reading structure:**

Every week we will have a few assigned readings. The readings are separated into three categories: *overview*, *focus*, and *insight*. None of these are particularly long, so I want you to really dig into them and come to class ready to discuss. Each week you will have two short reading-related writing requirements which contribute to your class participation grade. These are informal and meant to be reflective. Because we are only meeting once per week, I will ask that:

- by the Friday following class, you post at least one question you have of the reading before you start reading. In other words, think about the author, think about the context (class, life, etc.) and ask yourself what will this particular reading be about, how does it fit with the unit we're on, if the title is confusing, etc.
- By 12p on the Monday of class, post a brief summary of the reading, your thoughts, and any further questions you have of the reading. We will use these responses in class.
- When we discuss as a class, you will be the expert on the particular reading you chose, so please come prepared to share your reflection with the class.

## **Units**

### **Metacognition**

Week 1: Jan 28<sup>th</sup>

First day of class, no readings due

Week 2: Feb 4<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** Cooke. 2018. "Critical Thinking and Metaliteracy," from *Fake News and Alternative Facts*

**Focus:** Ohtani and Hisasaka. 2018. "Beyond Intelligence: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Relationship among Metacognition, Intelligence, and Academic Performance." *Metacognition and Learning*

**Insight:** Pennycook, Ross, Koehler, and Fugelsang. 2017. “Dunning–Kruger Effects in Reasoning: Theoretical Implications of the Failure to Recognize Incompetence.” *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*

## Truth and the History of Knowledge

Week 3: Feb 11<sup>th</sup>

**DUE:** Assignment 1: Personal Information Profile (due before class)

**Overview:** Burke. 2016. Selections from *What is the History of Knowledge?*

**Focus:** Trevor-Roper. 1983. “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland” from *The Invention of Tradition*

**Insight:** Burke. 2001. Chap 1, “Photographs and Portraits” from *Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*

Week 4: Feb 18<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** Weinberger. 2007. Chap 3, “Geography of Knowledge” from *Everything is Miscellaneous*

**Focus:** Trouillot. 1995. “The Power of the Story” from *Silencing the Past*

**Insight:** Orwell. 1944. “Propaganda and Demotic Speech” from *All Art is Propaganda*

Week 5: Feb 25<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** “Postmodernism” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>

**Focus:** Foucault. Selections from *On the Order of Things*

**Insight:** Kofman. 2018. “Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science.” *The New York Times Magazine*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html>

## Ideology and Language

Week 6: Mar 4<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** Van Cleave, Chap. 1 “Reconstructing and Analyzing Arguments” from *Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking*, <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/introduction-to-logic-and-critical-thinking>

**Focus:** Gillespie. 2018. “All Platforms Moderate,” from *Custodians of the Internet*

**Insight:** Carr. 2008. “Is Google Making us Stupid?” *The Atlantic*,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/>

Week 7: Mar 11<sup>th</sup>

**DUE:** Project Proposal (due before midnight on Mar 15)

**Overview:** Freedman. 2003. Selections from *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*

**Focus:** Read. 2018. “How Much of the Internet is Fake?” *New York Magazine*

<http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/how-much-of-the-internet-is-fake.html>

**Insight:** Paul and Matthews. 2016. “The Russian ‘Firehose of Falsehood’ Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It.” *RAND Corporation*, 2016.

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE198.html>

Week 8: Mar 18<sup>th</sup> Spring Break, no readings due

## Search and Filter Bubbles

Week 9: Mar 25<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** Pariser. 2011. Selections from *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*

**Focus:** Noble. 2018. “Introduction” from *Algorithms of Oppression*

**Insight:** Noble. 2018. Chap. 1 “A Society, Searching” from *Algorithms of Oppression*

Week 10: Apr 1<sup>st</sup>

**DUE:** Assignment 2: Critical Reflection (due before midnight on Apr 5)

**Overview:** Aghazadeh, Burns, Chu, et. al. 2018. “GamerGate: A Case Study in Online Harassment.” In *Online Harassment*

**Focus:** Noble. 2018. Chap 2 “Searching for Black Girls” from *Algorithms of Oppression*

**Insight:** Vaidhyanathan. 2018. Selections from *Antisocial Media : How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*

## “Memeification” of Reality

Week 11: Apr 8<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** Milner. 2016. Selections from *The World Made Meme*

**Focus:** Kavanah and Rich. 2018. Chap 3 “Historical Context: Is Truth Decay New?” from *Truth Decay*

**Insight:** Noble. 2018. Chap 3 “Searching for People and Communities” from *Algorithms of Oppression*

## Academic structures and peer review

Week 12: Apl 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Overview:** “What is Peer Review?” <https://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/what-is-peer-review>

**Focus:** Jennings. 2006. “The true purpose of peer review

What you can't measure, you can't manage: the need for quantitative indicators in peer review”

<https://www.nature.com/nature/peerreview/debate/nature05032.html> from *Nature*'s Peer Review

Debate, <https://www.nature.com/nature/peerreview/debate/index.html> -- Please also take a look

through the index of articles to get a sense of the debate. If there is one you would rather read,

please do.

**Insight:** Sagan. “The Fine Art of Baloney Detection,” from *The Demon Hunted World*

## Combatting False Narrative

Week 13: Apl 15<sup>th</sup>

**DUE:** Project Update (due before midnight on Apl 26)

**Overview:** Lepore. 2018. “Does Journalism Have a Future?”

In an era of social media and fake news, journalists who have survived the print plunge have new foes to face..” *The New Yorker*, [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/28/does-](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/28/does-journalism-have-a-future)

[journalism-have-a-future](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/28/does-journalism-have-a-future)

**Focus:** Kavanagh and Rich. 2018. “Summary” from *Truth Decay*,

[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2314.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2314.html)

**Insight:** Kavanagh and Rich, 2018. “Road to Solutions,” from *Truth Decay*

Week 14: Apl 29<sup>th</sup>

**Overview:** Borel, Chap. 1, “Why we Fact Check” from *The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking*,

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpr/reader.action?docID=4519388&ppg=99>

**Focus:** Fink, Christina. 2018. “Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, And Facebook In Myanmar.” *Journal of International Affairs*

**Insight:** Lipstadt, 1993. Selection From *Denying the Holocaust*

Week 15: May 6<sup>th</sup>

**DUE:** In-class workshopping and peer review. Preliminary product due through ELMS before class. **Also**, bring a physical copy of your work to class for workshopping

**Overview:** Borel, Chap. 2, “What we Fact Check” from *The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpr/reader.action?docID=4519388&ppg=99>

**Focus:** Explore the Newseum resources for Media Literacy, <https://newseumed.org/>

**Insight:** Zhuravskaya, “When—and Why—Fact-Checking Cannot Stop Alternative Facts,” *Promarket.org*

Week 16: May 13<sup>th</sup>

Presentations and class summary

No readings due

May 22: FINAL

***DUE:*** Portfolio Due to me by noon through ELMS

-Final product

-Bibliography

-Slides or presentation materials

## Assignments

**Basic requirements:** All written assignments will be turned in through ELMS with the following format notes:

- 12 point font either Times New Roman or Arial
- Double Spaced
- Normal margins (1” all around – Google and Microsoft defaults)
- APA Citation (in-text and works cited)

### Assignment 1 Personal Essay - 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 seek out? What is your preferred way of learning about new news items? What is your information diet like? In approximately 500-700 words (2-3) pages paint a picture of who you are as an information consumer and your world view. I will be grading on completeness of the assignment, not on the content, so don't worry about me not agreeing with a source you like or anything of the sort. No sources needed. If you are including optional sources, please cite using APA citation style.

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

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

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.

Additionally, examples could include museum exhibits, websites, people, and more. Be creative and find something that interests you. Please reflect on the readings from the course or any additional outside sources you have found and think deeply, analytically, and critically about this assignment.

Please make sure to cite all direct quotes AND author ideas.

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

This is the final project for this class and it is broken into a few section with individual due dates. There are two main components to this project, a presentation and a short paper. All of the work for this project works towards these two goals, so make sure to keep up with deadlines and start on the project as early as possible.

### **3a. Project Proposal**

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.

Topic must be approved by me

### **3b. Product design/ 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. 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.

*Project Update* with a brief summary of sources. For a 10-page paper, aim for around 10-15 sources. 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 page including your summary of sources and any mock-ups you may have. I would also like you to have consulted with a librarian by this point, so please also provide the name of the librarian you have met with and the date you met.

### **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/ revise your information product so that it can reach and appeal to both authoritative and marginalized groups.

### **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.

### **3e. Final Project portfolio**

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

## **Class Participation and Weekly Discussions - 150 pts**

*Requirements:* All posts will be done in ELMS

- Post 1-3 short questions you have of the reading *before* reading by midnight on the Friday following our class meeting.
- Carefully read and analyze weekly readings as an active reader
- Post a short reflection (1-2 paragraphs total) summarizing the readings and engaging with your initial questions.

You do not need to reply to your classmates in the ELMS forum, nor do you need to worry about originality, but the work needs to be your own. The summaries indicate your engagement with the reading and are a crucial component of your grade. I will be looking for:

- Honest reflection
- Engagement
- Active reading strategies

