**INLS690: Misinformation**

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| THE BASICS | |
| Course: | Misinformation |
| Location: | Manning 304 |
| Time: | 10:10AM to 11:25AM Mondays & Wednesdays |
| Instructor: | Samantha Kaplan |
| Contact information: | Please contact me at **sjkaplan@live.unc.edu** – I will make every effort to respond within 24 hours. While there are other ways to contact me and I maintain a presence on various social networks, my academic email address is how you should contact me unless instructed otherwise. |
| Office hours: | By appointment |

**Class description:**

This course will examine the concept of misinformation - what it is, when it occurs, and how what is misinformation in one context may be good information in another. We will review historical and present-day cases of misinformation. We will consider the implications of misinformation and how to address it, with an emphasis on anticipating the potential outcomes (positive and negative) of possible solutions. Class preparation will be varied and include scholarly and popular literature, long-form journalism, and video, but may also include activities or social media.

**Feedback**

Your feedback is extremely important to me! Please use the Qualtrics form below **at least once a month** to tell me what’s working and what you think I can improve! You can click the link below or copy and paste the longer link. All feedback is completely anonymous.

<https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_428L6KAEgrRLlnT>

**Primary Objectives:**

* The primary objective of this course is to cultivate pragmatic skepticism within students toward information so that they will be able to articulate the reasons, assumptions, and beliefs underlying why they do or do not consider information (in any form) misinformation.
* We will interpret, compare, and anticipate contexts and situations in which the same information might be interpreted or function differently.
* We will analyze information sources and assess their limitations, strengths, positive and negative biases across contexts, populations, and perspectives.
* We will evaluate and select or build information sources and items of information to ensure they meet the needs of a specific context
* We will articulate the information - emotional, tangible, empirical, et cetera - that drives an individual’s judgment of an information item or source

**Materials:**

We will not use a traditional textbook and most of our readings will come from scholarly literature and the popular press. We will also read selections from the two books below. It is highly recommended that you purchase them.

* Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How too much information is changing the way we think and know*. Routledge.
* Collins, L. (2012). *Bullspotting: finding facts in the age of misinformation*. Prometheus Books.

**Classroom environment**

We must nourish our classroom community so that we may welcome the diversity of understanding we wish to analyze. To do so, we must listen to our discussions with an open mind and give all views attention and consideration.

**Assignments**

* Classroom participation and attendance (20%)
* Weekly reading responses (20%)
* Statement of presuppositions (20%)
* Major assignment (40%)

**For all assignments:**

* **Submit in Sakai**
* **Cite your references in APA format**

**Classroom participation:**

Description: Every class is an opportunity to speak up and share insight, introduce the rest of the class to relevant examples, or ask critical questions that inspire discussion. At the semester midpoint I will communicate with you if your participation needs improvement.

Percentage of grade: 20%

Due date: N/A

**A note about computers, tablets, and phones**

* I understand and support students using these devices in class to, for example, refer to notes and required readings. Please take care that your devices support your ability to participate in class, rather than detract from it.

**Weekly reading responses**

Description: Every week please upload a response of 500 words (plus or minus 150 words) by midnight before Monday’s class to Sakai. The response should include your critical reactions and analytical thoughts about the readings for the week. Prompts below the week’s readings highlight themes or questions your response could address.

Percentage of grade: 20%

Due date: by 11:59PM every Sunday night

**Statement of assumptions and presuppositions:**

Description: Write a brief description (between 8-10 pages double-spaced) of your “context” (your discipline, your political leanings, your age, your personal experiences, et cetera) and describe some of the presuppositions and assumptions deriving from that context. The goal of the assignment is to introduce yourself based upon what you know and what you think and for you to begin to articulate why you think what you think.

Percentage of grade: 20%

Due date: Rough draft is due week 3, final draft is due week 6.

**Major assignment OPTION A: Resource guide creation**

Description: Students will select an issue and/or population of interest to them and create a resource guide to meet the information need (depending on the issue and population, the guide will vary greatly). The final product should resemble a libguide. Accompanying the guide, please provide an annotated guide or paper that discusses why each source was included, which sources were considered and not included and why, and a detailed description of the process of looking for sources.

Percentage of grade: 40%

Grading criteria: Major grading attributes will be comprehensiveness of guide, clarity of inclusion/exclusion criteria, and thoroughness of search and selection process.

Due date: Selection of issue must be submitted to Sakai by week 8. There is an option for rough draft submission during weeks 10-11. Tentative list of sources to be used should be submitted during week 12. Final product is due before last class session – guide should be uploaded to Sakai (document, link, PPT, etc.) and annotated guide/paper should be submitted to instructor.

**Major assignment OPTION B: Research Paper**

Description: Students will select a controversy, phenomenon, or an issue of interest to them and influenced by misinformation (or that is misinformation) and research its history, its current status, and consider its future. Students should identify the affected populations and stakeholders, consider what constitutes information, and good/bad, true/false labels in this context. Research papers should also include the student’s own reflections of the process – their initial thoughts and/or preconceptions, and how they changed or did not change as they researched the phenomenon.

Percentage of grade: 40%

Grading criteria: Major grading attributes will be thoroughness of paper, sensitivity to the issue and nuance toward how misinformation “works” in this setting, and reflection.

Due date: Selection of issue must be submitted to Sakai by week 8. There is an option for rough draft submission during weeks 10-11. Tentative list of sources to be used should be submitted during week 12. Final product is due before last class session – guide should be uploaded to Sakai (document, link, PPT, etc.) and annotated guide/paper should be submitted to instructor.

**A note about assignments:** The major and minor assignments are crafted to allow you some autonomy to pursue issues of interest to you. However, if you would like to modify them in some additional way or “create your own adventure” in some way, I am happy to meet with you to discuss possibilities.

**A note about due dates:** All assignments should be submitted before the class session of the week they are due, unless otherwise noted. You are allotted one grace period in which you may submit an assignment or deliverable 48 hours later without penalty of any kind – use it wisely! (If you are using it, you do not need to email me – I’ll just assume).

**Grading:**

UNC-CH graduate students are graded on the H/P/L/F scale. The following definitions of these grades will be used for this course. While assignments are not graded "on a curve," most students should expect to get a P, if they fully complete the course assignments.

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| **Letter grade** | **Numeric range** | **Description of grade** |
| H | 95-100 | High Pass: Clear excellence; beyond expectations for the course. |
| P | 80-94 | Pass: Entirely satisfactory; fully meets expectations for the course. |
| L | 70-79 | Low Pass: Minimally acceptable; clear weaknesses in performance. |
| F | Below 70 | Fail: Unacceptable performance. |
| IN | NA | Work incomplete. |

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

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| **LABELS** | |
| Week 1  August 28 & 30th | Required readings:   * Knowlton, S. (2005). Three decades since prejudices and antipathies : A study of changes in the library of congress subject headings . *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, *40*(2), 123-145. doi:10.1300/j104v40n02\_08 * *Sanford Berman: Father of radical cataloging « Papercut Zine Library*. (2016). *Papercutzinelibrary.org*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://www.papercutzinelibrary.org/wordpress/2012/06/17/sanford-berman-father-of-radical-cataloging/   Explore the following websites on terms you consider “controversial” or “contested”:   * http://racebox.org/ * http://authorities.loc.gov/ * https://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/MBrowser.html * https://www.oclc.org/dewey/features/summaries.en.html |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly readings response – should address your experiences exploring topics on LOC, MESH, and Dewey, and thoughts about implicit power of librarians or anyone else with power to “label” and “categorize” * Post to Sakai by 11:59pm on August 27th |
| Week 2  No class September 4th (Labor Day!), September 6th | Required readings:   * Levinovitz, A. (2016). *An Alternative-Medicine Believer’s Journey Back to Science*. *WIRED*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://www.wired.com/2015/04/alternative-medicine-believers-journey-back-science/?Src=longreads * *Vaccines ProCon.org*. (2016). *Vaccines.procon.org*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://vaccines.procon.org/ * Wolfe, R. M., & Sharp, L. K. (2005). Vaccination or immunization? The impact of search terms on the internet. *Journal of health communication*, *10*(6), 537-551.   Activity:   1. Using any search engine of your choice (Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask, DuckDuckGo, DogPile . . .) do two separate searches:    1. Immunization    2. Vaccination 2. Using any social media site of your choice (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest . . .) do two separate searches:    1. Immunization    2. Vaccination |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly readings response – should address readings and your experiences with the activity, possible implications or other issues that might have similar results * Post to Sakai by noon on September 5th because of Labor Day Holiday |

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| **BIAS, OVERT AND IMPLICIT** | |
| Week 3  September 11 & 13th | Required readings:   * Bednar, P. p., & Welch, C. c. (2008). Bias, misinformation and the Paradox of Neutrality. *Informing Science*, *11*85-106. * Quinn, B. b. (2012). Collection development and the psychology of bias. *Library Quarterly*, *82*(3), 277-304. * Gunter, J. (2015). Should the National Library of Medicine index anti-choice journals?Retrieved from https://drjengunter.wordpress.com/2015/12/30/should-the-national-library-of-medicine-index-anti-choice-journals/ |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly readings response – should feature your thoughts about whether neutrality and/or objectivity is possible * Post to Sakai by 11:59pm on September 10th * **DUE:** Rough draft of statement of presuppositions |
| Week 4  September 18th and 20th | Required readings:   * Kramer, A.D.I., Guillory, J.E., & Hancock, J.T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Early Online. <http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320040111> * Tufekci, Z. (2015). Facebook and the Tyranny of the “Like” in a Difficult World — The Message. (2015). *Medium*. Retrieved from https://medium.com/message/how-facebook-s-tyranny-of-the-like-and-engagement-can-be-an-obstacle-to-an-open-and-connected-dddc03a0d39b#.sj6q0hxmc * Tufekci, Z. (2015). How Facebook’s Algorithm Suppresses Content Diversity (Modestly) & How the Newsfeed Rules the Clicks — The Message. (2015). *Medium*. Retrieved from https://medium.com/message/how-facebook-s-algorithm-suppresses-content-diversity-modestly-how-the-newsfeed-rules-the-clicks-b5f8a4bb7bab#.233jyo9e5 |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly readings response – consider this week’s readings while thinking about how information networks and other parts of your life are built to filter out certain things, and are thus implicitly biased, but also how filtering/selection is necessary * Post to Sakai by 11:59pm on September 17th |

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| **LOGICAL FALLACIES AND COGNITIVE BIASES** | |
| Week 5  September 25th & 27th | Required readings:   * Collins, L. (2012). *Bullspotting: Finding facts in the age of misinformation*. Prometheus Books. – Chapters 1-4   Browse: *List of cognitive biases*. (2016).*Wikipedia*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\_of\_cognitive\_biases*List of fallacies*. (2016). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fallacies>https://skepticalscience.com/docs/Debunking\_Handbook.pdf |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly readings response – will any of these help you identify misinformation and/or why it perpetuates? How aware are you of cognitive bias and fallacious reasoning in your own thinking, in that of others? * Post to Sakai by 11:59pm on September 24th |
| Week 6  October 2nd & 4th | Required readings:   * Callahan, E. S., & Herring, S. S. (2011). Cultural bias in Wikipedia content on famous persons. *Journal Of The American Society For Information Science & Technology*, *62*(10), 1899-1915. * Vydiswaran, V. V., Zhai, C., Roth, D., & Pirolli, P. (2015). Overcoming bias to learn about controversial topics. *Journal Of The Association For Information Science & Technology*, *66*(8), 1655-1672. |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly readings response – consider our ability to overcome bias and the role of cultural bias as well * **DUE:** Submit statement of presuppositions, OPTIONAL: share to forum on Sakai day of class or earlier (must be posted by start of class) |

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| **AUTHENTICITY AND ACCURACY** | |
| Week 7  October 9th & 11th | Required readings:   * Cancer cons, phoney accidents and fake deaths: meet the internet hoax buster. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/18/cancer-cons-phoney-accidents-fake-deaths-internet-hoax-buster-taryn-wright  (2016).The long, fake life of J.S. Dirr: A decade-long Internet cancer hoax unravels. *Gawker.com*. Retrieved from http://gawker.com/5914621/the-long-fake-life-of-js-dirr-a-decade-long-internet-cancer-hoax-unravels  * Bergstrom, K. (2011). “Don’t feed the troll”: Shutting down debate about community expectations on Reddit. com. *First Monday*, *16*(8). * Marks, S. (2014). Somaly Mam: The Holy Saint (and sinner) of sex trafficking. *Newsweek.* Retrieved from http://www.newsweek.com/2014/05/30/somaly-mam-holy-saint-and-sinner-sex-trafficking-251642.html?src=longreads |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly reading response – Internet hoaxes, give me your thoughts, reflections, experiences and examples, but focus on the implications of how this could shape future interaction, story-telling, and source/system creation (NOTE: this week we are focusing more on hoaxers than the hoaxed; we’ll examine these in Week 11) |
| Week 8  October 16th & 18th | Required readings:   * Chen, A. (2015). The Agency. *New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html?mtrref=undefined&gwh=E2CF4EB7D27856C7F7F5BC7FB354D15D&gwt=pay * Rojecki, A., & Meraz, S. (2016). Rumors and factitious informational blends: The role of the web in speculative politics. *New Media & Society, 18*(1), 25-43. <http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1461444814535724> * Wemple, E. (2016). *AP editor cites Bachmann fact-checking ‘quota’*.*Washington Post*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/post/ap-editor-cites-bachmann-fact-checking-quota/2012/09/26/ac04901e-07ec-11e2-afff-d6c7f20a83bf\_blog.html   Explore:   * http://sunlightfoundation.com/tools/ |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly reading response – as much as possible, ignore the political figures being analyzed and consider the issues beneath, particularly the role of accuracy in political dialogue * **DUE:** Submit issue/population for Resource guide |

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| **INFORMATION OVERLOAD/GLUT** | |
| Week 9  October 23rd & 25th | Required readings:   * Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How too much information is changing the way we think and know*. Routledge. – Introduction and Chapters 1-4 |
| Deliverables   * Weekly reading response – consider the role of glut, feel free to focus on a particular chapter |
| We will not meet on October 30th or November 1st, use this time to catch up/get ahead on readings | |
| Week 10  November 6th & 8th  GUEST TEACHER on the 6th | Required readings:   * Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How too much information is changing the way we think and know*. Routledge. – Chapters 5-8 |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly reading response – continue to consider the role of glut, feel free to focus on a particular chapter * Resource guide – optional rough draft submission |

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| **INFORMATION LITERACY** | |
| Week 11  November 13th & 15th | Required readings + activities:   * Forster, M. F. (2015). Refining the definition of information literacy: the experience of contextual knowledge creation. *Journal Of Information Literacy*, *9*(1), 62-73.  *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education | Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)*. (2016). *Ala.org*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency  * Steege Krueger, K. (2013). Evaluating Information with ABCD (Authority, Bias, Coverage, and Date). *School Library Monthly*, *30*(1), 36-38. * Taylor, A. A., & Dalal, H. H. (2014). Information literacy standards and the World Wide Web: results from a student survey on evaluation of Internet information sources. *Information Research*, *19*(4), 321-347. |
| Deliverables   * Weekly reading response – consider what information literacy is, your thoughts on it and its efficacy in practice and in theory. What is missing? What shouldn’t be included? Who (individuals, populations, instructors, practitioners, consumers, students, to name a few) is helped or hurt by this? * Resource guide – optional rough draft submission |
| Week 12  November 20th (no class on the 22nd) | Required readings: Ciralsky, A. (2016). The celebrity surgeon who used love, money, and the pope to scam an NBC news producer. *Vanity Fair*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/01/celebrity-surgeon-nbc-news-producer-scam  * Herley, C. (2012, June). Why do Nigerian scammers say they are from nigeria?. In *WEIS*. * SWANN, M. (2016). *The Professor, the Bikini Model and the Suitcase Full of Trouble*. *Nytimes.com*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/magazine/the-professor-the-bikini-model-and-the-suitcase-full-of-trouble.html?pagewanted=all |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly reading response – consider these stories from the perspective of the hoaxed and the implications for or role of information literacy therein * **DUE:** Submit tentative list of items to be included in resource guide |

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| **TRUTH OR TRUISM** | |
| Week 13  November 27th & 29th | Required readings: *CHI keynote: Desperately Seeking Serendipity | … My heart’s in Accra*. (2016). *Ethanzuckerman.com*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2011/05/12/chi-keynote-desperately-seeking-serendipity/  * Green, H. (2011). Breaking Out of Your Internet Filter Bubble. *Forbes.–[Electronic document]– http://www. forbes. com/sites/work-inprogress/2011/08/29/breaking-out-of-your-internet-filter-bubble*. * Popova, A (2011). The Filter Bubble: Algorithm vs. Curator & the Value of Serendipity. *Brain Pickings*. Retrieved from https://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2011/05/12/the-filter-bubble/ |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly reading response – consider the concept of filter bubbles – articulate your stance on them, any criticisms you have with the concept, if you think it’s an issue, and what recommendations you may have |
| Week 14  December 4th & 6th | Required readings:   * Flaherty, M. G., Tayag, E. K., Lanier, M., & Minor, J. (2014). The jenny McCarthy conundrum: Public libraries, popular culture, and health misinformation. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *51*(1), 1-1. (Poster can be viewed on second floor hallway of Manning)  Storozynsky, T. (2016). *Anorexia’s scary online empire*. *Salon*. Retrieved 28 March 2016, from http://www.salon.com/2012/07/28/the\_internet\_and\_anorexia\_salpart/ Read and thoroughly explore:   * http://www.ala.org/bbooks/ * https://www.ila.org/initiatives/banned-books-week/books-challenged-or-banned-in-2014-2015 * http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/ |
| Deliverables:   * Weekly reading response – continue to consider the concept of filter bubbles but within the frame of banned books. Consider all the stakeholders, criteria, and implications at play when we add or remove books from the library (if you prefer you can use the Right to Be Forgotten * **DUE:** Final project |